

Anthology of all the Principal Upanishads of the Krishna Yajur Veda

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English Exposition by:-

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To My Most Beloved Lord Ram

A humble word of dedication

No creature is perfect; it's foolhardy to claim so. The best of paintings cannot replace the original; the best of words cannot express the original emotions and sentiments. Even the Lord was not satisfied by one flower or one butterfly—he went on endlessly evolving and designing newer forms. So, I have done my best, I have poured out my being in these books. Honestly, I am totally incompetent— it was the Lord who had done the actual writing and had moved my fingers as if they were merely an instrument in his divine hands. But nonetheless, it's a tribute to the Lord's glory that he does not take the credit himself, but bestows it to them whom he loves as his very own. And to be his very own is indeed an unmatched honour. However, I still beg forgiveness for all omissions, commissions and transgressions on my part that I may have inadvertently made. It's the Lord's glories that I sing, rejoice in, write on and think of to the best of my ability. I hope my readers will also absorb the divine fragrance effusing from the flowers representing the Lord's books, enjoy the ambrosia pouring out of them and marvel at the Lord's stupendous glories.

I submit this effort at the Lord's holy feet, and finding no words to express my profound gratitude to him, I just wish to remain quiet, and let my silence do the speaking and praying on my behalf.

Finally, I pay my greatest obeisance to Hanuman, the enlightened devotee of Lord Ram, whom I regard as my Guru (a spiritual guide), without whose blessings this effort would not have borne fruit.

May, 2022

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia
Author

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Introduction

Yajur Veda (Chapter 32)

The hymns of the thirty second Chapter of the Yajur Veda are dedicated in the honour of the Supreme Being. Their Rishis (the sages or seers who first conceived or visualized them) are Brahma Swayambhu (the self-born creator)—verse nos. 1-12, Medhaakaam—verse nos. 13-15, and Srikaam—verse no. 16.

The different Devtas (deities of the hymns) are the following—Atma (consciousness; the ‘self’)—verse nos. 1-12; Sadasampati—verse no. 13; Agni (Fire God)—verse no. 14; Varun (Water God)—verse no. 15; and Sri Mantrokta—verse no. 16.

32/1. The all-pervading and omnipresent Supreme Being is the self-illuminated and self-born Prajapati, the guardian of creation. It is he who is revealed in the form of the Fire that gives light to and illuminates all the directions; it is he who is revealed as Aditya that shines as the splendorous and brilliant Sun; it is he who is revealed as the all-pervading and omnipresent Vayu (vital winds that infuse and sustain life in this creation); it is he who is revealed as the pleasant and pleasing Moon; it is he who is revealed as the radiant and glorious Shukra (sperm, the spark of life); it is he who is the best and the most exalted entity in creation; it is he who is known as Brahm who shows the best path to all the creatures; it is he who is revealed as water that is present in some form or the other in all forms of life that exist (because without water there would be no life); and it is he who is the sustainer and protector of all the subjects of creation (32/1).

32/2. All the dimensions of time and space are created by the Supreme Being who is all-pervading and omnipresent as well as most splendorous, radiant, glorious and magnificent. No one can measure or even touch (i.e. know, understand or comprehend) this Supreme Being from any side, whether it is from the top, from the sides, or from the center (32/2).

32/3. The Supreme Being is honoured by the Mantras such as ‘Hiranyagarbha’¹ (Yajur Veda, 25/10), ‘Yasmaanna Jaataha’² (Yajur Veda, 8/36) and ‘Ma Ma Hinseet’³ (Yajur Veda, 12/102). His glorious name and fame are stupendous, astounding and majestic. Such a divine and magnificent Lord is beyond any the scope of any known fixed standards and neither does he conform to any prototypes. He is unparalleled and unique, and therefore has no shadow or reflection which is even remotely like him (32/3).

[Note—¹Hiranyagarbha—The primordial golden egg from which the entire creation evolved.

² Yasmaanna Jaataha—The Lord from whom no one is better, more exalted and superior.

³ Ma Ma Hinseet—That Lord who is the Supreme Being in creation.]

32/4. The Supreme Being permeates uniformly in all the directions and corners of this creation. He is present in all the creatures who have already taken birth as well as those who are yet in the mother's womb and contemplating to take birth. He is the one who takes a birth, and thereafter repeatedly takes one birth after another in the future. It is he who pervades the present time as well (32/4).

[Note—The Lord is present here and now in this world. He uniformly pervades in all the dimensions of time and space—whether it relates to the past, the present or the future. One need not search the Lord in the past as history, or wait for him to reveal himself in some date in the future. The supreme Lord is present all around us in visible as well as invisible form, in every nook and corner of creation in all imaginable forms. What is needed to 'see and witness' him is the proper instrument for such divine vision—which is of the eye of wisdom, erudition and enlightenment. Since he is not a gross thing like other things of this mortal world, he cannot be seen with the gross eyes of the body which can see only things that have a gross existence.]

32/5. The Supreme Being alone pervades in all the Bhuvans (worlds). Nothing was created before him. This creator called Prajapati lives with his subjects in the creation, and he is endowed with all the sixteen Kalaas (qualities, attributes and virtues; parts and aspects) that are discernible in this visible world. He also bears the source of the three types of illumination in creation. [These three sources of illumination are the sun, the fire and the electric.] (32/5).

32/6. The Supreme Being has made the heavens majestic, glorious and radiant. He has made the earth like a solid foundation and endowed it with all the necessities of life to make it enjoyable, pleasant to live, hospitable and inhabitable so that the creatures who would come to live in it would live happily and comfortably. He has established and provided stability to the sun and the heavens. He has created countless worlds in the vast space of the sky. We cheerfully and with great devotion offer our worship, pay our obeisance and make our offerings to that Supreme Being who sits in a magnificent heavenly vehicle¹. Who else can we pray to; who else should we pray to? (32/6).

[Note--¹This has reference to the Sun who rides on a glorious and splendourous chariot pulled by seven magnificent horses symbolising the seven colours of the spectrum as he moves across the sky from the east to the west. Many Upanishads have asserted that the Sun is the most evident and glorious manifestation of the supreme transcendental Brahm as it represents the latter's stupendous splendour, radiance, vibrancy, life-bearing potentials, the power to annihilate if the need arises, and the dynamic energy and powers that keep the wheel of creation rotating smoothly.]

32/7. The Supreme Being provides sustenance and protection to all the creatures by the way of nutrients present in the nourishing products (food and drink) created by him for their benefit in the world. He is subtly observed and subtly perceived everywhere in the heavens as well as on the earth by those who are wise and

enlightened. He is the one in whom the sun rises and shines¹. We honour and offer worship to this Supreme Being who is an embodiment of bliss and happiness. That Supreme Being is described in detail in the two Mantras ‘Aapo Ha Yad Brihati’² (Yajur Veda, 27/25) and ‘Yaschidaapaha’³ (Yajur Veda, 27/26) (32/7).

[Note—¹This is obvious because the ‘sky’, where the sun rises and sets, is regarded as the nearest analogue for Brahm. The sky has numerous attributes and qualities typical of Brahm—such as being vast, measureless, fathomless, infinite, colourless, taintless, uniform, all-pervading, all-encompassing, omnipresent and incorporating everything in existence within its outer limit for nothing exists outside the periphery of the sky.

²Aapo Ha Yad Brihati—The Lord who is like the great ocean of water that first appeared on the surface of the earth at the beginning of creation.

³Yaschidaapaha—The Supreme Being observed water all around him as a vast endless ocean. (He then ordained the creator called Daksha Prajapati—literally, the creator who was an expert in the art of creation—to create the subjects of this earth who would do fire sacrifices and perform other religious ceremonies.)]

32/8. Those who are wise, erudite and learned see the eternal and universal presence of the Supreme Being in all the things of this creation in a concealed, latent or subtle form. They recognise him as the divine one who is eternal, immanent, immutable and omnipresent as well as is the sustainer, protector and a giver of shelter, solace and succour to the entire creation. He pervades uniformly and universally in all the subjects of the creation (as the pure consciousness or Atma as well as the vital winds called Pran). It is in him that the entire creation would collapse and merge (dissolve) at the time of conclusion, and it is from him that it would be born again in the new phase of creation (32/8).

32/9. Only those who are wise, realised, enlightened and aware of the esoteric secrets of the transcendental are able to throw light on the sublime truth of that absolute Supreme Being who is like the eternal fount of elixir known as Amrit; only they can unravel the secrets of the Amrit because they have tasted the nectar themselves. This nectar-like divine entity is as unknown as the secrets hidden in a deep cave in the city of Gandharvas. [The Gandharvas are celestial musicians and their city is regarded as very attractive but illusive; it is impossible to know the reality of the magical world they create. The analogy here means that the Supreme Being is almost impossible to be comprehended except by those who are very wise, expert and enlightened.]

The honourable Supreme Being is illuminated (i.e. highlighted and made known) only by the intellectual mind (i.e. by ‘Gyan’—by wisdom, erudition, sagacity and knowledge of the reality and truth).

A wise and enlightened man who reverentially accepts and gratefully welcomes the transcendental supreme Brahm, enshrining his three august ‘Pada’¹ (literally, the holy feet) in his own self (i.e. in his heart), such a man indeed becomes a most honourable and exalted being who is regarded as the sustainer and protector of even those who are themselves capable of sustaining and protecting others (32/9).

[Note--¹The word *Pada* literally means ‘feet or steps’. Here the term implies the three glorious and divine attributes, qualities and virtues of the Supreme Being—which are ‘Sat’ or truth, ‘Chit’ or consciousness, and ‘Anand’ or blissfulness. Any spiritual aspirant who imbibes or cultivates these noble and auspicious virtues in himself would obviously become equivalent to the Lord who possesses these eclectic divine virtues.]

32/10. The Supreme Being who uniformly pervades in the third abode (i.e. the heaven in the physical plane, and the Sushupta or deep sleep state of consciousness at the subtle plane) where those who are wise, erudite, self-realised and enlightened find an easy access and freely roam about is a universal friend of all. That Lord is the creator of all as well as the sustainer, nourisher and protector of all. He knows everything in all the worlds; he knows everything about all the inhabitants of these worlds (i.e. he is omniscient and all-knowing; nothing is hidden from him) (32/10).

32/11. When those who are truly wise and learned understand the reality of everything in existence—of all the creatures, all the created worlds, all the directions and all the corners of the creation, when they honour and pay their homage to the sublime and transcendental Divinity known as the Absolute Truth which is eternal, primeval, perpetual and infinite (i.e. the supreme Brahm) by offering prayers to it, admiring it and worshipping it with devotion, verily then such persons are able to merge their own Atma (their own ‘self’) with the supreme Atma of creation (the supreme Brahm) (32/11).

32/12. When those who are self-realised, wise and enlightened become aware of the ‘truth and reality’ behind everything in existence, stretching from the sky to the earth, such as all the material things and the sense objects of this world, all the different worlds that are in existence, and all the directions of creation—besides realising the stupendous glories, powers and authority of the Atma (pure consciousness)—it is then that they experience and become aware of the presence of the Supreme Being (the supreme transcendental Brahm) in a sublime, subtle and divine form of the Absolute Truth that is irrefutable, immutable, indivisible, unwavering and unequivocal.

This realisation makes them aware of their original divine and eclectic form in which they had been before they were sucked into the quagmire of delusions and faults associated with ignorance of this fundamental spiritual truth. [That is, they realise that they are the same Brahm that is Truth personified, and that they have forgotten their auspicious and noble heritage to become an ordinary creature who is mired in countless miseries, confusions, perplexities and consternations that are caused by delusions that are the hallmark of this artificial creation.] (32/12).

32/13. We humbly pray to the Lord of the world who is worthy of being welcomed and accepted. The Lord is a friend, ally and supporter of the exceptional and wonderful king of Gods called Indra. He is honoured and welcomed by us for providing us with wealth and prosperity that are worthy for us and meant for our use. He is honoured and welcome by us for bestowing us with the best of wisdom, erudition, sagacity and intellect. We offer this oblation to him for this purpose (32/13).

32/14. Oh Fire God! Please bless us with eclectic wisdom and the finest of intellect that are so much desired and sought after by the Gods as well as the Pittars (spirits of dead ancestors who have become semi-gods) so that we become wise, sagacious, intelligent, clever, prudent, scholarly and learned. We offer this oblation to him for this purpose (32/14).

32/15. Oh Varun God (the deity of water; also the Sun)! Oh Agni God (the Fire God) who is the sustainer and protector of the subjects of creation! Oh Indra (king of gods and of the rain-bearing clouds) and oh Vayu God (the Wind God)! Oh the supreme

Creator! Please bless us with the best of wisdom, erudition, sagacity, intelligence, prudence, scholarship and knowledge. We offer this oblation to you all for this purpose (32/15).

32/16. Oh Gods! Please enhance and firmly establish in us the strength of Gyan (wisdom, enlightenment, knowledge, erudition, sagacity and skills) and Kshetra (the physical strength of arms and body as a whole, implying a healthy, strong and robust body). Let us have these two magnificent glories and achieve fame and majesty due to them. We offer this oblation to you all for this purpose (32/16).

Anthology of all the Principal Upanishads of the Krishna Yajur Veda

Preface

‘That which is wisdom, intelligence and steadfastness, that which is the inner immortal light within all living beings, that without which no action is performed—may that, my mind, will for me what is good’ (Yajur Veda, 34.3).

‘It is most important to note that even the wisest of Guru is not able to impart knowledge without the help of scriptures; therefore it is imperative for a wise student or disciple to have direct access to the scriptures. Since no knowledge is available and sustainable without the scriptures, it is of utmost importance to have knowledge of the scriptures. Therefore the aspirant should diligently and sincerely search for the scriptures everywhere in this world even if it involves going to far off places in search of them. When truthful scriptures are accessed and studied thoroughly and implemented in life, spiritual success and its attendant rewards are available very soon. Success and accomplishment in any field, let alone spiritual practice, is not possible in the entire world without a thorough study and implementation of the various principles and doctrines expounded by the scriptures’. [Yog Kundalini Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 10-12.]

‘Then said I, Wisdom is better than strength: nevertheless the poor man’s wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard’ (the Book of Ecclesiastes, 9/16, the Old Testament of the Holy Bible). ‘Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep my covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people, for all the earth is mine’ (the Book of Exodus, 19/5, the Old Testament, Holy Bible); then ‘I will certainly be with you’ (the Book of Exodus, 3/12, the Old Testament, Holy Bible).

‘This is the scripture whereof there is no doubt, a guidance unto those who ward off (evil); Who believeth in the unseen, and establish worship, and spend of that We have bestowed upon them; These depend on guidance from their Lord. These are the successful.’ (the Holy Quran, Surah ii, verse nos. 2-5). ‘And believe in that which I reveal---and part not with my revelations for a trifling price, and keep your duty unto Me; Confound not the Truth with falsehood, not knowingly conceal the Truth’ (the Holy Quran, Surah ii, verse nos. 21-42). ‘Read: And thy Lord is the most bounteous; Who teacheth by the pen; Teacheth man that which he knew not’ (the Holy Quran, Surah xcvi, verse nos. 3-5).

The present volume contains all the thirty two Upanishads of the Krishna Yajur Veda. The sequence in which they appear in this volume follows the true Vedic tradition as laid down by one of the major Upanishads, viz. the ‘Muktikopanishad’, in its Canto 1, verse no. 55. It says—

_____ कठवल्लीतैत्तिरीयकब्रह्मकैवल्यश्वेताश्वतरगर्भनारायणामृतबिन्दुमृतनादकालाग्निरुद्रक्षुरिकासर्वसार—
शुकरहस्यतेजोबिन्दुध्यानबिन्दुब्रह्मविद्यायोगतत्त्वदक्षिणामूर्तिस्कन्दशारीरकयोगशिखैकाक्षराक्षयवधूत—

कठरुद्रहृदययोगकुण्डलिनीपञ्चब्रह्मप्राणाग्निहोत्रवराहकलिसंतरणसरस्वतीरहस्यामां—
कृष्णयजुर्वेदगतानां द्वात्रिंशत्संख्याकानामुपनिषदां स ह नाववत्विति शान्तिः ॥५५॥

There are thirty two Upanishads in the Krishna (dark) Yajur Veda, and their 'Shanti Mantra' is 'Saha Navavatu Saha Nau Bhunaktu'.

These thirty two Upanishads are the following—(1) Kathvalli, (2) Taitiriya, (3) Brahm, (4) Kaivalya, (5) Shwetashwatar, (6) Garbha, (7) Narain, (8) Amrit-bindu, (9) Amrit-naad, (10) Kalagni-rudra, (11) Kshurika, (12) Sarvasar, (13) Shukarhasya, (14) Tejobindu, (15) Dhyanbindu, (16) Brahmvidya, (17) Yogtattva, (18) Dakshinamurti, (19) Skand, (20) Sharirak, (21) Yogshikha, (22) Ekakshar, (23) Akshi, (24) Avadhut, (25) Kath-rudra, (26) Rudra-hridya, (27) Yogkundali, (28) Panch-brahm, (29) Pranagnihotra, (30) Varah, (31) Kalisantaran and (32) Saraswati-rahamasaya.

The Upanishads are the perennial philosophy of life and its truth, and they endeavour to teach the spiritual seeker the way to access this eclectic truth, to realise who he actually is, and find eternal peace, happiness, contentedness and bliss for himself by reaching his goal of spiritual liberation and deliverance once and for all. The amazing aspect of the Upanishads is that though they talk and preach about the same subject they appear fresh every time one reads them, and their philosophy is as applicable now as they were when they were first conceptualized. Each reading provides a newer insight to the secrets of life and the way to unravel them.

Now let us have a very brief pre-view of each of the Upanishads that appear in the Krishna Yajur Veda.

Chapter 1 is the famous Upanishad known as Kathwalli or Katho-panishad. It has two Cantos, each having three Vallis. It describes the spiritual knowledge given by the God of Death, i.e. Yam, for the benefit of the enlightened Nachiketa, the son of Vajsrava.

When Nachiketa was disillusioned by the way his father was donating useless old cows at a fire sacrifice, he mildly rebuked the father, at which the latter disowned him by giving him to Yam. Pleased by Nachiketa's maturity of wisdom and enlightenment, Yam granted him three boons. The answers to the two questions which Nachiketa asked, i.e. which is that holy fire which ought to be worshipped to attain heaven and what happens to the creature after death, forms the basis of the grand spiritual discourse of Yam which forms the basis of the eclectic knowledge expounded and elucidated in this Upanishad.

Chapter 2 is another famous Upanishad called the Taittiriyo-panishad. It forms a part of the Taittiriya Aranyak of the Taittiriya branch of the Krishna Yajur Veda. This Aranyak has ten chapters, out of which the seventh, eighth and ninth chapters have been recognised as Upanishads, hence the prefix 'Taittiriya'.

The Upanishad has three Cantos called 'Vallis', each having a number of sub-cantos called 'Anuvak'.

The first Valli is called 'Shiksha Valli' and it has twelve Anuvaks. The second Valli is called 'Brahmanand Valli' and it has nine Anuvaks. The last Valli is called 'Brighu Valli' and it has ten Anuvaks.

Chapter 3 is Brahm Upanishad or Brahmo-panishad. Dedicated exclusively to the exposition of the divine and eclectic form of the supreme transcendental Being known as Brahm, this Upanishad has a total of twenty three verses. It describes, inter alia, the

four legs of Brahm and its three symbolic forms represented by the three intertwined strands of the sacred thread worn by Hindus along with the symbolism of the tuft of hair on the head, as well as the importance and significance of Tapa (austerity, penance and sufferance of hardships), Satya (steadfastness in 'truth'), and the unity between the Atma, the pure consciousness, and Brahm, the supreme transcendental Divinity.

Chapter 4 is called Kaivalya Upanishad or Kaivalyo-panishad. As the name suggests, it describes the supreme state of spiritual realisation when all sense of duality are removed and only 'one, unique, un-paralleled, non-dual, immutable and indivisible universal Truth' known as Brahm and its representative, the conscious Atma, remain. This state is possible only with the awareness of what Brahm is and what Atma is, as well as experiencing and witnessing of this Truth first hand in all aspects of creation. This eclectic knowledge of divine realisation was revealed by the creator Brahma himself as an answer to sage Aashwalaayan's query.

Chapter 5 is Shwetashwatar Upanishad or Shwetashwataro-panishad. This is one of those Upanishads which are exclusively dedicated to the theme of Brahm, much like Brahmo-panishad, and repeatedly stresses the importance of realising this grand quintessential Truth of this existence. It was first revealed to sage-cum-seer named Shwetashwatar (6/21) and hence bears his name. Amongst the many interesting aspects of this Upanishad are the two beautiful analogies of the *wheel* and the *river* to explain the fundamental principles of Vedanta, the exposition on the principles of *Sankhya Shastra* and *Sankhya Yoga*, the use of a metaphor of *two birds* sitting on a tree to beautifully describe the relationship between the Jivatma (the creature) and the Parmatma (the Supreme Being, the Lord of creation), how the giant wheel of creation and destruction called the *Brahm-Chakra* is rotated by the supreme Brahm, and what is implied by the cycle of deeds and their unavoidable consequences, known as the great *Karma Chakra*. The process of evolution has been also outlined in Canto 5, verse nos. 10-12.

Chapter 6 is a medico-philosophical Upanishad called Garbha Upanishad/Garbho-panishad. It is a rare text which judiciously combines metaphysics with medical science as it incorporates embryology and anatomy while describing the process of how the elements of Nature come together to form the complex structure of the living entity known as the 'creature' or Jivatma. It is a wonderful sample of how, in ancient times, philosophy was mixed with hard-core science, and how the ancient sages were well versed in both. This establishes one very important point—and that is that the people who taught the Upanishads were acclaimed experts not only in the field of metaphysics, theology and spiritualism alone but also in other fields, especially those that had an empirical and scientific basis.

This Upanishad was preached by sage Pippalaad, and is in the form of five long paragraphs much like modern text books. It appears that he gave five lectures, and they were collated, edited and written down in the form of this Upanishad.

Chapter 7 is Narayan Upanishad/Narayano-panishad. Dedicated to Lord Narayan, also known as Vishnu and Viraat Purush, this Upanishad expounds and elucidates the great metaphysical and spiritual importance and significance of this form of transcendental Divinity. Narayan is the primary cause of creation and of whatever that exists; he has manifested himself in everything that exists, being immanent and

omnipresent. Narayan is a manifestation of the Supreme Being's (Brahm's) glorious virtues of providing sustenance, protection and nourishment to the creation created by him. There are in all five paragraphs in this Upanishad.

Chapter 8 is called the Amrit Bindu Upanishad or Brahm Bindu Upanishad. It is so-called because it describes the path by which the spiritual seeker can reach that one cardinal point of eternal beatitude and felicity which is known in the fields of spirituality, metaphysics and theology as 'Brahm'. This one fount or wellspring of elixir called Amrit is the quintessential object sought by the soul of the creature, and once it is reached, nothing remains further to be searched or researched.

It elucidates how the Mana (the thinking mind and the emotional/sentimental heart) are the cause of all bonds and fetters that shackle a creature on the one hand, and can provide freedom to him on the other hand. It then goes on to enunciate how to control this Mana (i.e. the thinking mind and the emotive and sentimental heart) and how it can be made an instrument of attaining Mukti (liberation and deliverance; emancipation and salvation). It goes on to explain the concepts of Gyan and Mukti, and cites the instances of reflection of one moon in different vessels full of water, the case of the clay pot as artificially separating the space of the sky, the bee getting trapped inside the flower in its longing for nectar, the colour of milk being the same in all samples, and the presence of butter hidden inside milk to elucidate great metaphysical truths about the 'self', the Atma and Brahm.

Chapter 9 is called Amrit Naad Upanishad/Amritnaado-panishad. It is based on the philosophy of Yoga or meditation by which a spiritual aspirant establishes a union between his individual self and the cosmic supreme Self known as Brahm. It has thirty nine verses.

It goes on to describe the various limbs or branches of Yoga, and the most acclaimed of all meditation exercises that is known as 'Pranayam' which entails control of the vital winds inside the body and diverting their energy towards spiritual upliftment. The benefits of Yoga are outlined in this context.

Finally, this Upanishad deals with the vital winds called the various Prans which sustain and protect the body. It describes their importance, location and symbolic colours. It concludes that when an ascetic who practices Pranayam manages to concentrate his vital life forces called Pran in the head, he finds final deliverance from this gross body when he dies, and therefore he does not have to take birth again.

Chapter 10 is Kalagni Rudra Upanishad/Kalagnirudro-panishad which is revealed in the form of a dialogue between sage Sanatkumar and Kalagni-Rudra. It describes the proper way of marking and wearing the 'Tripund' (three horizontal or vertical lines marked on the forehead of devotees of Lord Shiva using the ash of the sacrificial fire) along with its spiritual and metaphysical importance and significance. This Tripund is an auspicious symbol of Lord Shiva who is regarded as the greatest of ascetics and the wisest, most enlightened and omniscient Lord in creation. The wearer of this sign of the Lord, if he is not an imposter, becomes a personification of the Lord along with the auspicious and glorious virtues he stands for.

Chapter 11 Kshurika Upanishad/Kshuriko-panishad is so named because it acts like a 'knife' that helps the spiritual aspirant to cut through different hurdles that come in the way of his spiritual progress, and helps him to attain his objective of obtaining final liberation and deliverance from the fetters that shackle him to this body and the

various torments that it is subjected to in this deluding world of artificiality. It advocates the employment of various Yoga practices to achieve this end.

The steps to be followed in doing Yoga, which are meditative exercises to control the vital wind called Pran as well as unclogging of the hitherto blocked Naadis, are described in graphic detail. With Naadis open, the vital winds can move freely inside the body, and with practice of Yoga sufficient energy is generated inside the body itself when the body is well ventilated. This stokes the latent fire present inside the body further, and the Pran winds move up the body to finally escape from it into the outer sky by rupturing the skull and escaping into the outer sky to merge and become one with the cosmic air or wind element present outside the body much like the heated air, in the form of steam, escapes from the spout of a kettle never to return into the body of the kettle again.

Chapter 12 is known as Sarwasaar Upanishad/Sarwasaaro-panishad. As the name suggests ('Sarwa' meaning 'all, comprehensive', and 'Saar' meaning 'essence, basic, fundamental, principal doctrine'), this Upanishad presents a precise and comprehensive definitions to many metaphysical terms. Thus, definitions of concepts such as 'Bandhan' (getting bound in shackles), 'Mukti' (being liberated from the fetters that confine the creature's soul or Atma and prevent its independence and salvation), 'Vidya' (truthful knowledge of the reality and expertise in it), 'Avidya' (lack of this knowledge which is tantamount to ignorance, remaining deluded and bound if fetters), of the four states of existence of the pure consciousness and the five 'Koshas' or the sheaths that surround the true 'self' of the creature, the concept of a 'Jiva' (the independent living being), the 'Kshetrageya' (the authority who has complete command over this individual being), the 'Jiva-Atma' (the soul of this individual creature), the 'Parmatma' (the supreme Soul of the creation), 'Maya' (delusions and misconceptions about the reality) etc.—all have been beautifully incorporated in this Upanishad.

Chapter 13 contains the Shuka Rahasya Upanishad/Shuka-Rahasyo-panishad. It is so named because in it Lord Shiva has elaborately expounded upon the four great sayings of the Vedas, called the 'Maha Vakyas', to unravel their profound secrets and explain their metaphysical importance and spiritual significance for the benefit of sage Shukdeo, the son of sage Veda Vyas, the legendary classifier of the Vedas and the author of the Purans, at the latter's request.

The four great sayings are the following—'OM Pragyanam Brahm' (OM salutations! The highest form of knowledge is Brahm), 'OM Aham Brahmasmi' (OM salutations! I am Brahm), 'OM Tattwamasi' (OM salutations! That Brahma is you), and 'OM Ayamatma Brahm' (OM salutations! This Atma is Brahm).

Chapter 14 is Teja Bindu Upanishad/Tejobindu-panishad. This magnificent Upanishad is virtually like a citadel and a strong fort of the philosophy of 'Advaitya Vedanta' which extols the eclectic philosophy of non-duality and uniformity in creation. It describes the supreme transcendental Divinity known as Brahm in a very holistic manner.

There are six elaborate Cantos in this Upanishad. From the practical standpoint, this Upanishad has a profound positive value in today's world of depression and darkness.

Chapter 15 is called Dhyān Bindu Upanishad/Dhyānbindu-panishad because it extols the importance of ‘Dhyān’, literally the concentration of the stupendous powers of the various faculties of the mind to deeply contemplate and fixedly ponder on the great spiritual truths of existence and creation as envisioned by the scriptures to unravel their enigmatic secrets.

This Upanishad describes the two basic concepts of metaphysics—viz. the divine word OM, and Yoga. It analyses the various components of OM with metaphysical perspective, and then explains the meaning of the different components of Yoga such as Pranayam (breath control), Aasans and Mudras of Yoga (sitting postures), Shadanga Yoga (the following of the six-fold path for spiritual enlightenment and salvation), the various Chakras (subtle cosmic energy centers in the body), Prāṇas (vital winds), Haṁs Vidya (acquisition of truthful knowledge pertaining to universal Spirit that lives in the heart as a symbolic swan), Kundalini (the coiled subtle energy center located at the base of the spine), and Naad (the all-pervading cosmic background vibration in ether that are represented by the word OM) etc. The culmination of Yoga is the experience of spiritual ecstasy and a profound degree of bliss. It also enables the aspirant to realise his mystical powers and access the stupendous energy of the Spirit that normally lies untapped inside an individual.

The eternal metaphysical question ‘why does the immaculate and uncorrupted Atma appear to be corrupted and tainted while it lives in a gross body of the creature and interacts with the world’ has been explained beautifully in verse nos. 93/1-93/15 of this Upanishad.

Chapter 16 is called Brahm Vidya Upanishad/Brahmvidyo-panishad. This Upanishad discusses the ways by which Brahm, the supreme transcendental Divinity, can be realised by a spiritual aspirant, along with explaining the esoteric and mystical form of that Brahm. This Upanishad starts with a discussion of the subtle meaning of the four sublime letters that constitute the ethereal word OM which is metaphorically used as a classical synonym of Brahm. It goes on to describe the difference between Brahm, the transcendental and eternal Supreme Being, and the ordinary Jiva, the mortal living being or creature, and how this same Jiva can become as exalted as Brahm and be known as a Haṁs or a divine Swan when it becomes enlightened about the Atma or the pure consciousness present in his bosom. This eclectic knowledge about Divinity helps the creature break free from all fetters that shackle him down to this mortal existence and pave the way for his obtaining eternity.

Chapter 17 is the Yogtattva Upanishad/Yogtattvo-panishad. The name of this Upanishad itself indicates what it is about. The word has two components—Yog and Tattva. Yog means meditation as a means of bringing about a union between the soul of the individual and the Soul of the creation, to establish harmony between two entities that have been artificially separated though they are inherently the same. Tattva means the essence and principle of anything. Hence, the combined meaning is clear—the text strives to establish a unity between two inherently divine entities which are essentially and by principle one and the same but had been inadvertently and erroneously separated from one another. They yearn to be re-united into their original indivisible and non-dual form as the Principal entity of creation that is wholesome, absolute and truthful.

This is a revealed Upanishad as it was taught or preached by Lord Vishnu, the sustainer and protector of creation, when Brahma, the creator of the visible creation, approached the former to advice a method by which the creation that was being

unfolded by him could free itself from the unending cycle of birth and death to find its final freedom and rest. So Vishnu taught Brahma about the essential features of Yoga, its benefits and its different aspects. Regular practice of Yoga enables the practitioner to be able to break free from the unending cycle of miseries and transmigration, and instead find liberation and deliverance from it.

It describes the concept of Kaivalya (the 'only one') and stresses that Yoga is the best path leading to it. In the realm of Yoga, it deals with five types, i.e. Mantra Yoga, Laya Yoga, Hath Yoga, Raaj Yoga and Purna Mano Yoga, and narrates their various aspects.

Chapter 18— The Dakshin Murti Upanishad is dedicated to Lord Shiva who is regarded as knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment personified, and therefore the most competent one to expound upon, teach and preach subjects related to the divine wisdom pertaining to the field of metaphysics and spiritualism. This Upanishad highlights the significance and importance of the 'Shiva Tattva' or the Shiva principle, the essence and basis for which Shiva is recognised as the greatest Lord and worshipped as such.

Iconographically, this form of Shiva has other names also besides 'Dakshin Murti', such as 'Dakshin Mukhi' and 'Dakshinaa Murti'.

The word 'Murti' means a 'form or image', the word 'Mukhi' means 'facing', the word 'Dakshinaa' means 'giving away liberally as charity or donation', the word 'Dakshin' has three connotations here—viz. 'south', 'right' and 'knowledge and wisdom', and the word 'Shiva' of course means 'someone who is a personification of such glorious virtues as auspiciousness, beauty, truth, knowledge, enlightenment, wisdom, renunciation, dispassion and detachment from all things material and false, someone who is meditative and contemplative, someone who is self-realised and Brahm-realised etc.'

So we have a comprehensive picture of what this Upanishad aims to worship—it does not aim to worship Lord Shiva as the God of death and destruction but as the most enlightened and wise teacher of the philosophy of Brahm whom he personifies. Since Lord Shiva faced 'south' when he taught the ancient sages and seers who had approached him in some earlier time to gain divine wisdom and metaphysical knowledge which only he could impart to them, he was known as 'the Lord facing south'. Since the knowledge imparted by him was astoundingly unique and the most 'right or correct and precise knowledge' of metaphysics which granted 'a divine wisdom as well as vision' to its followers, it was called 'Dakshin'. Since he was liberal in giving it to the sincere spiritual aspirant, he was called 'Dakshinaa Murti' or the 'one who is an icon of charity and donation, one who is very generous in giving away what is asked for without holding anything away from the alms seeker'. What did he give away? He gave away 'knowledge and divine wisdom', and only one who has something can give it to others, therefore he is deemed to be a 'Murti', or an image, a personified form of such knowledge and divine wisdom.

Since it was first revealed by Lord Shiva himself, it is a revealed Upanishad. The leading sage who was given this knowledge by Shiva was Maarkandey, who later revealed some relevant part of it when he was approached by other sages and seers led by Shaunak and others who asked him nine questions which form the basis of the present Upanishad. The nine questions briefly are—what is the esoteric and eclectic knowledge of the Shiva principle, who is the deity worshipped in this principle, what are the Mantras (mystical and spiritual formulas in the form of words or letters), what is the kind of devotion needed for its success, how can that esoteric and eclectic

knowledge be obtained, what is the instrument to felicitate it, what offerings are to be made, what is the appropriate time for doing it, and what is its ultimate goal?

Chapter 19—Extolling the principles of Non-duality, the Skanda Upanishad stresses that there is no basic difference between Hari (Vishnu, the sustainer) and Shiva (the concluder), on the one hand, and Shiva and the Jiva (the living being) on the other. In other words, the three are one and the same; they are like the three corners of a triangle known as creation. They are manifestations of the same divine non-dual entity known as Brahm which has assumed three distinct forms to perform three distinct functions in this creation.

This Upanishad is a sort of an extension of the Dakshin Mukhi Upanishad (Chapter 18) which says that Shiva is the only ultimate truthful Lord called Brahm, and that the Shiva and the Atma of a creature, the Jiva-Atma, are one and the same.

Chapter 20— Shaarirak Upanishad/Shaarirko-panishad basically deals with the profound secrets of creation, the Genesis of Creation and its expansion. It describes its fundamental basic elements or units of this creation and the way they expanded and developed into such a complex structure that defies definition. In its twenty verses it encapsulates the entire process in a clear and step-by-step format. It narrates succinctly the concept of what constitutes the body, its subtle and gross sense organs, their functions, the four types of ‘Antahakaran’ which constitute one’s inner self (i.e. one’s sub-conscious; his conscience) that mould the individual’s thought processes and outlook as well as his personality, behaviour and temperament etc. It outlines the three famous Gunas or inherent qualities that are present in all living beings in varying ratios, tones and combinations, and which determine each individual’s special nature and characteristics. Then it goes on to describe the various ‘Tattvas’ or fundamental elements that have together made up this world, starting at the micro level of the subtle body having seventeen elements, and extending right up to the vast cosmos having twenty four elements that make up Nature and the controlling Authority of the entire setup, i.e. the Supreme Purush who is non-dual and is therefore the universal Truth and the Absolute.

Chapter 21—The Yogshikha Upanishad has six elaborate Cantos dealing with the concept of Yoga. The word ‘Shikha’ literally means ‘a peak, a crest, an apex, a flame, the highest point’. Hence the composite word obviously refers to the knowledge which helps the wise person who possesses it to reach the climax of spiritual achievements that is possible by employing Yoga as a tool for this purpose. This eclectic knowledge ignites the hidden potentials in him like a flame of light that removes the darkness of ignorance and its attendant delusions.

Yoga and Gyan are the two famous paths of Brahm realisation or becoming knowledgeable about the ultimate, irrefutable and immutable Truth of creation. This Brahm realisation is equivalent to ‘self’ realisation because the Atma or the pure consciousness of the individual creature and the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm are basically one and the same Divinity. This Upanishad presents a magnificent judicious mix of metaphysical philosophy of Yoga based on the principles of Vedanta along with the Tantra philosophy of Yoga and its practical aspect of exercises and meditation techniques.

This Upanishad is one of the ‘revealed Upanishads’ because it was revealed by Lord Shiva to Brahma the creator.

Chapter 22—The Ekakchar Upanishad/Ekakcharo-panishad has been revealed in the form of a sublime prayer coming out of the heart of a truly realised and enlightened sage/seer who sees the same Divinity known as the supreme transcendental Brahm, the Supreme Being having the unique virtues of being ‘Ek’ or one and non-dual, and ‘Akchar’ or imperishable and eternal, as being universally present in the entire creation in a uniform and non-dual manner. In fact, this Upanishad derives its name ‘Ekakchar’ from these two principal sublime qualities of Brahm—i.e. Ek and Akchar.

This divine Being is present everywhere, from the macrocosmic level of the cosmos right up to the minutest atom at the micro level because it is all-pervading, all-encompassing and all-inclusive.

Chapter 23—The Akchi Upanishad/Akchyu-panishad is dedicated to the Sun God and has two parts. In the first part, sage Sankriti has prayed to the Sun God and asks him to show the world true light. The Sun is a visible manifestation of the glorious divinity, the radiant splendour and magnificence of the supreme transcendental Brahm. In the second part, the Sun God describes to the sage the metaphysical knowledge of this Brahm, called the Brahm Vidya, and emphasises that Yoga is the true and effective means to realise this Brahm. The path that leads to Brahm-realisation has seven distinct signs or stages, called the ‘Seven Bhumikas of Brahm Yoga’. (Refer also to Varaaha Upanishad, Chapter 30). Each marks a distinct stage of enlightenment and they have been elaborately described in part two of this Upanishad. These seven stages are listed in ordinal numbers, with the seventh number marking the ultimate order which is equivalent to Brahm-realisation. The distinctive characteristics of each stage have been clearly brought out in a beautiful way in this Upanishad.

Being revealed by the Sun God himself, it is one of the ‘revealed Upanishads’.

Chapter 24—The Avadhuta Upanishad deals with the concept of Avadhut Sanyas which is a spiritual way of life of an ascetic marked by exemplary renunciation and total detachment from the world and its material sense objects along with its deluding charms as lived by a most enlightened and self-realised person. Emphasis is laid on describing his enlightened thought processes and mental bearing which is central to a man’s behaviour, personality and temperament. It is marked by an extreme sense of dispassion, detachment, equanimity, fortitude, holiness and piety. This attitude of the mind and intellect would automatically lead to a commendable state of all-round calmness of demeanours and tranquility of the mind.

This Upanishad was expounded by the great seer and sage Dattatreya who is considered as an incarnation of the Trinity Gods (Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva the concluder) to answer queries on the subject raised by sage Sankriti. Dattatreya is regarded as the patron saint of all Avadhut Sanyasis.

The word *Avadhuta* is an acronym derived from the first letters of the following words—the letter ‘A’ from Akshar meaning imperishable, eternal and infinite; the letter ‘Va’ from Varenya meaning worthy of accepting and honouring; the letter ‘Dhu’ referring to the worldly deceit and conceit known as Dhut; and the letter ‘Ta’ from the word Tyakta meaning to abandon and discard. Hence, the term Avadhut refers to the person who moves straight to his aim of life, which is self-realisation and truth-realisation, as well as liberation and deliverance of the soul from the cycle of transmigration and worldly miseries, and obtaining eternity and peace. This is accomplished by discarding all deceits and conceits associated with life in this materialistic world of delusions and artificiality.

The Avadhuta state is one of the highest categories of the life of Sanyas. This Upanishad details its characteristic features, especially the mental state more than the physical state, and highlights the fact that such people are free from external pretensions of piety and holiness, and remain perpetually engrossed in contemplation and meditation.

Chapter 25— The Kath-rudra Upanishad/Kathrudro-panishad is also called ‘Kanth-rudra Upanishad’. In this Upanishad, which is one of the many revealed ones, deals with the esoteric and enigmatic but most eclectic and divine knowledge pertaining to the supreme transcendental Being known as Brahm. It is enunciated by Prajapati Brahma, the patriarch of creation, when approached by the Gods with a request to preach them the great knowledge pertaining to the divine entity known as the Atma and how to realise it. During the course of unfolding of the great tenets of the Atma, Prajapati elucidates about the life of Sanyas which is spiritual path marked by profound renunciation obtained as a result of becoming aware of the reality and truth behind the façade of falsehood and deception. This Upanishad compliments the Avadhut Upanishad which is Chapter 24.

Other metaphysical concepts that are covered are Maya (delusions) and Brahm (supreme and absolute Truth from which everything, including Maya, has originated) and their relationship, the various Tanmatras (subtle sense perceptions) and the genesis of creation, the concepts of the Panch Atmas (the five vital winds) and Panch Koshas (the five sheaths that surround the pure consciousness). It goes on to establish that the supreme universal Consciousness called Parmatma is the only Lord of creation called Ishwar, and it is the same entity that is revealed in the form of the individual living being called the Jiva.

Chapter 26—The Rudra Hridaya Upanishad is very significant in the sense that it establishes the principle that Lord Vishnu the sustainer and protector of creation, and Lord Shiva the concluder of creation are one and the same entity. This sets at rest once and for all the eternal dichotomy that has existed from time immemorial about the separate existence of these two Godheads. In fact, they represent the two soldered ends of the circle or wheel of creation and prove the dictum that what has come into being would certainly come to an end one day.

Rudra is one of the main names of Lord Shiva, and the word Hridaya means heart. Thus the composite word ‘Rudra Hridaya’ implies the Upanishad that teaches the fundamental principles behind the concept of Shiva.

It was expounded in the form of a dialogue between sages Veda Vyas, the legendary classifier of the four Vedas and narrator of the Purans and Mahabharat, and his son Shukdeo, the sage having the body of a parrot. When Shukdeo asked his father who was the most exalted amongst the Gods, the answer was ‘Rudra’, i.e. Shiva. Thereafter, the magnificent knowledge that Rudra and Vishnu are one, the three forms of Rudra to indicate the Trinity Gods (Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva), its reflection in the three forms that the Atma symbolically assumes (as the Jiva, Parmatma and Atma), and the fact that one is spiritually liberated when one acquires this supreme transcendental knowledge is elucidated in detail.

The Upanishad extols the greatness of the tenet of non-duality espoused by the Upanishads and forming the basis of the philosophy of Advaita Vedanta.

Chapter 27—The Yog Kundali Upanishad/Yogkundalyu-panishad, as the name suggests, is dedicated exclusively to Yoga—its exercises, its practice, its pitfalls and

precautions, its spiritual benefits, and how it can lead to one's liberation and deliverance from this trap-like perishable body as well as from the cycle of birth and death. It has three Cantos. It is one of the main Yoga Upanishads and come under the category of the revealed ones— as it was revealed by the patron God of Yoga himself, i.e. by Lord Shiva, to the creator Brahma (refer Canto 3, verse no. 1). It was also preached by Shiva to sage Gautam (Canto 1, verse no. 3). In its three Cantos it describes such topics as the four types of Pranayams (viz. Surya Bhedan, Ujjayi, Shitali and Bhastrika), the three types of Bandhas (Mool, Uddiyan and Jalandhar), the detailed process of kindling the dormant Kundalini fire, the special meditative technique called 'Khechari' which empowers the practitioner with certain unique abilities such as the ability to float or fly in the air, and the spiritual rewards of Yoga such as achievement of Mukti or liberation and deliverance of the soul from the fetters of the gross body.

Chapter 28—The Panch Brahm Upanishad is again one of the revealed ones as it was first preached by Lord Shiva to sage Gaalav (refer verse no. 33). Later on, this profound metaphysical knowledge was passed on in the form of a discourse that was given by sage Pippalaad when he was approached by sage Shaakalya with the question—'what or who was produced in the beginning of creation' (verse no. 1).

Primarily, this Upanishad describes the five symbolic forms of the one supreme transcendental Divinity known as Brahm. Pippalaad reveals that these first five forms of Brahm had a great symbolic and metaphoric value and significance. They were respectively called Saddyojaat (the 'first born'), Aghor (literally the 'formidable one'), Vamdeo (one of the eleven forms of Shiva, the radiant and glorious one), Tat-purush (literally 'that Purush', referring to the Viraat Purush), and Ishan (Shiva's one name; also called Sadaa Shiva, the eternal, auspicious and truthful Being; the one who gives liberation and deliverance to the creature; the one who lives in the zenith of creation).

These five independent forms are only a matter of existential perception, for basically they are the same non-dual supreme Divinity which has revealed itself in all these forms.

Iconographically, this Panch Brahm is depicted as the five-faced Shiva, called 'Panchaanan', symbolising the composite authority and the dynamic cosmic powers of the Supreme Being at one place. The face that is turned towards the zenith is called 'Ishan'; the one facing north is called 'Vamdeo'; the one to the east is 'Tat-purush'; the south facing face stands for 'Aghor'; and the one to the west side is known as 'Saddyojat'. This image of Panchaanan Shiva has ten arms, fifteen eyes, is seated on a bull, wears an elephant hide around the waist and the tiger skin on the upper part of the body, has matted hairs and a tall crown. His weapons are Shakti (thunderbolt), Khatvanga (a magical wand) and a Trident. He also holds an Akshamala (the prayer rosary), a fruit (symbolising his power to grant boons and blessings), a snake (indicating his fearless and venomous nature that would tolerate no nuisance), a Damaru (the hand held drum indicative of the cosmic Naad, the cosmic primordial sound that existed at the beginning of creation as well as the thunder and rumble of dooms day), and the Utpala flower (a blue species of lotus symbolising purity and holiness; the flower called *nymphaea cerulean*). The other remaining hands are held in Abhaya Mudra (the posture giving fearlessness to his devotees) and Vara Mudra (the posture that grants boons and blessings).

Chapter 29—Pran Agnihotra Upanishad/Pranagnihotro-panishad, as the name suggests, has two components—Pran and Agnihotra. The second word ‘Agnihotra’ refers to the offering of oblations to the consecrated sacred fire, while the first word ‘Pran’ refers to the vital and primary life giving and life sustaining forces of Nature present in the individual’s body. Therefore, this name assumes two connotations—one, to offer oblations to the sacred fire to pay obeisance to and honour the all-important Pran and Fire which are deified forms of the vital life giving and life sustaining forces in Nature, both at the cosmic level as well as at the individual level of creation (verse nos. 6-14), and two, to honour the Supreme Being, who is the Lord of the entire creation including the Pran and Fire, and who has empowered Pran with its stupendous and magical ability to inject life even in the inherently inert and dead entities such as the gross body of the mortal creature, by offering this Pran itself as an oblation to him. At the macro level of creation, this Supreme Being is called Viraat or Vaishwanar, and at the micro level he is called the Atma (verse nos. 15-18).

Verse nos. 21-22 draw a parallel between a human body and the venue of an elaborate fire sacrifice, describe their symbolic similarity in great detail by incorporating the various components of a fire sacrifice and going on to explain how the human body perfectly fits in the scheme of things and can seamlessly replace the venue and other details of the physical fire sacrifice done by the spiritual aspirant in the external world—complete with the altar, the implements and other things needed to perform the various rituals, making of offerings, oblations and libations, the participants such as the different priests, the attendants, the patron and his family members, the post, the rope and the sacrificial animal et al. In fact, this Upanishad highlights that the fire sacrifice done within the body is more effective and better placed for the person’s spiritual elevation and aid in his final emancipation and salvation than the formal ritual of the fire sacrifice done mechanically in the external world.

Chapter 30—The Varaaha Upanishad/Varaaho-panishad has been taught by Lord Varaaha, the Boar incarnation of Lord Vishnu, the sustainer and protector of creation and the Supreme Being, to sage Ribhu. Hence, it is one of those Upanishads that were revealed by the Lord himself. It espouses and expounds the eclectic philosophy of ‘Advaitya Vedanta’, i.e. the doctrine of ‘non-duality and uniformity’ in creation. It can be broadly classified into two components—the first half is dedicated to an elaborate discussion of this philosophy and how this changes the world view of the enlightened man (Canto 1-3) as preached directly by the Lord, while the second half is an exposition of sage Ribhu for the benefit of another sage Nidagh on how this enlightened view can be actually realised by inculcating divine values in life (Canto 4) and by doing Yoga (Canto 5).

In Canto 1, it presents a long chain of Tattvas (fundamental principles of creation) and finally concludes that inspite of gaining access to the highest level of metaphysical and theological knowledge the best path of obtaining liberation and deliverance is Bhakti or devotion to God.

Canto 2 deals with the four preliminary disciplines called ‘Saadhna Chatushtaya’—viz. the true nature of the Atma as the true ‘self’, pure consciousness and bliss, how the self-realised person becomes one with the Parmatma, the Supreme Being, how this lead to freedom from the fetters of Karma (deeds and actions), and how meditation leads to dissolution and overcoming of the mind etc.

Canto 3 extends the ideas of Canto 2 and goes on to describe the Parmatma or the Supreme Soul as an embodiment of Sat-Chit-Anand (truth, consciousness and

bliss). It is stressed here that the best and most effective way of attaining him is Bhakti or devotion.

Canto 4 is divided into two sections like the Vedas—the first section is the Mantras, and the second is the Brahman. There are in all 42 Mantras in section 1 which list the seven Bhumikas (stages of development of wisdom), while the second section consisting of 43 verses are like the Brahmam which give a detailed description of all the stages. It, inter alia, describes the concept of Jivan Mukti, and cites the examples of sage Shuka and Vamdeo as epitomes of this type of Mukti. As for the Bhumikas, one should also refer to Chapter 23 titled Akchi Upanishad.

Finally, Canto 5 is exclusively dedicated to Yoga and its practice. It describes the various aspects and limbs of Yoga, such as Angas (limbs or branches), Bandhas (control of vital energy of the Pran), Chakras (subtle energy centers in the body), Naadis (nerves), OM and its use for Japa (repetition).

Chapter 31—Kalisantarna Upanishad/Kalisantarno-panishad is a very short Upanishad belonging to the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, having only three verses. It was revealed by the creator Brahma to the celestial sage Naarad.

The name of the Upanishad has three parts, viz. ‘Kali’, ‘Sant’, and ‘Tarna’. The first word ‘Kali’ refers to the present fourth era of the 4-era Hindu celestial cycle, an era considered as the most sinful and full of perversions from which a person finds great difficulty to find liberation and deliverance. The second word ‘Sant’ refers to saintly and pious people, and the third component ‘Tarna or Taran’ means to actually find liberation and deliverance from or protection from some kind of noose or snare or from a most difficult situation. Hence, the combined word means an Upanishad which provides an easy formula by which saintly and pious persons can find emancipation and salvation as well as protection for themselves from all types of torments and horrors even during the most difficult period of their lives.

It extols the glory of the holy and divine name of the Supreme Being called Hari, who is also known as Lord Narayan or Vishnu, in his two incarnations as Lord Ram and Lord Krishna. Therefore it is often referred to as *Hari Naam Upanishad*—an Upanishad which espouses the holy name of the Lord as the all-inclusive and infallible panacea for all spiritual ills during the most difficult phase of creation, i.e. the present evil-ridden era called Kaliyug.

The Upanishad prescribes the great well-known and most popular Mantra of the Lord which has sixteen words and relates to the holy names of Lord Vishnu in his incarnations as Ram and Krishna. The Mantra ‘Hare Ram Hare Ram, Ram Ram Hare Hare; Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare’ is set to different tunes and is sung melodiously, either alone by the devotee or in a group, to the accompaniment of various musical instruments. This melodious singing of the holy name of the Lord is called ‘Kirtan’.

Chapter 32—The Saraswati Rahasya Upanishad/Saraswatairahasyo-panishad. It was preached by sage Ashwalaayan to other sages who had approached him to learn about the great mystical secrets of Goddess Saraswati, the goddess personifying all arts, sciences, crafts and skills as well as all wisdom, erudition, expertise and knowledge. Since speech is the medium by which one teaches others and is the vehicle for dissemination of information, wisdom, skills and knowledge, Saraswati is also said to be patron goddess of speech.

This Upanishad is roughly divided into two parts—the first part is like the Mantra part of the Vedas wherein the Suktas or devotional hymns dedicated to the

goddess are said (verse nos. 1-35), and the second part is like the Brahmin section of the Vedas wherein an elaboration is done of what has already been said in the Mantra part and their spiritual and other benefits are enumerated (verse nos. 36-68). The Mantra part of this Upanishad is also classified as a Sukta—i.e. a devotional hymn.

This Upanishad winds up this anthology of the Krishna Yajur Veda Upanishads.

A number of **Appendices** have been added to this volume to add a spiritual flavour, special vibrancy and dynamism to this volume. Appendix no. 1 has the Shanti Paath that is common to all the Upanishads of the Krishna Yajur Veda. Appendix no. 2 is the short Rudro-panishad which has great relevance to a number of Upanishads that deal with Rudra or Lord Shiva in different contexts. Appendix nos. 3 and 4 contain the Vishnu and Narayan Suktas which are devotional hymns of the Vedas dedicated to Lord Vishnu and Narayan respectively. Similarly, Appendix no. 5 has the Krishi Sukta of the Vedas dedicated to agriculture which produces food which sustains and protects life in this creation.

There are various angles by which a picture can be viewed, and each angle would add a special dimension to the overall beauty of the picture, making it appear fresher and newer. The metaphysical, theological and spiritual knowledge contained in the Upanishads are profound, vast and timeless, but at the same time this knowledge becomes esoteric and difficult to comprehend, primarily because of the various terms, phrases, words and concepts that form an integral part of the lexicon of the Upanishads, and are employed to disseminate this stupendous body of knowledge are themselves not properly explained and understood. To address this problem, this humble author (Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia) has published independent Books in English which endeavour to explain in detail, in simple language, virtually all such terms, words, phrases and concepts that are used in the Upanishads at one or the other point during the course of their narration, and which need explanation, elaboration and analysis from an ordinary person's perspective.

Therefore, in Appendix no. 6, a comprehensive list of such Books is given, with the Title of the Book, the websites from where they can be easily accessed, and the URL of independent books so that the interested reader can very easily access and download them.

At the end of this book, some **diagrams and sketches** are added which give a visual representation of some of the quintessential esoteric concepts that form an integral part of the Upanishads.

It would be pertinent and interesting to add a brief note herein below on “why the main body of the **Yajur Veda Text** has come to be known as **Krishna** and **Shukla**, meaning ‘black’ and ‘white’ respectively.”

The ‘Yajur Veda Sanhita’ (a collection of Mantras or hymns) is classified into these two types for a variety of reasons. One of the probable reasons for this Yajur Veda having two names is that the collection in the Sanhita that came to be known as ‘Krishna’ had a mixture of prose and poetry, and hence considered ‘impure and corrupted’. This is because primarily the Vedas were composed in poetry form with the verses structured according to one or the other methods of poetical composition called ‘Chandas’. Prose as style of composition came later on and was regarded as an

interpolation, interposition or juxtaposition which is all tantamount to corrupting the original method. Hence, that text which had both the poetry and prose was deemed to be 'corrupted and impure form of the Vedic text', and therefore called 'Krishna'—the dark one. On the other hand, the Sanhita which had only poetry was considered unadulterated and pure form of the Vedic text, and hence called 'Shukla' or the white one, the colour 'white' being the colour of purity, immaculacy, divinity and holiness.

Since the primary use of the hymns of the Vedas in earlier times was for incantatory chanting during religious fire sacrifices, the poetical mode of composition was more suitable than the prose model. That is why these hymns were composed in 'Chandas' which are the different styles in which Sanskrit verses are composed. Later on, when these verses were also being used for purposes other than the fire sacrifices, the prose model evolved and developed. The Upanishads are mainly in the prose model because they are philosophical treatises and not ritualistic incantatory chanting.

Another plausible reason is that the verses of the Krishna Yajur Veda are more difficult to understand than those of the Shukla Yajur Veda. Hence, the former were called 'dark' or Krishna because of the difficulty in their comprehension and explanation as compared to the more easier ones classified as 'white' or Shukla. The Krishna Yajur Veda Sanhita was more prevalent in the south of India while the Shukla was more common in the north of the country.

The third reason is that the original classifier of Vedas was '*Krishna* Dvaipaayana Veda Vyas' who taught the text of the Yajur Veda to his disciple called Vaishampaayana. Hence, the original version of the text was named 'Krishna' in order to commemorate this fact.

There is a fourth probable reason as outlined here. The chief exponent of the Yajur Veda is regarded as the ancient sage Yagyavalkya. He was one of the several disciples of sage Vaishampayana. Once the teacher asked his disciples to perform the 'Brahmavadhya' sacrifice (a type of elaborate penance) for him. Yagyavalkya was so confident of himself, his knowledge and competency that he offered to do it all by himself for his teacher. The teacher thought that he was haughty and boastful. So, disowning or disinheriting him from his line of disciples, he commanded that Yagyavalkya should return all that he had learnt from his teacher. The sage returned all the Mantras of the Yajur Veda that he had learnt from his teacher by 'vomiting' them out. The rest of the disciples were very cunning; they transformed themselves immediately into partridges, called Tittars, and gobbled up everything. From that developed the Krishna Yajur Veda's Taittiriya branch. It is called 'Krishna' after the teacher and 'Taittiriya' after the partridges. Also, since they were 'vomited products' they were regarded as polluted and impure. Such body of knowledge came to be known as 'Krishna'—the impure one.

Now, not to be demoralised so easily and determined to get back his lost knowledge and wisdom, Yagyavalkya worshipped the Sun God who blessed him with a fresh set of Mantras of the Yajur Veda. Since it came from a 'bright source' represented by the sun, this set of Mantras was called the 'Shukla Yajur Veda'. [The word 'Shukla' means 'bright or light or illuminated'.] The sage revised this into fifteen sub-texts, called the Vajasanis, i.e. those belonging to the horse race. This is because the Sun

God had assumed the form of a 'horse' to teach him, and the word 'Vajis' means a horse.

Yagyavalkya had fifteen disciples (e.g. Kanva, Madhyandin etc.) who mastered one each of these fifteen sub-text created by Yagyavalkya. [Vishnu Puran, 3-5; Vayu Puran, 60-1.]

And finally I wish to say a word to express my deep and overwhelming sense of gratitude and thanks for my Guru, Lord Hanuman ji, as well as to my beloved Lord Ram, the heart-and-soul of my very existence, but I feel shy because words cannot do justice to my inner-most feelings, they cannot sufficiently thank the Lord for the extent of benevolence, munificence and benediction that He has been gracious enough to shower upon me, and without whose wish, direct intervention and constant guidance this volume, like the others in the series, would not have materialised at all.

I humbly present this book to my esteemed readers with a sincere request to excuse me for the errors of omission and commission, and this request is out of the depths of my heart. At the same time, I ask forgiveness from my beloved Lord Ram for all my incompetence and childishness by submitting before Him—'Oh Lord! I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me which I did not know' (Bible, Job 42/2), but 'must I not take heed to speak what the Lord has put in my mouth?' (Bible, Numbers 23/12), for 'the Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue (when I spoke what I said)' (Bible, 2 Samuel 23/2).

I write these books as a means of my thanksgiving to my Lord—'Oh! Give thanks to the Lord! Call upon His name; make known His deeds among the peoples' (Bible, 1 Chronicles 16/8). For this purpose, I—'Sing Psalms to Him; talk all His wondrous works! Glory in His holy name. Let the hearts of those rejoice who seek the Lord! Seek the Lord and his strength, seek His face everyone. Remember His marvelous works which He has done; His wonders and the judgments of His mouth' (Bible, 1 Chronicles 16/8-12).

Before concluding finally, the author wishes to express his sincere feelings of deep and overwhelming gratitude for his beloved Lord Ram for whose love and service he has embarked on this adventurous journey, and he wishes to thank the Lord from the deepest recesses of his heart for everything by humbly offering this short prayer quoting the Holy Bible, for he has no word of his own to say anything—'O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! Who hast set thy glory above the heavens. Out of the mouth of babes and suckling hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightiest still the enemy and the avenger. When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visit him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou maddest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas. O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!' (The Holy Bible, Old Testament, Psalm 8/1-9).

I wish to once again thank the Lord God of all—‘Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever’ (Bible, 1 Chronicles 16/34), and seek his refuge ‘Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of Daybreak; From the evil of that which He created; From the evil of the darkness when it is intense; And from the evil of malignant witchcraft; And from the evil of the envier when he envieth.’ (*the Holy Quran, Surah cxiii, verse no. 1-5*). ‘Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of mankind; The King of mankind; The God of mankind; From the evil of the sneaking whisperer; Who whispereth in the hearts of mankind; Or the Jinn and of mankind.’ (*the Holy Quran, Surah cxiv, verse no.1-6*).

Amen!

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Upanishads of the Krishna Yajur Veda

Chapter 1

Kathavalli/Kathopanishad

This is a famous Upanishad narrating the episode of a highly enlightening conversation between Yam, the God of death, and Nachiketa, the wise grandson of Vaajsrava. The word ‘Vaajsrava’ means one who has acquired immense fame and obtained great glory as the result of making huge donations of food and other eatables which are given away as a means of doing charity during the course of religious ceremonies and observance of religious duties. Therefore, Nachiketa’s grandfather was honoured with this title because he had done great sacrifices during which he had liberally donated food to Brahmins and other needy persons. His name was Aaruni, and his son, the father of Nachiketa, was Uddyalak. Aaruni belonged to the line of great sages coming down from the legendary sage Gautam.

The word ‘Nachiketa’ meanwhile means one who is free from all delusions, ostentations and deceptions. So it was an appropriate name for the son because, as compared to his father, he was a wise, self-realised and enlightened person from his birth much like the enlightened line of sages to which he belonged.

This Upanishad belongs to the Kath branch of Krishna Yajur Veda, and it has two Cantos, each having three sub-cantos called Valli. The word ‘Vali’ means a line, a row, an offering made to a deity. Hence, each line of this Upanishad has the same significance and importance for a man as an offering he makes to the holy fire or to his chosen deity.

Nachiketa’s father Uddyalak performed a fire sacrifice called ‘Vishwa Jeet’ which is a religious ceremony done to empower the performer with the ability to conquer the whole world, and had made perfunctory token donations of worthless cows who were old, past their prime of health, and in a miserable condition. They were so useless that they weren’t fit to be given as charity during religious ceremonies, because only useful things having worth are to be donated during such rituals to derive any honourable and worthwhile rewards consequent to such religious exercises. Otherwise they have an opposite affect. So the son felt very sad and sorry at the ineptitude of his father’s wisdom when he saw such cows being given as charity during a fire sacrifice by him, and objected to his father doing so. He felt that his father would never attain any spiritual benefits which are consequential to any fire sacrifice by donating worthless things. He wished to open his father’s eyes regarding the grave folly he was committing.

He sarcastically asked his father to who would he like to give his own son as a donation, at which the father got annoyed and said in disgust and exasperation that he would give Nachiketa to Yam, the God of death.

Being thus snubbed by his father for an honest attempt at showing him the great error he was committing, Nachiketa felt very sorry for him and left his parental home. He went to the Yam God because he felt that he was now assigned to him by his father, and pleased him by his maturity of wisdom. Yam asked him to request for three boons to be granted at which Nachiketa asked for the following three—first was to ensure his father’s welfare, second pertained to the knowledge of the Agni Vidya (the metaphysical knowledge related to the sacred Fire), and the third was concerned with the Atma, the pure conscious soul.

Yam tried to deflect his query to test his sincerity, integrity and commitment. Finding him eligible for this grand metaphysical and spiritual knowledge, Yam finally conceded and preached to him all the different aspects of Atma and Parmatma (i.e. the individual soul of the creature and the cosmic all-pervading supreme Soul) along with the knowledge pertaining to them. This is the subject covered in Canto 1.

Canto 2 narrates the hurdles that the creature encounters in attaining the supreme Soul called Parmatma (or the supreme transcendental Brahm), and how to overcome them. The all-pervading, omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient nature of the Parmatma or the supreme transcendental Divinity known as Brahm, the various symbolisms involved while dealing with that stupendous indescribable entity that is beyond comprehension and understanding, the importance of Yoga (meditation and contemplation) as well as the importance of having deep faith and unwavering conviction in the truthfulness and divinity of Brahm, and what constitutes 'Moksha', or the attainment of final emancipation and salvation—these and other relevant topics have been succinctly and articulately described in Canto 2.

Finally, having obtained this metaphysical insight into the ultimate truth of Brahm, the enlightened Nachiketa found his final rest with self-realisation and Brahm-realisation.

-----Shanti Paath-----

ॐ सह नावतु । सह नौ भुनक्तु । सह वीर्यं करवावहै । तेजसि नावधीतमस्तु । मा विद्विषावहै ।
 ॐ शान्तिः । शान्तिः । शान्तिः ।

The meaning of this Shanti Paath is given in appendix no. 1.

Canto 1, Valli 1

1. OM Salutations! It is well known that sage Vaajsrawa's son Vaajsrawas¹ (also known as Uddyalak) had performed a great religious sacrifice (called Vishwa Jeet) with a desire to obtain the benefits that accrue with the performance of such exercises, during which he had made huge donations². He had a son named Nachiketa (1).

[Note—¹The grandfather of Nachiketa belonged to the line of great sages who traced their heritage to the great sage Gautam. Vaajsrawa is a title bestowed upon the grandfather of Nachiketa, i.e. sage Aaruni, because he had given huge amount of food items as donation during fire sacrifices and had made immense charity by feeding large number of people during the course of his religious duties. The word 'Vaajsrawa' has two components—viz. 'Vaaj' meaning 'food', and 'Srawa' meaning 'fame spread by word of mouth'. Therefore the name refers to a man whose fame had spread far and wide as someone who gave huge amounts of food as donation, or a man who had acquired great fame and glory as a result of donating food and feeding people. His son was Uddyalak and the grandson was Nachiketa who is the protagonist in this Upanishad.

²The sacrifice that he performed was called 'Vishwa Jeet' which literally means the fire sacrifice that empowers the performer with sufficient powers that makes him unconquerable in this world. Here this conquest does not refer to territorial gains because Uddyalak was a sage, but it refers to his desire to become invincible in

knowledge and acquire fame and honour in the world as a man who performs great religious sacrifices involving huge donations. He did the fire sacrifices not selflessly or for obtaining any spiritual benefits from them but as a means of acquiring worldly fame as a highly religious man who does big sacrifices and gives huge donations. It was with this intention that Uddyalak had performed the sacrifice, but he was quite unlike his father Vaajsrawa, being a miserly and worldly man as compared to his enlightened, broad-hearted and noble father.

So, instead of giving away healthy cows as donation during the course of the fire sacrifice, he preferred to meet the obligatory requirement of making such donations by perfunctorily giving away old, sick and useless cows which were in a miserable condition and almost dry because they could not produce any milk just to fulfill the formality of making charity during the fire sacrifice. In earlier times, cows were considered as priceless assets of sages and Brahmins, and it was a standard practice to give cows to them as donation. A Brahmin's material wealth was measured, inter alia, in terms of the number of milk-giving cows that he possessed as much as the quantity of gold he had. But to give worthless things during religious rituals is considered a sacrilegious act and defilement of the holy institution of making charity. So Uddyalak, though belonging to the line of enlightened sages, had committed a grave sin, and this saddened the heart of young Nachiketa.

From all accounts, Nachiketa's father Uddyalak was a rich man because only rich people could afford to do elaborate fire sacrifices involving huge financial outlay, including big donations.]

2. When the feeble and old cows were being brought to be given away as charity to the priests who had performed the sacrifice¹, the young Nachiketa saw them. Watching their miserable condition and the futility and sinfulness of giving such cows as charity during any holy ceremony, wisdom sprouted in his heart and he felt pity for his father at the folly that he was committing. He felt very remorseful and lamented at the prospects of his father's spiritual welfare² (because giving away anything that is worthless as donation during religious ceremonies was highly inappropriate and unethical, and such act would nullify the good effects of the elaborate fire sacrifice that his father was doing; instead it would have an opposite effect and result in his being demoted to an ignominious hell) (2).

[Note—¹There were four categories of priests called Ritwij who participated in a fire sacrifice. (a) The first category consists of the chief priests such as Hota, Adhwaryu, Brahma and Udgata. They were entitled to the largest portion of donation, and if the cows were to be donated, they had the largest share. (b) The second category of priests were junior to them, and they were called Prastotaa, Pratiprasthaataa, Brahmanaanchasi and Maitraa-varun. They worked under the chief priests in that order respectively. Their share of donation was half of what was given to the chief priests. (c) The third category of priests were called Achaawaak, Neshtaa, Aagnidhra and Pratihartaa respectively. They were junior to the second category and their share of donation was one-third of what the chief priests got. (d) And finally, the fourth category, i.e. the lowest helpers or the junior most priests who were probably only apprentices were also four types who worked under the instructions of the third category. They were called respectively Graavastut, Unneta, Pota and Subrahmanya. Their share of donation was equivalent to one-fourth of what the chief priests got.

The Hota—he is the priest who offers oblation to the sacred fire; he uses the hymns of the Rig Veda. The Adhwaryu—this is the priest who chants the hymns of the Yajur Veda. The Brahma—he is the head priest who is a representative of Brahma the creator; he uses the hymns of the Atharva Veda. The Udgata—he is the priest who sings the hymns of the Sam Veda.

Each of these chief priests has a hierarchy of assistants or juniors who would help them in the performance of the elaborate rituals associated with a fire sacrifice.

Depending upon their position in this strictly hierarchical setup, the donation received during a fire sacrifice was also divided amongst them.

²Nachiketa was astonished and confounded at his father's way of miserly thinking and his mean act of giving away old and useless cows to Brahmins during a fire sacrifice. He was surprised at the lack of basic wisdom on the part of his father because a man of his standing was not supposed to be so stingy and ignorant that he would not know that giving away worthless things as donation, especially during the course of a religious exercise such as a sacred fire sacrifice, is a sacrilegious act which is unpardonable and it literally defiles the fire sacrifice itself. Further, charity has an underlying spirit of selflessness, generosity and magnanimity which his father obviously lacked. The sacrosanct spirit of charity entails that one gives to others what one would prefer to keep for his own use or accept himself, and this charity is to be done with all humility and a sense of sincere detachment with things that one regards as most valuable and useful himself—but true charity does not mean donating things that are primarily worthless and useless, things that are meant to be disposed off nevertheless but are used for making a donation with the ill-intention of gaining false fame and glory as a donor. Therefore, by donating useless cows, the father of Nachiketa was virtually insulting the holy institution of making donation and giving of charity, and was defiling the sanctity of such exercises during a fire sacrifice. Was he not aware of the horrendous consequences that such an act would have for him and his family?

Aside of this, there was the question of why was he doing it at all? This fire sacrifice called 'Vishwa Jeet' was done by him to acquire immense fame, but the way the father was being miserly it would only result in having a negative affect instead of a positive one, inviting infamy and leading to the demotion of his soul.

So, Nachiketa was very peeved and dismayed that this demeaning act of his father would give a permanent bad name to his family, and in future he would have to bear the brunt of this ignominious deed of his father. Not only worldly infamy, this sacrilegious act would also be denigrating for the spiritual well being of his father as well as for the rest of the descendents because of the curse that the Brahmins would cast upon them.]

3. Nachiketa thought to himself—"These cows are so feeble and miserable, they are past their prime years and health, they appear to have no desire to drink water and no inclination to graze upon grass, they have been milked and have become dry (i.e. they are past their age of producing milk), and they have become so old and wretched that they cannot reproduce. By giving such worthless cows as donation it is certain that my father would not only get ignominy but also would be committing a grave sin that would deprive him of all the happiness in this world. Instead, he would be condemned to hell. [Hence, I must warn him.]" (3).

4. With this noble thought in his mind, Nachiketa approached his father and said, 'Oh dear father! Whom would you like to give me as donation?'¹

[In other words, if you decide to sacrifice your son, or abandon him, by giving his custody to someone else, whom would you prefer?]

He asked this question twice or thrice. Initially the father just neglected him but on his insistence he became extremely annoyed and said in exasperation—"I would give you to Death God (Yam)"² [That is, should I decide to abandon you, I would prefer to give you to the God of Death known as Yam.] (4).

[Note—¹Nachiketa was very peeved and perplexed when he watched that his father gave away worthless cows from his stock of cows and kept healthy ones for his own use. After all, who would enjoy the milk of these cows still in the family cow-shed? Perhaps the father wished to kill two birds with one arrow—by giving the old and

worthless cows he would free himself of the burden of taking care of them on the one hand, and reap the benefit of the good act of performing a fire sacrifice in which huge number of cows were given as charity to Brahmins on the other hand. But Nachiketa was alarmed that this foolish act of his father would have the opposite effect—i.e. instead of having any positive affects, such thoughtless deed would be ruinous not only for him but for the entire family as well. He thought that he must warn his father that he does not approve of his actions, and he would not like to enjoy any property and prosperity or fame and glory derived with such an unreligious, ignoble, selfish, unrighteous and sinful act. So he went to his father and sarcastically asked him if he would be willing to donate his own son as the ultimate sacrifice because he felt very ashamed to be called a son of such a miserly father who gave away old and useless cows as donation. Nachiketa also seems to taunt his father, as if saying—‘Suppose one day you deem me to be useless for you, and then you would not hesitate to give me also as a donation in one of your future fire sacrifices. Say, I wish to know to whom would you give me as charity?’

²The father of Nachiketa admonished his son at having the temerity of confronting him with such a ridiculous question because no father wishes to give his son to anyone as donation. After all, the father does so many things and takes so much trouble in this world so that the benefits derived from his enterprise can be enjoyed by his son as much as he enjoys them himself. A person who has no son would lose interest in acquiring the material assets of this world because there is no one after him to enjoy the fruits of his troubles. So when Nachiketa asked this question from his father, the latter thought it to be a silly and impertinent query, and thus reprimanded his son for it. He felt so disgusted that he chided him by literally saying ‘go to hell’! It was not that he did not love his son Nachiketa, but it was simply said in annoyance like any father’s response would be to untimely nagging and impertinence shown by his immature son.

Yam is extensively covered in the 1st and 10th Mandals of the Rig Veda. Sukta 10 of the tenth Mandal is totally devoted to him. *Yam* personifies the concept of death and life after death. As opposed to *Nirriti* who is also the God related to death, *Yam* deals with giving justice to the dead person depending upon his deeds that he has done during his lifetime. Therefore, he is also called the patron God of Dharma, because he gives the dead person an abode in the heaven for his righteous and noble life, whereas *Nirriti* is the patron God of death and destruction due to sins and evil way of life. According to legends, *Yam*’s sister is *Yami*. His father is named *Vivaswat* or *Vivaswaan*, and he is also called ‘*Yam Vaivaswat*’ (Rig Veda, 10/14/5). His mother’s name is *Saranyu* (Rig Veda, 10/17/1-2). He is regarded the patron God of those who are dying or death personified (Rig Veda, 10/165/4) as well as of the Spirits of those who have already died and have become ‘*Pittars*’ or ‘spirits of dead ancestors’. Hence, he is the king of the *Pittar-Loka*, i.e. the abode of the spirits (Rig Veda, 9/113/8, 10/16/9). He decides where the dead creature goes according to the deeds done by the latter in his previous life (Rig Veda, 10/14/1). He resides in the outer heaven. Out of the three *Lokas* (mythological worlds), the first two, i.e. ‘*Bhu*’ (earth; the terrestrial) and ‘*Bhuvaha*’ (the sky just above the surface of the earth; the space of the solar system) is the realm of *Savita* (the God who is treated as synonymous of Sun), while the third world, the ‘*Swaha*’ representing the heaven, is the abode of *Yam* (Rig Veda, 10/35/6). He is the patron deity of the south direction. In some places he is also regarded as the son of a *Gandharva* and a marine beauty (Rig Veda, 10/10/4).

Iconographically, he is depicted as riding a buffalo or bison, and holds the baton or mace to punish the guilty as well as to threaten those who do not obey him. River *Yamuna* is said to be his sister.

According to the Purans, he was cursed by sage *Animaandavya* and was born as *Vidura*, the low-caste *Shudra* (*Mahabharat*, *Adiparva*, 108/16).

Yam has the following connotations— (i) the God of death and one who judges the creature for his deeds during his life and ascertains the reward or punishment that he deserves for them; he is therefore also called Dharma-Raj or the king who upholds Dharma even after death, (ii) self control of sense organs, and (iii) noble actions to concentrate the mind on the absolute truth, i.e. the Brahman— this is a form of Yoga.]

5. When his father sternly rebuked him in this way, Nachiketa became pensive. He thought to himself—‘I occupy a high place amongst those who are regarded as the best sons of their fathers or best disciples of their teachers. I at least have a place amidst those who are regarded as ordinary or mediocre sons and disciples. But surely I do not belong to the lowest type or the third class of sons or disciples¹ that I deserve being condemned to the service of the God of Death (Yam) by my own father. Certainly, there must be something good in store for me that my esteemed father has cast me to the custody of the Death God². What service can I render to Yam who henceforth becomes my guardian from this moment?’³ (5).

[Note—¹There are three categories of sons or disciples—(1) The best ones are those who do not wait for their father or teacher to tell them to do anything as they are ever vigilant and foresee the needs of their fathers or teachers in advance and act even before they are asked to do so. They are ever eager to serve them, very careful and diligent in their service, take initiative by putting the first foot forward to serve their fathers or teachers, and consequentially they become most dear to the latter. (2) The medium ones are those who wait for instructions before acting. They are disciplined in their behaviour but do not take the initiative on their own. (3) The lowest category of sons or disciples is that who do not act in spite of their fathers or teachers asking them to do anything. They are either defiant and arrogant and disobedient or plain lazy and careless in their attitude for service. Such sons and disciples are not liked either by their parents or their teachers.

²So Nachiketa wondered why his father had treated him with such disdain and disinherited him by casting him out of his flock of disciples when he had never disobeyed him even once. No father would like his son to die and go to Yam who is the patron God of death, and surely it is not expected from his own loving father because had it been so he would not have been so stingy as to keep healthy cows and give away old and decrepit ones as charity. Surely he wished to keep the healthy cows for the benefit of his family, and a son is not only the most valuable asset in a father’s household but most important member of the family.

³When anyone gives anything as donation, the donated thing belongs to the person to whom it is given. The person who receives the donation becomes the rightful owner from that moment. So, when Nachiketa’s father said that he is casting him to the custody of Yam, the God of death, Nachiketa henceforth became the ward of Yam. Now he had a moral duty to serve his new guardian with the same diligence and sincerity with which he had been serving his father until now. So it would be fit and proper for Nachiketa to go to Yam forthwith and serve him as his new guardian.]

6. Nachiketa saw that his father was very upset and hurt at having said angry and inappropriate words in the heat of the moment. So he approached him calmly in order to assuage his ruffled feelings, console him and soothe him down.

He said to his father in sagely words—‘Oh dear father! You must pay attention to the hallowed tradition of noble behaviour, righteous conduct, pious demeanours and religious observances that have been a part of our great tradition from time immemorial, coming down from hoary past when your ancestors had observed them most stringently, and which are being observed even in the present time by your peers and other righteous persons.

Human beings (or any living creature for that matter) are mortal. They become ripe like a grain of crop, become old and worn out in due course of time, and finally die, only to be reborn again like the new crop that grows from the seed of the earlier harvest (6).

[Note—Nachiketa tells his father that in the first place the charity which he had thought he was doing was not the right way to do it because one should not give worthless things as donation, especially during a fire sacrifice. He should recall the noble tradition of ancient sages to which he belonged, sages who had performed great sacrifices and given away the best of things that they had at the time most willingly and happily. He must realise the grave error he had committed by donating decrepit cows. Secondly, now that he has given his son to Yam, he should not have any remorse because a righteous and noble man has nothing more important for him than upholding his own words. So he must now allow his son to go to Yam, i.e. die, most willingly, happily and without demurring a moment. This is the best way to uphold that great tradition. Perhaps this was the greatest repentance for him for defiling the sanctity of the fire sacrifice by donating old and useless cows to Brahmins. Perhaps this charity or donation or the sacrifice of his own son during the fire sacrifice would absolve him of all his sins. So he must not have any regret and remorse.]

7. [Reassured by the maturity of wisdom and enlightenment shown by his son, Uddyalak gave Nachiketa his permission to go to Yam's place. When Nachiketa reached Yam's place he found that he was not there. So he waited for him for three days without eating or drinking anything as a token of his determination to die if Yam did not consent to meet him. By and by, when Yam returned, his consort told him about Nachiketa waiting for him.]

‘Oh Vaivaswat (Yam)! The Vaishwanar Agni, i.e. the universal and all-pervading ‘fire element’ represented by the Fire God comes to pay a visit to a householder in the form/guise of a Brahmin guest. Righteous and noble people welcome such guests with this understanding. Therefore they welcome the guest with due honour and respect by offering them water, washing their feet and giving them a comfortable seat to sit upon comfortably. Hence, go and offer him (Nachiketa) water as libation and wash his feet. [That is, you should not neglect Nachiketa and instead show him the same respect that you would normally do for an honoured guest. He has been waiting for you for three days without food and water, and now you should immediately calm him down and assuage his ruffled feeling by being very humble and welcoming.] (7).

8. If a Brahmin guest stays hungry in the household of a man, then it is an unpardonable sin and it brings curse upon the stupid and lowly householder. It is such a great sinful act that all the good and auspicious deeds done by this man and their consequential rewards go in vain. All his desires and aspirations, all his hopes and expectations of acquiring known and unknown things become null and void. Even if the rewards are well within his sight, even if success is within reach, he is not able to get them; they elude him. Neither can he enjoy the rewards and reap the benefits that come with the fulfillment of his desires and aspirations; none of his hopes and expectations are ever fulfilled and prove rewarding for him.

Even the auspicious rewards that would normally accrue to him for doing such noble deeds as digging wells and establishing other water bodies such as wells, ponds etc. for the use of the society are offset by insulting his guest. This curse destroys his sons and animals etc. [That is, all the good effects of observing religious sacrifices, giving alms and donations and making huge charities for the general welfare of the

people at large, and similar other auspicious activities, also nullified by not showing due respect to the guest who has come visiting him in his household.].’ (8).

9. Hearing the words of sane advice given to him by his consort, and afraid of the horrendous consequences of insulting an honoured Brahmin guest by keeping him waiting without food and water, Yam went immediately to receive Nachiketa and showed him due respect by offering water to him and washing his feet as a token of great respect.

Yam said to him, ‘Oh Brahmin! You are my honoured and revered guest, so I bow respectfully before you. Let me be forgiven for being the cause of your inconvenience that you had to spend three nights at my place without food. Please excuse me for it. I promise you three boons which I would grant you for these three nights, one boon for one night. Go ahead and ask whatever you wish’ (9).

10. Nachiketa replied, ‘Oh Death God! Let my father, the son born in the lineage of sage Gautam, i.e. Uddyalak, be calmed down in relation with me. Let him be happy and without any anger and remorse for me¹.

When you send me back home, let my father welcome me with the same love, affection and respect that he had for me earlier. Let him willingly accept me as his son.

This is the first boon that I wish be granted to me (10).

[Note—¹‘Let him forgive me and have no ill-will for me. Let him forgive me for my audacity and temerity of questioning his actions and pretending to be wiser than him by pointing to him the wrong he was doing by giving old and useless cows as donation. I should have shown more prudence and caution by keeping quiet and respecting the traditional custom and decorum of not raising fingers at one’s father and his wisdom. I ought to have maintained the dignity of his stature as my respected father as well as the fact that he is considered a great sage with an established fame and reputation, I should have realised that he is much senior to me inspite of the fact that I was correct and he was wrong. So I am indeed sorry for my actions and impatient behaviour. It is my impertinence that resulted in his getting so agitated and losing his peace. I am indeed sorry for it, and so would request you to bless me that my father gets back his peace of mind which he has lost because of my childish and impertinent behaviour. But I had no wrong intention of insulting him or causing harm to his reputation; rather I was worried about his spiritual welfare and the infamy that he would get by committing the sacrilegious act of giving inappropriate donation.

Please forgive me and bless me that he does not turn me away or treat me as an outcast when I go back home’.]

11. Yam replied, ‘When he would see you freed from the clutches of death when you go back to him, be assured that your father Uddyalak, the son of Aaruni, would, under my influence, not only recognise you as his own son Nachiketa but also welcome you with the same love and affection that he had for you earlier.

He would be freed from all anger and regrets for you; he would no longer feel aggrieved and suffer from any sorrows at having lost a son. Having got back his beloved son, he would spend the rest of his life sleeping comfortably in peace. [That is, instead of getting annoyed at seeing you again, he would rather feel very fortunate at having found his lost son and got him back from the mouth of death.].’ (11).

12. Nachiketa said, ‘Oh Yam God! There is no fear from any quarters in the heaven. Even you as death personified have no influence there. Old age does not torment

anyone there. A creature overcomes thirst and hunger in the heaven, and having vanquished all sorrows and pains, he lives happily and most cheerfully in the heaven (12).

13. Oh Yam! You are well acquainted with the Agni Vidya¹ (i.e. the science and knowledge pertaining to spiritual energy which is as potent as the fire element) that entitles and empowers a man to reach the heaven and enjoy its benefits. I am devoted to you and eager to learn about it². So be kind to preach me about that Agni Vidya by which one can attain heaven and enjoy its eternal peace and tranquility. This is the second boon that I wish be granted to me' (13).

[Note—¹The *Agni Vidya* pertains to the metaphysical knowledge of the various facets of the eternal fire element which is at the root of creation because any form of life necessitates the presence of energy and heat and light which are the eclectic virtues possessed intrinsically only by the fire element. Now let us have a broad glimpse of the different forms in which this fire element has been worshipped down the ages.

The *Vaishwanar Fire (Agni)*—The legendary 'fire element' has a very prominent place in the scriptures. The Fire God or *Agni* appears in the Vedas as follows—Rig Veda—1/1; 1/12; 4/5; 5/1; 6/7-9; 7/1, 3-6; 12-13; 8/1, 23, 39; 10/1-7; 12/1-122 etc.; in Sam Veda—1-51; 53-55 etc.; in Yajur Veda—1/5; 2/4; 7/24; 18/72 etc.; and in Atharva Veda—6/119; 8/3; 12/3.

Since it was the first born amongst the various Gods, it was called 'Agni' meaning the one who comes first, that which precedes others. It is the inherent 'fire' element in the form of the vital spark of life and warmth present in all the living creatures that distinguish them from non-living creatures. It is all-pervading and omnipresent, and infuses life to all the creatures (Kaushitaki Brahmin, 4/3; Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 5, Brahman 9, verse no.1). This fire helps in digestion of food (Shatpath Brahman, 148/10/1).

He is the foremost amongst the Gods worshipped on earth (Shatpath Brahman, 6/1/11). He is compared to the Sun in the heavens. He has 7 tongues representing the 7 colours of the rays of the Sun or the colours of light (Rig Veda, 1/146/1; 3/6/2). Since he provides nourishment to the Gods by accepting the offerings made to the sacrificial fire at the time of fire sacrifices, he is deemed to be their sustainer and father (Rig Veda, 1/69/1). Other names of the Fire God called Agni or Agne are the following—Vishwavedus, Kavi, Kavikratu, Jaatvedus, Vaishwaanar, Tanunpaat, Maatrishwaa and Naraashansa. It is believed that he was born from the mouth of the Virrat Purush (Rig Veda 10/90/13).

The fire element has *three* legendary forms—viz. the 'Agni', which is the terrestrial fire on earth represented by the word Bhu, the 'Jatvedas', which is the fire of the sky represented by the word Bhuvaha, and 'Vaishwanar', which is the fire of the heavens represented by the word Swaha (Brihaddevitakaar, 1/67). The term appears in the Rig Veda approx. sixty times and is more often than not synonymous with both life as well as the fire element.

According to some ancient scriptures, the holy fire has *five* forms which have been elaborately described in Chandogya Upanishad, canto 4, section 10 to 13. They are the following--(a) 'Garhyapatya' (the fire of the household hearth; the main fire of the formal fire sacrifice), (b) 'Dakshinagni' (the fire used as a witness to making charities or any other religious festivity; the fire lit at the site of a sacrificial fire ritual, near its south end), (c) 'Ahavaniya' (the fire to invoke the Gods during a ritualistic sacrifice), (d) 'Sabhya' (the fire of the Vedic period which was continuously lit) and (e) 'Awasathya' (the fire of the later Smriti period). Worship of the three important fires have been described in Chandogya Upanishad, canto 2, section 24, while canto 5, sections 4-10, 19-24 explain their great symbolic metaphysical significance.

The *Garhyapatya* fire—This is the householder's fire. A householder has land and farm representing 'earth' in which he grows food. This food is grown with the help of the light of the Sun, and it is cooked in the fire of the fire place in the house. Hence, the *Garhyapatya* fire, or the householder's fire, is intrinsically present and is implied in these 4 entities. It is an integral part of these four. The earth has the 'fire element' because without heat and warmth, no seed would germinate and no life can survive on this earth. The food has fire present inherently in it because it is the energy inherent in food which helps to energise the creature that eats it. The presence of heat in the sun does not need to be explained because it is very evident.

The fire was the central piece of all religious life in early times of the Vedic period when a fire sacrifice was deemed to be the best religious activity that a righteous man can expect to do. In this context, the *Garhyapatya* fire is the main fire lit during such formal fire sacrifices. The fire pit was either square-shaped or rounded. In the context of the fire sacrifice, it was used for the purpose of daily rituals, cooking or warming the offerings, heating of the vessels, to perform circumambulation, to act as a main cauldron or reservoir of the sacred fire which was to be kept perpetually burning throughout the life of the householder once it was lit.

The *Dakshinagni* fire—This fire is a witness to making of charities when some water is poured as libation to the Gods. It signifies that the Gods are offered water to drink. To give water to the thirsty is the greatest form of charity. Therefore, this fire is symbolically present in water, and when it is poured, it signifies that the heat produced by sins committed by the person has been doused. Charities and donations make a man famous and renowned, hence the allusion to directions of the earth. His glory shines like the bright moon and he is called a star among human beings. He is the most exalted amongst his peers and compatriots even as the moon is most prominent amongst the stars in the sky.

Like in the case of the *Garhyapatya* fire, the fire that was lit in the main sacrificial shed or site just near the main fire pit but to the south of it and where donations and charities were made was called *Dakshinagni* fire. The fire pit for this fire was semi-circular or bow-shaped.

The *Ahawaniya* fire—This fire is lit to invoke the Gods, and the Gods live in the heaven; hence the reference to the sky, heavens and electric. Since *Pran* is the best form of the vital winds, the allusion means that the Gods are the most exalted forms that exist in creation. The 'electric' is a metaphor for immense strength, potent and power, which of course the fire possesses. This inherent quality of Electric that it possesses most stupendous powers and strength is likened to the presence of *Brahm* in it even as the great power and strength present in a man is due to the *Atma* or *Pran* present in him. Even as a man is useless without the presence of *Pran* in him, the Electric would lose its importance if there was no *Brahm* present in it which gives it its punch and strength.

The following are also regarded as the five fires— (i) The Sun, (ii) The Lightening, (iii) The Terrestrial fire, (iv) The Master or Lord of the household, and (v) The Chief Priest.

Scriptures ordain that a learned person should worship the fire element by doing five types of sacrifices in his life. These are called the *Panch Maha Yagya* (the five great sacrifices). They are the following—(1) *Bhut Yagya* refers to taking care of other creatures in creation, such as feeding animals and providing for their protection and shelter. (2) *Manushya Yagya* refers to doing the same thing for fellow human beings as done for animals and other creatures of this creation. (3) *Pitri Yagya* refers to offering oblations to dead ancestors and doing religious activities for the peace of their souls. (4) *Dev Yagya* refers to the performance of fire sacrifices in which offerings are given to the sacred fire which sustain the Gods and are done to honour them. (5) And *Brahm Yagya* refers to the study of the Vedas and other scriptures that enlighten the man about the ultimate Truth known as *Brahm*. These five sacrifices have been described in *Ashramo-panishad*, verse no. 3.

²Firmness of faith and conviction are the necessary requirements for acquiring knowledge of the spiritual truths. If one lacks these qualities, then it would be like climbing a slippery pole. Nachiketa emphasised the fact that he has these qualities in him and so he must not be denied the opportunity of acquiring this knowledge of spiritual energy that would entitle him to ascend to heaven when he so wishes.]

14. Yam said to Nachiketa, ‘Oh Nachiketa! I am well versed in the ‘Agni Vidya’ that you wish to know about. It is able to provide an eternal and imperishable life in the heaven to those who know it and are well conversant with it; it is the foundation upon which the entire edifice of heaven and eternity is based. Hear carefully about it from me and understand its import fully.

This profound metaphysical knowledge about the ‘Agni Vidya’ entitles and enables a person to reach or access the heavens (which is a metaphoric way of saying that it gives him immortality and beatitude). It is also the foundation and sustainer of this world as well. It is the dynamic force in creation that empowers, energises, supports, sustains and protects all forms of life, both in the mortal world on the earth as well as the immortal world in the heaven.

It is very esoteric and mysterious, and you must regard it as secret that is hidden in a deep cave. [That is, it is very difficult to understand it correctly or even have access to the knowledge pertaining to it. It is equally difficult to find someone who would explain it in detail. But impressed by your sincerity and steadfastness of purpose, I shall narrate it to you in detail.] (14).

[Note—*Agni* means fire, and *Vidya* means knowledge. Taken together, this knowledge refers to the inherent strength, energy and power of the pure conscious ‘self’ or Atma that resides in the subtle heart of all living beings. This is the dynamic energy of the ethereal Spirit that helps the creature to rise above the mundane and reach for the ‘sky’ or heavens. This is metaphoric way of saying that if a man takes the shelter of his conscience which is the voice of this inner ‘self’ and obeys its orders, he can become god-like and attain immortality and happiness that is available to those who are sinless and free from all worldly taints. This is the picture at the micro level. From the cosmic perspective it refers to the dynamic forces of Nature in the form of the fire element that provides the basic energy and vitality for the creation to come into being in the first place and then sustain what has been created.

As any specialised field of science and art requires expert knowledge and skills specific to that field in order to derive any real and tangible benefit from it, the knowledge of Agni Vidya would enable the person who has this knowledge to attain great heights of spiritual achievements that are not available to those who lack it. The term ‘fire’ is also symbolic of wisdom, erudition and enlightenment because without these virtues the inherent spiritual strength of a man cannot be known by him. It also stands for having great zeal and enthusiasm for reaching great heights of spiritual freedom.]

15. After that, Yam explained to him about the ‘Lok Agni’ in detail. This ‘fire’ is the primeval cause for the creation known as the ‘Loka’ coming into being¹.

On the physical plane, Yam explained to him the details of how to build the sacrificial fire pit using bricks where this all-pervading cosmic fire is symbolically established at the micro level of creation². He described in detail the type and number of bricks to be used for the purpose of constructing the fire pit.

Nachiketa heard the teaching in rapt attention and repeated what he had learnt for the satisfaction of the Yam God. [In order to test his attentiveness and intelligence, Yam asked him to repeat what he had learnt, at which Nachiketa repeated verbatim what he was taught.]

Yam was extremely pleased by the boy's concentration and ability to grasp things taught to him. He said to him—(15).

[Note—¹This 'fire' represents the cosmic dynamic creative energy of the supreme transcendental Brahm which the latter employed to unfold this vast and multifarious creation. It is a metaphor for the knowledge, expertise and skill that Brahm inherently possessed that enabled the latter to mould such a stupendous variety of creation from virtually nothing. This is a highly technical field requiring expertise of the highest order. It can be compared to the modern atomic or aerospace sciences which are highly technical fields of knowledge, and not every Tom, Dick and Harry can be an expert in it. That is why this Agni Vidya is not only regarded as the basis of creation but highly esoteric and mysterious as well. It not only provided the basic know-how to get the process of creation started but even provided the very first spark to ignite the cosmic cauldron.

Thus, the Agni Vidya refers to the wisdom and knowledge which one employs to harness and establish control over the stupendous dynamic energy, powers and strength of the eternal 'fire element' which is the basis of creation and which is the primary vital spark that not only initiated the process of creation in the beginning but sustained it once the thing came into being. Energy and strength are needed for anything to happen. Such a gigantic creation also needed an atomic explosive spark to provide the initial ignition to get the chain reaction of creation started. Heat and energy are the prerequisites for any activity, whether at the visible gross level or at the invisible subtle level. Nothing in this world can survive even for a moment without heat and energy. This is why 'fire' is deemed to be at the base of creation. Once a man is able to control this magnificent cosmic power of creation and harness its astounding energy, nothing can beat him again. He becomes a 'superpower' in the realm of creation.

In other words, from the metaphysical perspective, a person who can use the energy of the Pran (vital winds) and Atma (consciousness) present inside his body can achieve great things which defy imagination. The Agni Vidya would therefore refer to the harnessing of the inherent spiritual strength and dynamic energy of the pure consciousness present in a man and use it to attain liberation and deliverance from this world. It can be used to attain the state of eternal blissfulness that is akin to being in heaven.

²When the performer of the fire sacrifice sees the astounding powers of the raging fire in the sacrificial pit and observes that it burns everything put into it, and that it selflessly passes over these offerings to the Gods for whom they are meant after due purification, the spiritual aspirant learns a great spiritual lesson from what he observes. He learns that one should be as fierce and unrelenting as the fire to destroy every worldly impurity and spiritual obstacles that comes his way, and be as selfless as the fire so that whatever he possesses is passed on for the benefit of others. If this happens, he would acquire as great a power as the fire greatly honoured by all.

³In ancient times it was an established belief and tradition that the way to attain heaven was through the path of the fire sacrifice. The fire sacrifice was in effect a method to harness the dynamic cosmic energy inherent in the all-pervading fire element which would sufficiently empower the person performing the fire sacrifice to achieve his goal. The sacrificial pit and the heat generated from it remind one of the modern day nuclear reactors. Even as the strength and energy and powers of the atom can be harnessed for beneficial or ruinous effects through the nuclear reactor, depending upon the temperament and mental setup of the person who masters the science of atomic energy, the fire sacrifice could be similarly used either for auspicious purposes such as attaining eternal peace and tranquility for the tormented soul, or for attaining worldly glory and conquest. Harnessing of nuclear energy requires expertise, knowledge and skills not easy to master and not accessible to all. Building and operating a nuclear facility also is a daunting and elaborate job.

Similarly, the ancient fire sacrifices required special skills and expertise, and it was not simply lighting any odd evening village community bonfire to the merriment of all those who sit around it to gossip about the day's events.

The fire sacrifice was a 'must do' exercise that in ancient times was the only means of attaining heaven and getting riddance of sins. It was ordained that a man must perform a fire sacrifice before his death so that the negative affects of any deed done by him during the past and present lives are nullified and the way to his liberation and deliverance is cleared.

From this perspective of doing a fire sacrifice to attain spiritual eternity and liberation, the 'units' of the special knowledge that Yam described to Nachiketa symbolically pertain to the steps to be followed in the construction of the fire pit—such as the type of bricks used, the number of bricks to be used, the geometrical design of the sacrificial pit, the type of wood to be used in the ceremony, the Mantras to be chanted, and other such finer details which must be diligently and strictly followed if any spiritual benefit is to be derived from the entire exercise. So, the sacrificial fire pit is like an oven in which the fuel of wood is added and the science of Mantras is used to order to generate immense energy that can empower the patron performing the fire sacrifice with stupendous potentials.

By way of explaining the details of the physical construction of the fire pit, Yam was metaphorically explaining to Nachiketa the different forms of 'fire' as a manifestation of the supreme transcendental Brahm's astounding dynamic energy, stupendous potentials, magnificent powers and cosmic strength. The visible symbol of the eternal fire is the sun in the sky, and the energy inherently present in the body of all living beings. It is a well known fact that no life can ever exist without heat and energy of the fire element. In Chandogya Upanishad of the Sam Veda tradition (Canto 4, Sub-cantos 5 and 7) it has been stated that Brahm is characterised by light and illumination (as opposed to darkness) which are the characteristic virtues of the fire element. The entire Canto 3 is dedicated to the praise of the Sun God as the essence of life, and Sun is the celestial pitcher of fire element which burns eternally inside it.

The 'fire' has immense importance in metaphysics as it is a symbol of life, vitality, energy and the purity and strength inherent in the consciousness known as the Atma of the entire living world. Without 'fire' everything is deemed to be dead and gone.]

16. The exalted Yam God was very pleased with Nachiketa when he observed his divine virtues and rare intelligence, his phenomenal memory, steadfastness of purpose, sincerity and integrity. He blessed him thus—'I am so pleased with you that I hereby grant you an additional boon that henceforth this astounding metaphysical knowledge called 'Agni Vidya' will be known after you (i.e. it will have your name attached to it and would be recognised as 'Nachiketagni')¹. Now you should accept this symbolic magnificent garland from me as a token of my blessing for you. The magnificent beads of this garland represent all the units of knowledge pertaining to the eternal fire element, which are like individual gems. This knowledge is the basic requirement for achieving success in spiritual progress of an aspirant, and especially useful during fire sacrifices, because without this knowledge no fire sacrifice can be completed successfully (16).

[Note—¹It is standard practice even in our time that when a person discovers something new, the discovery is named after him. Nachiketa was the first human to have acquired this astounding knowledge pertaining to the correct way of performance of the fire sacrifice, the esoteric knowledge regarding the correct way of constructing the fire pit and arranging the rest of the accoutrements, and the correct

objective to be aimed at and achieved by this exercise, and so it is apt to name the entire knowledge after him.

Yam God is also known as 'Dharma Raj' or the deity who presides over all conducts which are called righteous, noble and auspicious. Therefore, Yam is the custodian of all the virtues of righteousness, nobility and auspiciousness. It is his duty to ensure that the laws of Dharma are strictly enforced, and those who do not adhere to them are punished for their misdemeanors. He is like the conscious keeper of creation. So when he found that Nachiketa was a unique model of auspiciousness, nobility and righteousness as is borne out by the fact that he did not hesitate to even chide his own father for his unrighteous way of making charities, willingly courted death for his convictions, and then asked for his father's peace and forgiveness without any rancour and ill-will in his heart, Yam was extremely obliged to bless him.

The word 'Nachiketa' means one who is untouched by worldly delusions and attachments. Only such a man who is untainted in every manner and detached from all attachments is entitled, eligible and qualified for claiming eternity and knowledge of Brahman that is supreme, transcendental and eternal. Attainment of heaven is a natural spin-off of having attained such an exalted stature that makes one equivalent to Brahman.

In Rig Veda, 10/135, Yam asked Nachiketa which chariot he rode to reach the heaven. The obvious answer is the 'chariot of dispassion and detachment from everything false and perishable, the sincere desire to pursue what is auspicious and righteous, and being uncompromising as far as one's convictions and faith in what is true and correct are concerned'. Nachiketa was selfless and righteous to the extreme as he was worried for the spiritual welfare of his father, and his detachment from the material world is obvious from the fact that he did not think twice before leaving the comforts of his house and coming to face the death god willingly. This fire of spiritualism burning in the heart of the young Nachiketa enabled him to go straight to the heavenly abode of Yam and confront him with confidence. Whereas others in his place would have been frozen stiff in fear at the prospect of meeting the God of death, Nachiketa waited for him patiently, determined to meet him instead of running away from the place. Perhaps this confidence of Nachiketa would have stunned Yam himself so much that he would have felt proud to have such an exalted soul as his disciple, for surely Yam must never have encountered a man earlier so willing to serve 'death' at the altar of righteousness and propriety.]

17. A wise aspirant should invoke this divine and eclectic knowledge known as 'Nachiketa Vidya' (pertaining to the stupendously powerful fire element of creation) having three subtle dimensions¹.

He should declare his tremendous faith and allegiance to this divine knowledge by affirming it thrice. [When one says anything thrice or repeats his desire to accept it thrice, it shows his firmness in his conviction and determination of his mind. To say anything thrice is used even today to confirm something, to firmly assert that what is being said is true and correct and one has no doubt in his mind regarding its authenticity and truthfulness. The repetition of any word thrice is confirmation of one's commitment in what he is being said by him.]

He is able to fulfill his obligations to three entities with which he is linked in this world because of the incidence of his taking birth in it, but he remains completely detached and indifferent to them. [These three entities to which he has moral obligations are his two parents, viz. the father and the mother, and his teacher. He physically serves them and remains obedient to them, but not emotionally attached to them. He treats them as mere co-travelers in the journey called life. Nachiketa is a living example of this type of person. He served his father to the best of his ability,

but was not emotionally attached to him. He even fulfilled his obligation to him by warning him of the grave error he was committing by donating old cows even at the cost of annoying him and having to leave the comfort of the household.]

Such a wise, self-realised and enlightened man is able to fulfill the obligatory three deeds ordained by the scriptures for all human beings², and finally gets across the cycle of birth and death³.

Such a holistic and comprehensive approach to metaphysical principles and doctrines of spiritualism entitles him to overcome the barrier—in the form of an endless cycle of birth and death—created in his path to ultimate emancipation and salvation.

Having acquainted himself with all the finer nuances of this divine knowledge called the Nachiketa Vidya or Agni Vidya, complete with its three dimensional spiritual philosophy, an exalted, self-realised and enlightened man is able to have a first hand experience of the divine Brahm who is honoured and praised by way of doing fire sacrifices. Brahm is indeed the deity in whose honour the sacred fire is lit and oblations made to it. The reward of this auspicious and highly rewarding spiritual exercise is that the aspirant finds eternal peace and tranquility for himself and his soul⁴ (17).

[Note--¹The term *Trividya* has two parts—viz. ‘Tri’ meaning ‘three dimensional, and ‘Vidya’ meaning ‘specialised knowledge, skills, expertise and erudition’. Hence, the combined word *Trividya* refers to the triad of knowledge pertaining to creation. It has many hues and shades of meaning. Let us examine these various connotations one by one.

(1) It refers to the three paths leading to Brahm, the paths that a spiritual seeker seeking to know Brahm follows. They are—(a) Karma Yoga, (b) Gyan Yoga, and (c) Bhakti Yoga.

(a) Karma Yoga expounds on the importance of doing deeds and taking actions, but with a different attitude. It stresses that we must not get ‘involved or attached’ to those deeds or action in as much as we shouldn’t be bothered about the rewards or punishments incumbent on such deeds or actions. We must do them dispassionately and with detachment. The action or deed should be treated as one’s offering to the God as well as an offering to the sacred fire sacrifice. This will ensure that the actions or deeds are not unrighteousness, corrupt or evil. On the contrary, whatever is done in which a person’s subtle sub-conscious says is not the correct thing to do will be deemed to be unrighteous, unethical and unlawful, and therefore cannot be an offering to either the God or the sacred fire sacrifice.

(b) Gyan Yoga involves the intellect and mind to determine and delineate the true and the false; it helps to access and understand the reality and falsehood behind the manifested visible world which appears to be ‘real’ but is actually like a ‘shadow of the truth’. This Gyan Yoga helps to establish the mind firmly into seeing unity in diversity. Those following Gyan Yoga are called ‘seers’ because they can ‘see’ beyond the visible, multifarious and bewildering variety of this false world. Gyan Yoga is in the realm of the intellect and discriminating mind of a creature.

(c) Bhakti Yoga refers to having devotion for a chosen Godhead who is a person’s ideal, on whom he showers all his adoration, and on whom he focuses his attention. He is emotionally and sentimentally involved with his deity. Hence, the heart is the realm of Bhakti Yoga; it helps to commune with the divine.

(2) The three Paths followed by a creature according to the deeds done by him are referred to in Shwetashwatar Upanishad, 4/7 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition as follows—(1) the path that goes to the heaven where the Gods live, (2) the path that leads to the world of spirits, and (3) the path which leads to the world of mortal creature on this earth. These have been elaborately described in Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, 3/1/3, 3/2/11-12, 3/9/28, 4/3/12, 36, 5/10-5/11, 6/1/1-6, 6/2/2,14-16, etc.;

Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 5, Section 3-10; Kaushitaki Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 1; Taittiriyo-pahishad, Valli 2, Anuvak 6; and Katho-panishad, Canto 1, Valli 1, verse no. 20, and the whole of Canto 1, Valli 2 right up to Canto 2, Valli 3 of it.

What happens to ignorant people after death is explained in Brihad Aranyak 4/4/1.

(3) The other interpretation of this phrase is that the three paths are the following—(1) the path of Dharma marked by auspiciousness, virtuousness and righteousness, (2) the path of Adharma marked by inauspiciousness, sins, perversions and guilt, and (3) the path of Gyan or the path dominated by truthful knowledge, wisdom, erudition and enlightenment.

(4) These three dimensions are symbolic of the three legs of Brahm representing the three planes of creation in which the dynamic powers of Brahm represented by the fire element exist—viz. the past, the present and the future; the mortal world represented by the earth, the immortal world represented by the heaven, and the afterlife represented by the world of the Spirits or the nether world.

(5) The three primary Vedas known as Rig, Sam and Yajur, and the knowledge contained in them is also known as Tri-Vidya.

(6) The three steps to benefit from these Vedas are first to access them, then to acquire their knowledge intelligently and with due understanding, and then to apply it in practice in one's life for the ultimate spiritual welfare of the soul.

(7) Having knowledge of the truth about the three types of bodies of the creature and establishing coordination between these three bodies so that their efforts can be directed towards one's spiritual objective instead of letting these bodies act like obstacles in one's spiritual path. If not handled properly, these three bodies can act like an uncrossable boarder for the creature's Atma. These three bodies are the following—the gross body consisting of the sense organs of perception and action, the subtle body consisting of the mind and intellect, and the causal body consisting of the Atma or soul of the creature.

(8) The three states of existence of pure consciousness—the waking state of consciousness called 'Jagrat', the dreaming state called 'Swapna', and the deep sleep state of consciousness called 'Sushupta'.

(9) The three legendary rewards of righteousness and auspiciousness—viz. 'Artha' or material well being and prosperity, 'Dharma' or possessing noble and righteous qualities, being virtuous and upright, and 'Kaam' or being successful in fulfilling all worldly desires.

(10) The three phases of creation—viz. the creation, the development and sustenance, and the annihilation of creation.

(11) The three qualities that determine the basic character of a creature. they are 'Sata Guna' or noble qualities, 'Raja Guna' or mundane and ordinary worldly qualities, and 'Tama Guna' or mean and base qualities.

(11) The three classes of society and the knowledge regarding the laws that each of these categories should follow. These three classes are the Brahmins who are people supposed to be learned and wise, and are generally teachers and priests; the Kshatriyas who are the warrior class and assigned the duty to give protection to the other classes, and the Vaishyas who take care of trading and farming so as to provide the basic necessities of life to the other classes. However, there is a fourth class called Shudra whose main function is to serve these three classes in a general way.

(12) The ability to have knowledge of what happened in the past, what is happening in the present, and what would happen in the future.

(13) According to some, the two parents of a man—viz. the father and the mother—and the teacher form the three points of this Tri-vidya because they mould the entire character of a man. While the parents are responsible for his physical existence as well as his basic character building right from the man's earliest days, the teacher is responsible for his formal education as well as his moral bent of mind. The three are the ones who shape a man's character and personality more than the scriptures.

(14) The three aspects of formal religion—doing rituals such as fire sacrifices and observance of sacraments, hearing of scriptures, and doing Tapa (austerity and penance, enduring sufferings) and giving Daan (charity and donation) are also to be properly coordinated for any worthwhile benefit.

(15) The knowledge pertaining to the three holy fires also comes within the purview of the Trividya. These fires are—(a) ‘Garhyapatya’ (the fire of the household hearth), (b) ‘Dakshinagni’ (the fire used as a witness to making charities or any other religious festivity), (c) ‘Ahavaniya’ (the fire to invoke the Gods during a ritualistic sacrifice).

Nachiketa’s knowledge is called a three-faceted spiritual knowledge or *Tri-vidya*. The three aspects of this knowledge are to be properly coordinated to harness the latent energy, powers and strength that they encapsulate in them much like the latent qualities of the individual atom which reveal themselves when this single atom combines with other atoms to form things that are so useful to existence, such as for example a ‘water molecule’. Each water molecule consists of two atoms of hydrogen and one atom of oxygen. Taken independently, these atoms have different qualities and attributes which are phenomenally different from water. Without water element, life is just not feasible on this earth, but simply putting hydrogen and oxygen together would not create water.

This is what is meant here—knowledge and its units have to be properly coordinated in order to benefit from them.

²The three duties of a creature as a human have many connotations as follows—(1) To search for the ‘truth’ of life by studying the scriptures, understanding what they imply, and then implementing it in practice the doctrine of the scriptures. (2) To diligently follow the tenets of Dharma as prescribed for the three phases of life, viz. the life as a Brahmcharya when he lives a celibate life and studies the scriptures, the Grihastha when he enters the householder’s life, marries and raises a family, provides for its happiness and welfare, and takes care of the society, and Vaanprastha when he passes on the baton to the next generation and prepares to live a life of renunciation and withdrawal. (3) Offering of religious prayers three times a day—at dawn, at noon and at dusk. This is called observing ‘Sandhaya’ when prayers are offered to the Sun God or any other deity. The Mantra used is usually the Gayatri Mantra. (4) Other three obligations are the ones which a man has towards his father, his mother and his teacher. (5) Doing Yagya (a fire sacrifice or observance of any other religious vow), making Daan (donation, charity and giving alms), and undergoing severe hardships in the form of Tapa (following rigid religious austerity and observance of penance, suffering hardship as a means of purification of the soul and the washing off of all the impurities clinging to it).

³To ensure that the Atma is able to cross the hurdles created by these three bodies, and find its ultimate liberation and deliverance. The statement that the wise and enlightened man who has mastered this Tri-Vidya is able to cross the cycle of birth and death and find his ultimate liberation and deliverance means that his Atma is able to cross the three barriers in the form of these three types of bodies of the man, viz. the gross body, the subtle body and the causal body, that come in the way of his Atma from finding its liberation and deliverance from this world. These three bodies surround the Atma like the impregnable walls of a fort.

⁴This is because he would have studied the Vedas from metaphysical angle and not simply to acquire fame and wealth by participating in elaborate religious ceremonies which require some expert to chant their hymns. When he studies the Vedas and their Upanishads and extracts the essential truth being described in them, he is filled with immense satisfaction that comes with knowledge acquired for upliftment of one self. Spiritual knowledge is liberating and it fills him with an exhilaration of self-realisation. He exults and realises who he actually is. When this is aided by deeds that are commensurate with the noble and lofty ideals enunciated in the scriptures, the aspirant’s spiritual progress gets a boost and he is catapulted to a

higher state of existence not available to other men who are engrossed in this world and eclipsed by the dark shadow of ignorance and delusions that are the hallmarks of this mundane existence.

When a wise person realises that it is not ‘he’ but some other divine power that is responsible for creation, development and destruction of this creation, and that he is simply an inconsequential pebble or a particle of dust in the vastness of the cosmos, he feels humbled and all his sense of false pride is punctured like a balloon. It is then that he attempts to find his true identity when the scriptures tell him that he need not be so dejected at being inconsequential, for he is not an ordinary being but the supreme Brahm personified. But that realisation is not meant to stoke arrogance; it instead kindles renunciation because with knowledge comes awareness of the falsehood of this world and the truthfulness of the pure conscious Atma or soul.]

18. An erudite, sagacious and wise man who is well versed with the esoteric knowledge called ‘Trinaachiketa Vidya’ (i.e. the knowledge pertaining to the cosmic dynamic energy of creation having three dimensions and bearing the name of Nachiketa as explained in detail in verse no. 17) performs the fire sacrifice after properly selecting the correct type and number of bricks to construct the fire pit and then correctly lighting the sacred fire, is able to enjoy the happiness and bliss that is available in the heaven even before leaving this body at the time of death. That is, such a man can reap the rewards of eternal peace, bliss and happiness while they are still alive (18).

[Note—In ancient times, the fire sacrifices were regarded as the ultimate religious deed that a man can do to entitle him to enjoy the rewards that come with being auspicious and righteous. These fire sacrifices were supposed to ensure that the performer goes to heaven and enjoy its eternal happiness and pleasures. But if a man rose above the mere ritualistic aspect of the fire sacrifice and understood its spiritual and philosophical importance, he could enjoy the same benefit here in this life itself. He would become so wise and enlightened that he would realise that the supreme transcendental Brahm that is being worshipped through this fire sacrifice is resident in his own bosom as the pure conscious Atma. Therefore there is no need to search this eternal fount of happiness outwardly somewhere as it is present inside one’s own self. He would also realise the futility of pursuing this world and the fact that the gross body is not his ‘true self’. The ‘true self’ is the Atma which is eternally blissful and happy. This realisation helps to infuse him with a sense of internal calmness and bliss of realisation of the truth about himself. He no longer worries about death and afterlife as he realises that the Atma never dies, and that therefore there is no question of having an afterlife.]

19. Oh Nachiketa! This is the Agni Vidya which can bestow heaven and its joys to those who know about it and adore this knowledge with the proper erudition and wisdom. You had wanted to know about it, and so I have described it for you. Henceforth, in order to commemorate this occasion, this knowledge would be known after you, i.e. this knowledge would bear your name for ever—it would be called ‘Nachiket-Vidya’. It was the second boon that you had asked for. Now, what do you wish to have as the third boon?’ (19).

20. Nachiketa replied, ‘There is great confusion about one point. Some wise ones say that after the death of a man the Atma or soul survives, but there are others who say that nothing remains after death. I wish to know from you what the reality is (i.e. I wish to ascertain what happens to the creature after his death)*. Your answer would

conclusively settle this confusing subject for me and remove all my doubts. This would be your third boon for me.’ (20).

[Note—It should be noted here that Nachiketa has no confusion in his mind about the existence of the Atma because he believes in heaven and hell. This is proved by the fact that he had warned his father that violating of the sacrosanct principle of giving only useful and worthy things as donation during a fire sacrifice, things that are considered as valuable by the donor himself, would result in his going to hell. Then Nachiketa approached Yam and sought to know about the sacred knowledge pertaining to the holy fire that can provide heaven to the soul of the creature. These two events prove his belief in the presence of a hell or heaven where the soul or Atma of the creature goes after death, thereby affirming his belief in the presence of life after death. If there is nothing after death, then who would suffer by going to hell or enjoy anything by going to heaven? When the man dies, the body is either cremated or buried, which means it does not survive post death. If the body is the ‘true self’ then there should be no question of either suffering or enjoying hell or heaven respectively after death of the man for the simple reason that the body has obviously died and its existence terminated.

Therefore, there must be something other than the body that survives after death and which would be recognised as the ‘true self’ of the man. This entity is the pure conscious Atma which is the true self of a creature, and it is the one that either suffers in hell or enjoys the comforts of heaven. So when Nachiketa asks this question, he cleverly circumvents the fact that he knows that the Atma exists so that Yam would be compelled to answer him fully and preach him about the Atma in a holistic manner.

Nachiketa was being very wise for now he would have an opportunity to hear direct from the God of Dharma about all the metaphysical and spiritual aspects of the Atma.

*This question has been elaborately elucidated by other Upanishads as well. They are, inter alia, Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, 3/2/11-13, 3/9/28, 5/10, 5/11, 6/2/2.16 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition; Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 5, Section 3-10 of the Sam Veda tradition; and Kaushitaki Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 1 of the Rig Veda tradition.]

21. Yam said to Nachiketa, ‘In some ancient time even the Gods had doubted about the Atma or pure conscious Soul. Surely, this knowledge is very difficult to access and understand, for it had confounded even the Gods. So please excuse me from answering it and ask for some other boon instead of it’ (21).

22. But Nachiketa was not at all confounded by or afraid of the gravity of the subject he had chosen to know (learn) about. He was determined to unravel the secrets of the Atma and not get deflected from his chosen path. So he persisted, saying, ‘Oh Death God (Yam)! You have said that the Gods had contemplated on this subject but could not decide upon it, and that this subject is not easy to comprehend and access. Besides this, there is no one other than you who is wiser and better qualified to elucidate upon this profound and mysterious metaphysical knowledge, and there is no better learning opportunity that I would ever come across again. So, there is no better or equivalent boon that I can substitute it with’. [In other words, I stick to my request that you teach me about the Atma with all its intricate fine details along with all the complexities and various shades of meanings and concepts associated with it.] (22).

23. Yam tried to deflect (i.e. test) his determination by offering him numerous allurements of material wealth and such other enticements that would have dazzled anyone else. This is did to test his sincerity and eligibility for accepting this great

metaphysical knowledge. Yam enticed him by saying, ‘Oh Nachiketa! You can ask me for sons and grandsons who would live for a hundred years, for countless livestock (cattle and other household animals), elephants and horses, as well as for as much gold as you wish to have. You can ask me for huge kingdoms extending to as much territory as you want, and you can ask me for a long life for as many years as you wish to live (23).

24. If you think that there is anything else or any other boon that is dear to you, you can ask me for it. Permanent material wealth and prosperity as well as means of livelihood can be sought by you. Oh Nachiketa! I can bless you that you would have unchallenged sway over the vast realm of this earth and easily get whatever the best of things you desire to enjoy in this world (24).

25. Oh Nachiketa! Any or all of the material comforts and enjoyments of this mortal world that are most rare and difficult to achieve or acquire, and even be imagined, can be asked gladly by you as a grant of boon from me, and you should certainly have it. You can be provided with the Apsaras (the beautiful damsels living in the heaven and who dance for the Gods) who live in heaven along with divine chariots and the best of musical instruments (so that you can enjoy the life of a king). Humans cannot have access to such beautiful women as the celestial Apsaras. You can employ these heavenly women to serve you as you wish, but oh Nachiketa, do not ask me about what happens to the Atma after death of a man’ (25).

[Note—The God of Death had granted a wide choice to Nachiketa about all the material comforts and enjoyments of this world in order to entice him with their allurements so that the latter would be lured by their charm and thereby release Yam of the compulsion of having to divulge that esoteric and mysterious knowledge that had been traditionally secret and highly mystical to be easily divulged and taught; it was a subject held taboo since ancient times. Yam had also tried to employ this method to test the sincerity and determination of Nachiketa, because this knowledge should only be given to the most eligible and competent of seekers. Yam wished to inculcate deep renunciation in his disciple because as a wise teacher it was his moral duty to ensure that the knowledge that he was about to impart would go to correct hands. First Yam had tried to discourage him by pointing to him the difficulty of understanding this knowledge, and then tried to test his sense of renunciation by enticing him with the best of things available in this existence. But Nachiketa was not moved; he was as firm as a rock in his determination and conviction that there is nothing in this existence that is superior to and a better giver of eternal peace and bliss than the knowledge of the Atma which is pure enlightened consciousness and a fount of eternal peace, happiness and bliss.]

26. Nachiketa replied, ‘Oh Yam! There is no certainty about all the things you have described and promised to give me that they would survive tomorrow or not. They are themselves perishable and they eat away into the inherent strength and vitality of the body and its sense organs¹. The long life which you wish to grant me would be less if I would like to fully enjoy the comforts and pleasures that you promise me, for these have no end and life cannot be stretched indefinitely because everything that has come into being must invariably come to an end. Hence, no matter how big or long-lasting they might appear to be, they cannot be eternal or infinite.

So please keep all the boons that you wish to grant me with yourself; I do not want any of them. Keep these chariots as well as the dancing and singing girls with you, I do not want anything to do with them (26).

[Note—¹When a man is provided with material comforts of this world, he begins to enjoy them so much that it becomes difficult for him to remain detached from them while still enjoying them. He becomes naturally engrossed and submerged in them, and the consequences are absolutely denigrating for his soul as well as for the natural stamina, vitality and strength of the body which wears off due to indulgences. That is why people of modern materialistic society are so mentally fragile and restless as well as bodily feeble and inept, disposed to so many diseases and devoid of mental peace and poise as compared to those who lived a less materialistic life long ago.]

27. No man can be satisfied by material wealth and prosperity. Once I have had the rare and unique privilege of having your Darshan (divine sight and communion), these things I can generate myself by the good affects of your blessings upon me; they would come to me just by my merely wishing for them. As long as you are the Lord of Death, I can be certain of living as long as I wish (because now that I have had your blessings, death cannot touch me against my wishes, and this boon is incidental to my having your divine sight and it comes to me as a special privilege even without my asking for it).

But this is not what I ask. My request to you is about the knowledge of the Atma, its essential form and nature, and all the metaphysical and spiritual aspects associated with it (27).

28. Oh Yam! This human body is perishable and subject to old age and death. Which wise man would be so foolish as not to be aware of this fundamental fact? And being aware of it, which wise man would desire to have transient comforts, pleasures and enjoyments that come with the company of beautiful Apsaras or acquisition of other material wealth and prosperity in this world, especially when he has had the rare and unique privilege of having an opportunity of coming in direct contact with immortal Gods or other divine Souls like you? (28).

[Note—When a man gets a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to seek something he wishes, then surely he would pick up the best he thinks of. A wise man knows that whatever exists must come to an end, because this is the law of Nature and creation. Nothing is immortal, and therefore the best of enjoyments and comforts would have to come to an end one day, after which there would be sorrow and misery. After all, one wishes to have material wealth for one's happiness and comforts, but if they cannot give him eternal peace, happiness and bliss because of their inherent flaw of being mortal and perishable, if the constant fear of their being snatched from him one day keeps nagging at him day in and day out, there is no point of losing sleep over them.

A wise man would be he who chucks such uncertain things and pursue things that are evergreen and constant so that the rewards are also long-lasting and steady. So if one can find a way by which happiness and peace can be made perpetual and eternal, which wise man would let go of such an opportunity? In short, Nachiketa says that he won't fall for the enticements offered by Yam, and he must be given what he has asked for.]

29. Oh God of Death! The profound knowledge about the Atma regarding which people have doubts as to whether it survives after death or not, or whether the Atma has any existence after the creature dies and his body perishes, please preach me about the truth of it, and tell me what is the fact according to you.

This magnificent knowledge pertaining to the Atma is very mysterious, esoteric and profound as much as it is rare and unique. Nachiketa does not want anything other than this request, which is firmly etched in his mind and heart, to be

fulfilled. In other words, I do not want anything except the knowledge of the Atma.’ (29).

*****Thus ends the first Valli of Canto 1*****

Canto 1, Valli 2

1. [When Yam was sure that Nachiketa was of a firm determination, infused with great renunciation and fearless in his spiritual pursuit, qualities necessary for acquiring the profound knowledge pertaining to Brahm and the Atma, he began to preach him. In the beginning, Yam enumerated the stupendous importance and significance of this knowledge.]

Yam said to Nachiketa, ‘The laudable and virtuous path of spiritual welfare and auspiciousness, that which gives eternal happiness and fortunes, is different from the path which provides worldly gains and material welfare, the path which leads to things dear to ordinary mortal beings.

The first path is called ‘Sreya’ (one that is auspicious, virtuous, eminent and good; one that provides good fortunes, a great name and fame; the path of truthful knowledge and wisdom) while the second path is known as ‘Preya’ (the opposite of Sreya—i.e. one which leads to downfall, denigration and demotion; one that gives ignominy and infamy; the path of ignorance and delusions). Both these paths have separate destinations, and pursuing them provides different fruits or rewards. Both have their own inherent attractions, benefits and charms, and therefore both try to pull the creature towards themselves.

Out of these two, those who follow the path known as Sreya are rewarded with an all round spiritual welfare, happiness and auspiciousness which is sublime, divine, truthful, real and eternal, while those who prefer to follow the second path known as Preya are deprived of this benefit, lose their chance of becoming spiritually exalted and liberated, become fallen and get mired in a swamp of worldly delusions (1).

[Note—The human body has been acquired by a creature after a lot of difficulty and after he has had to pass through a maze of numerous births and deaths. The birth as a human gives him an unique opportunity to mend his future in as much as besides enjoying or suffering from the accumulated affects of the deeds done by the creature over different births, he can do something purposefully with due application of intelligence, wisdom, diligence and willingness to rectify the future.

A man is placed uniquely in the hierarchy of creation because it is only a man who is able to determine his future and destiny, he can decide what would or should be his future. This he does by willingly and diligently making a choice and selecting an option best suited for him from a horde of choices open in front in order to decide the course of his own future.

The human birth is the only chance that a creature gets to break free from the endless cycle of birth and death. This is obviously true because no other form of life has the same level of intelligence, erudition and wisdom that a man has, and no animal, for example, can read the scriptures and benefit from their eclectic wisdom. So, to fritter away this golden opportunity by pursuing sensual pleasures and material comforts of this world, which are nevertheless perishable, instead of ensuring upliftment of the state of the Atma or soul so that it does not have to re-enter the cycle of birth and death but get the final liberation and deliverance from this endless cycle of misery and pain, would be a most foolish thing to do.

Therefore, those who pursue the path called ‘Sreya’ which leads them to spiritual liberation and self-realisation are the ones who enjoy eternal happiness and bliss as compared to those who pursue the path called ‘Preya’ which would tie him down to

the world and its alluring charms which are very attractive on their face value but hollow from the inside.]

2. Both these options, known as Sreya and Preya respectively, present themselves before a man. A wise, erudite and sagacious man is one who then analyses both these options and understands the subtle but profound differences between them along with the separate rewards or fruits that are got by pursuing them independently.

Armed with this wisdom and knowledge, he chooses the eclectic and sublime path known as Sreya as the best choice for him because it would bestow him with eternal happiness, everlasting peace, tranquility and bliss which would give his tormented soul perpetual succour and solace by helping it to break free from the fetters of ignorance and delusions which had forced the creature to remain trapped in an endless cycle of birth and death for uncountable number of lives.

On the other hand, those who are less enlightened and wise, who do not realise the folly of what they are about to do, choose the path of Preya, i.e. the path which leads to the mundane worldly cycle of seeking things that a person does not possess at any given time, and then trying to ensure that the newly acquired thing remains with him for ever. His entire attention is focused on acquiring newer things of material comfort and sensual pleasure in ever greater quantity and quality, and then worrying about their preservation and safety. [He has no time to think for what would happen to his 'self' once this golden opportunity is lost, and that the things he is so diligently pursuing are all perishable and can never be the cause of permanent peace and happiness for him. Once old age and time takes over and he has to die, he becomes worried about his possessions, and this worrying thought overshadows him like the dark veil of death. Such a man who is worried about anything perishable cannot ever hope to find eternal peace and happiness. This cycle is never-ending because there is no end of desires and needs, and they cannot be ever satisfied, no matter how hard a man tries and no matter how many births he takes in order to accomplish his objectives. He falls into a quagmire from which it is impossible for him to extricate himself.

Obviously a man is deemed to be wise when he chooses something that has a permanent and high value though it might not immediately be so pampering for the senses, and not something that seems shining on the face of it and very charming for the senses but which would result in permanent worry and misery for him. So an erudite man would prefer to follow the path of self-realisation and Brahm-realisation instead of spending his time in worthless pursuit of the material comforts and sensual pleasures of the world which is nevertheless deluding and based on ignorance.] (2).

3. Oh Nachiketa! You are so erudite and wise as well as fortunate that you have voluntarily discarded all the transient and impermanent attractions and charms of this materialistic world and did not fall in their trap. You could not be attracted by and shackled to the illusive and transient happiness, comforts and pleasures of this world, such as for example those expected from one's sons, wife and material things of this world. Even the magnificent attractions of the heaven could not sway you from your chosen path.

The deluding allurements that act like fetters shackling numerous ignorant men to the illusionary charms of this perishable world and keep them hooked to it for ever have not been successful in trapping you. In this, you are indeed very fortunate (3).

[Note—Yam had tried his best to dissuade Nachiketa from pursuing the knowledge of the Atma which is not only the ultimate 'true self' of the creature at the microcosmic level but also the ultimate Truth of creation known as the transcendental supreme

Brahm at the macrocosmic level. Nachiketa had opted out of the perishable things of the world and instead decided that he would follow the path that would lead him to something that is eternal and truthful as described in Valli 1 of this Canto. Wise as he was, Nachiketa was not to be taken for a ride by false charms as he rejected all the offers made by Yam and stuck to his bargain for acquiring the knowledge which would make his 'self' immortal and eternally peaceful and blissful, thereby enabling him to find liberation and deliverance from the endless cycle of miseries and torments associated with numerous births and deaths.]

4. These two paths (known as Sreya and Preya as described in verse no. 1 and 2) are very opposite to each other, and their rewards are also diametrically opposed to each other.

Oh Nachiketa! I regard you as a traveler on the path of Sreya because you wish to seek the ultimate Truth and acquire knowledge of the sublime and divine entity known as the pure conscious Atma, the pure 'self', which is synonymous with the cosmic universal 'Self' called the supreme transcendental Brahm, the Supreme Being. This knowledge is eternally liberating for the soul of the creature and provides it with deliverance and salvation. This is because you could not be enticed with the dazzle and splendorous charms of either this materialistic world or that of the heavens (4).

5. Those fools and ignorant ones who are under delusions that they are wise, erudite, sagacious, skilled and learned inspite of their being surrounded by the dark shadow of Avidya (lack of true knowledge) and Agyan (ignorance), keep stumbling and falling repeatedly as they follow the dark path full of delusions and pitfalls, thereby injuring themselves much like a blind man who repeatedly falls and injures himself on an uneven and obstacle-ridden path.

They are so engrossed in pursuing the material enjoyments of this world that they have no time to spare for self-realisation and contemplation. They neither go anywhere themselves nor can lead others to any fruitful destination like a blind man who himself does not where he is going, so how can he lead others? (5).

[Note—In other words, there are people who claim to be experts in the tenets of the scriptures and consider themselves as wise ones who can show others the correct path to liberation and deliverance. But they are under illusion of being wise and knowledgeable, for they are tied in shackles of ignorance because they do not understand the essential meaning of the doctrines of the scriptures. They remain attached with this material world and roll in its material comforts, sensual pleasures, and gloat in the acclaim that comes with knowledge and expertise along with the fame and honours that are incidental to such expertise and skills. They would never ever think of renunciation and detachment from it. On the one hand they sit on huge dais and lecture on metaphysics and spiritualism, and on the other hand they surround themselves with all the luxury one can imagine in this world. They teach others about the perishability and transient nature of the world, that what is seen around is not the truth, that the 'truth' is the Atma and not the gross physical world, that the Atma is inherently eternal and nothing is needed to make it eternal, that the best method to break the chain of birth and death is to realise this truth about the Atma and remain aloof from the deeds done by the body and expect nothing from these deeds so that no consequences accrue for the Atma or the 'true self'—but themselves they do elaborate rituals and sacrifices and fear from death. They do not believe in what they preach.

They are sought after by others as their teachers and guides, say how can such people show the correct path to others when they themselves are not aware of it? The actual 'truth and reality' eludes them; they can never find emancipation and salvation

for their souls. These people remain trapped in the cycle of birth and death. Their desires never end and so they are never contented, and un-contentedness can never give eternal rest and peace to the creature.]

6. Those who are trapped by the magical charm cast by the dazzle and enchantment of worldly wealth and material prosperity, they remain engrossed in enjoying their acquisitions. Thought of what would happen to their destiny and their soul do not bother them in the least because for them what matters is the current moment and the present life. Such ignorant men treat the illusionary world and the gross body which lives and interacts in this world as the real thing and the truth. For them nothing else exists; nothing else matters and has any relevance.

Such proud and deluded men who think that the body is the only thing that is true and really matters are ignorant of the factual position and foolish enough to deny the existence of the ethereal Spirit. They are so deluded that they regard the perishable world and the decayable body as the real thing and their 'true self' respectively at the cost of neglecting the 'actual truth' that is eternal, infinite and imperishable. [The 'actual truth' is that the world is perishable and an imaginary creation of the mind, and the body is equally perishable and not the 'true self' of the man. On the other hand, the Atma or the pure consciousness is not only eternal and imperishable but also the 'true self' of the man.]

As a result, they repeatedly have to die and take birth again and again. Such people remain under my (Yam's) control as I am the God of death and determine when they have to die. I am also the God of Dharma and therefore decide what fate beholds such men¹ (6).

[Note—¹When they think that their body is their true self, they have to own up the various deeds done by the body, because it is the body and not the Atma that does anything in this world. They think that they have done this and achieved that, and therefore they are entitled to enjoy their benefits. If they are entitled to enjoy the benefits then they would also have to suffer for their sins and misdeeds. Besides this, life is so short in its span that no man can claim that he has had sufficient time to fully satisfy himself from all the comforts and pleasures that the world has to offer, or fulfills all his desires and aspirations. He yearns for still more, and at the time of death his Atma remains clung to unfulfilled desires and aspirations which force the man to take another birth. And the cycle continues to rotate endlessly.

All these factors combine to decide what birth the Atma—which in fact is the actual 'self' of the creature who has forgotten about his true identity as the pure consciousness because of ignorance and delusions that have cast their long shadow upon the intellect of the creature—would take. Hence, a man who is submerged in pursuing the dazzle of wealth and the blinding brilliance of material prosperity forgets who he actually is and begins to hallucinate like a man seeing a mirage in a desert or a man under the charm of a magician. As long as the charm lasts, he would not believe that what he sees is not the truth. And the only way to remove the spell of charm is to become alert and pay attention to the advice given by wise and self-realised teachers as well as by the self study of the scriptures.]

7. This magnificent, profound, eclectic and sublime knowledge about the Atma or pure conscious soul which is the true 'self' of a creature and a microcosmic counterpart of the macrocosmic transcendental Brahm who is the Supreme Being in creation and the ultimate goal of all spiritual endeavours, is not so easily accessible to all and sundry (i.e. everyone does not have an opportunity to even hear about it). If fortunately they do have access to it then only a minority amongst them is able to understand or grasp its profound tenets and their far reaching spiritual import. Out of

them those who actually implement this knowledge in their lives and mould their thinking and deeds accordingly are even rarer.

It is very difficult to find a learned and wise man who can sufficiently expound and elucidate upon this great metaphysical knowledge. It is equally difficult to find a competent and eligible candidate who has the mental caliber and aptitude to entitle him to be imparted this knowledge. And it is similarly rare to find someone who is an expert in this divine knowledge in the true sense (7).

[Note--A person who is learned, skilled, wise, erudite and enlightened enough to first understand this grand knowledge himself and then is able to articulately and skillfully describe or teach it to others is indeed most rare and difficult to find. Such men are most honourable, laudable, reverend, fortunate and exalted. Likewise, the person who eagerly seeks and achieves success in obtaining this holy knowledge, and then is able to put to practice its grand and magnificent tenets is equally rare and difficult to find; he is equally exalted and fortunate, and equally honourable, laudable and reverend. Such persons are deemed to have a life which is said to be 'fulfilled' in the sense that they have not frittered it away in pursuance of falsehoods and delusions, and instead have used it to acquire something worthwhile and permanent, something that is truthful and liberating for their souls. They have achieved the main objective of having the faculty of intelligence and wisdom which distinguishes a man from animal or other forms of animate life. Verily, such an expert teacher and his enlightened disciple who have factually understood about the Atma are equally praiseworthy and exalted; they are identical in their spiritual stature. Such people are most rare and difficult to come across.]

8. This holistic and magnificently truthful knowledge about the divinity of the ethereal Atma, known as 'Vidya', cannot be understood or known by being taught by a person who has not himself realised this profound 'truth' and has not personally experienced its impact upon his daily life. That is, this profound metaphysical knowledge cannot be taught by a person who has only a literal knowledge about it as described in the scriptures instead of actually understanding the profound import of the scriptural teachings as experienced in actual life. This is because this enigmatic subject is very profound, esoteric and mysterious besides being astoundingly sublime and subtle. It is beyond the purview of rational debates and mundane logics which are the yardsticks of a man's intelligence and expertise.' (8).

[Note—The emphasis here is on first hand experience and verification of the truth of what is learnt and taught by implementing in one's daily life, and not mere theoretical and literal knowledge. Once a man experiences or witnesses anything himself, it becomes firmly etched in his mind and he is fully convinced about its truthfulness. Without first hand experience, the factor of doubt lingers on, especially on a subject that appears to be so greatly abstract on the face of it. The concept of 'self-realisation' is basically self experiencing or self witnessing. It is like a science student understanding any theory by doing the practical of it in his school laboratory when he actually witnesses the practical aspect of what he has learned in theory. This exercise not only clears all skepticism in his mind, but he cannot also now be misled or fooled about the concept by anyone trying to give a wrong explanation of it to him.

As is very obvious here in this example, only an 'experienced' teacher would be able to explain all the intricacies of any subject to his students, and a novice or an inexperienced teacher would only disseminate half-baked and unclear knowledge, adding to confusion rather than clearing doubts. He would fail to fully satisfy the queries raised in the mind of an intelligent student, which in turn would have disastrous effect upon the student's all round educational benefits. A student with erroneous conceptions and false ideas about the subject he learnt from the teacher

would be more dangerous than an illiterate fool because the future generation depends upon the knowledge shared by the former after the teacher is dead and gone.]

9. Lauding Nachiketa for his steadfastness of purpose, an inborn propensity for acquisition of the best of what is available, and for seeking out the truth inspite of all odds, Yam said to him very affectionately, ‘Oh dear Nachiketa! The gift of mature wisdom, sharp intellect and an exalted mental setup marked by prudence, understanding and steadfastness of purpose that you have for acquisition of truthful knowledge is no ordinary thing to be possessed of. It is no mean achievement and it cannot be obtained by dry debates and logics. [That is, such erudition and sagacity, such maturity of thought and diligence in pursuing the truth and remaining focused on one’s goal with a steady mind and intellect cannot be achieved by simply studying the various branches of the scriptures, such as logic and philosophy, etc.] It can be obtained only as a result of listening attentively to discourses on the ultimate Truth from the mouth of a truly wise and self-realised person. Hence, you are indeed most lucky and steadfast in pursuit of your chosen goal, and in that you are indeed laudable¹.

Oh Nachiketa! I sincerely wish that I have such sincere and wise seekers of truth like you as my disciple² (9).

[Note--¹The importance of hearing the principles of the Atma from a self-realised teacher has been repeatedly emphasised in this Upanishad. This is because only a person who has had first hand experience of anything is competent not only to teach about it but also to remove all doubts that might vex the mind of an intelligent student of the subject. Besides this point, everyone knows that only highly gifted students can really make path breaking discoveries and do extensive research. Millions of students pass out from universities and colleges each year, but only a small decimal fraction of them opt for a rigorous life shorn of all the worldly pleasures by devoting it to research, discovery and invention, or to serve the downtrodden section of the society by sacrificing personal privileges and comforts while the majority of their peers opt for a cushy job and a high lifestyle that come with acquisition of special skills and education.

There are many instances in history when great discoveries and inventions as well as astonishing accomplishments have been made by men who have remained focused and steadfast in their goals, and have trodden the difficult path of sacrifice and sufferance.

In the present context, ‘self realisation’ would inculcate in a man awareness of the falsehood of all the allurements of this perishable world by pointing out the fact that this body which enjoys the world is indeed perishable and it is not the true ‘self’ of the person. On the contrary, the ‘self’ is eternal and imperishable, and it is perpetually in a state of blissfulness and peace. It is ignorance about the truth that creates an illusionary veil of miseries for the Atma when it thinks that it has a body which is its ‘true self’. Once this veil is removed, once this cloud of illusions and delusions is removed, the shine of the Atma breaks through and lightens up the inner self of the person much like the rays of the sun breaking through thick banks of clouds to illuminate the world, thereby dispelling all darkness and their attendant phantoms and ghosts.

Communion with self-realised persons kindles a burning desire to achieve permanent peace and tranquility by realising the truth about the Atma which is the real identity of the individual. This helps one to break free from the chain of miseries caused by ignorance and delusions, and realise the eternal nature of the Atma which is eternally happy and blissful.

²Every worthy teacher would say such a thing, because only a sincere student can imbibe what the teacher teaches, pay attention and respect to him, and carry forward

the torch of knowledge that the teacher wishes to pass over to some worthy disciple before his days are up. To teach something serious and having deep import to a fidgety student more concerned about the next meal or to pass an examination in order to land a high-paying job is a waste of breath as far as the teacher is concerned. That is why when a teacher finds that one of his students is very diligent in his studies, an natural affectionate bond develops between the teacher and the taught, and the former goes beyond his mundane duties to explain even those intricate matters of any subject that he would rather not divulge to anyone else, not even to his unworthy son. In fact, an accomplished teacher begins to love his intelligent and ardent disciple more than his own offspring.]

10. I am aware that all the rewards in the form of worldly assets and prosperity obtained by doing worldly deeds are impermanent and perishable because they pertain to the world which itself is transient and perishable. Since they are perishable and impermanent, it is not possible to obtain or derive something that is imperishable and permanent from them, such as the attainment of the eternal bliss and peace consequent to self-realisation and enlightenment¹.

That is why I have chosen the sacred knowledge known as ‘*Nachiket*’² which is symbolic of the sacred fire of renunciation in which all worldly desires are burnt. By choosing to do the physical fire sacrifice with material things obtained from this mortal world but internally remaining detached from them, by understanding the spiritual significance and importance of such a fire sacrifice instead of paying attention to its external rewards, I ensured that not only will my Atma (soul; the pure consciousness) be purged of all impurities associated with having worldly desires, aspirations, yearnings and hopes (because they are shackling and degrading for the exalted stature of the eternally free and enlightened Atma, and are best avoided) but also obtain liberation and deliverance from the bondage of delusions and ignorance associated with this transient world full of miseries and torments. This paved the way for my emancipation and salvation. That is, inspite of doing a physical fire sacrifice in a physical world and employing physical things needed for such exercises, I could manage to obtain a reward that is ethereal and spiritual³ (10).

[Note—¹People organise elaborate religious events, give huge donations, offer oblations to Gods and perform fire sacrifices in the hope that these exercises would take care of their spiritual welfare. But this is a horribly misplaced conception because all the material things employed to do any of these rituals, such as large amounts of money spend on elaborate religious exercises and giving donations are obtained by doing deeds with selfish interests in an illusionary dream-like world, and therefore they are more like acts done on stage by a trickster magician to deceive the audience than having any real pith and substance. When the very basis of doing anything is fictitious and imaginary, then it is absurd to expect that the result would be real and have any substance. It is more like a castle of clouds in the sky, visible and apparent but without any real existence.

²The concept of *Nachiket* fire has been elucidated upon in detail in the earlier Valli no.1 of this Canto, in its verse nos. 12-19, and the importance of renunciation has been highlighted in verse no. 3 and 26-27.

³Even though I had to do fire sacrifices and observe other religious duties as ordained by the scriptures, I could still attain the eternal and imperishable stature of being a ‘Yam’. In other words, by exercising self-control or self-restrain, I was blessed with supernatural powers and authority so much so that I am now able to exercise control over all others in this existence as the patron God of Death and upholder of the baton of Dharma (righteousness, auspiciousness, probity and propriety. I observed all the formalities and did all the sanctioned deeds but remained non-attached with them; I did not allow myself to get mentally involved in them and

neither did I yearn for any good results from them, nor had I any desire to enjoy their good effects. This diligence and wisdom on my part made me so exalted and enabled me to reach the citadel of spiritual accomplishment whereby I became the torch bearer of Dharma and the one who judges other's destiny when they die.]

11. Oh Nachiketa! You have voluntarily and cheerfully, as well as patiently and without any remorse or second thoughts, forgone or relinquished your chance of accessing and enjoying the comforts and pleasures of heaven even when they were evidently within your sight and reach¹. You were not lured by the blinding charm of the heaven which is full of all the imaginable things which give comfort and pleasure, a heaven which is obtained as a long-lasting reward and a trophy for meticulously performing various fire sacrifices and other religious duties, a heaven where there is everlasting fearlessness (from all kinds of sorrows and torments), a heaven which is praiseworthy, being revered and lauded by all the scriptures as the best destination obtainable by a creature for doing righteous and auspicious deeds.

This decision of yours is most laudable and wise; it shows you in a very good light and proves that you are an enlightened soul difficult to come across.

[In other words, you have a deep sense of renunciation in you, and all things which are perishable and demeaning for the spiritual enhancement are not attractive for you, making you an eligible candidate for accepting the profound knowledge pertaining to the Atma. In this, you are indeed most fortunate and intelligent, wise and enlightened because it is very difficult, if not impossible, to relinquish such privileges especially when they are being offered without even undergoing any hardships such as doing severe Tapa, or observing austerities and doing penances. This steadfastness of purpose, maturity of spiritual wisdom and ability to determine what is of real worth and what is merely a magical charm has indeed endeared you to me. I am really glad and proud of you.]² (11).

[Note—¹It would be noted that Yam had earlier offered the best of pleasures and wealth of this world as well as of the heaven to Nachiketa in order to judge his sincerity as well as the level of his renunciation and wisdom to decide whether he was competent enough as a seeker of truthful knowledge pertaining to Atma, and whether he should be accepted as his disciple. Nachiketa had rejected them all to prove that he was indeed an eligible candidate. Refer Canto 1, Valli 1, verse nos. 23-29.

²Yam wishes to convey his appreciation of Nachiketa and his readiness to accept him as his disciple. The knowledge that Nachiketa wishes to acquire is very esoteric and sublime, and it needs a focused mind and a sharp intellect which cannot be distracted or blunted by any kind of enticements or distractions that would sway the attention of an ordinary student. The entire object of this exercise is to highlight the qualities that one should possess if one is to obtain self-realisation and thereby break free from the fetters of ignorance and delusions that tie an ordinary creature to the endless cycle of birth and death.]

12. [This verse describes how one can have a first hand experience of the supreme transcendental Being residing in one's own bosom as the Atma.]

The supreme transcendental and divine Lord (i.e. Brahm) is most primary and primeval. He lives in the secret cave-like inner self or the sublime heart of a creature. That Lord is so esoteric, enigmatic and mysterious in nature and surrounded by a magical veil creating a deception about his true nature and form that he becomes most difficult to be seen or witnessed or perceived without special efforts even though he is present everywhere in this visible world (because he is all-pervading and omnipresent). He lives ensconced in the mind-intellect complex of the creature (thereby giving the latter its power to think, analyse, determine and show intelligent

behaviour). He is beyond the reach of worldly charms and the material objects of the sense organs. [That is, Brahm is not reachable by the gross organs of perception of the body and cannot be either understood by the low level of the mind though he is present universally everywhere in the world, even in the mind-intellect complex as well as the subtle heart of the creature.]

In other words, this divine entity is so profound and magnificent that it transcends all known definitions and criterions by worldly standards.

The only way to witness and have a first hand experience of this most exalted and holy Being is by the means of 'Adhyatma Yog'¹ which entails a judicious combination of spiritualism and metaphysics with meditation and contemplation upon the eclectic and sublime Truth that is Absolute. [This is possible only when the seeker has an uncorrupt intellect not tarnished by worldly delusions and its illusionary veil of enticing charms and alluring attractions, and a mind open enough to be receptive to the truth which is beyond the purview of conventional logic and rational debates.]

When one successfully witnesses and experiences that supreme fount of spiritual bliss, he is not affected by worldly sorrows and joys. [This is because such a self and Brahm realised person understands that his 'true' self is the pure conscious Atma which is not only eternally blissful and happy but also a microcosm of the universal Soul known as the quintessential Truth called Brahm. He also understands that such emotions as sorrow and joy relate to the gross body and not to the Atma, and that this body is as perishable and impermanent as the things that are the cause of sorrow and joy in this world. Therefore he is unaffected by either of them.] (12).

[Note—¹The word *Adhyatma Yoga* consists of two parts—viz. 'Adhyatma' meaning something that pertains to the spirit, and 'Yoga' meaning a union or joint. Therefore, the means by which a man is able to establish a relationship between his present existence as a mortal being surrounded by worldly delusions and its attendant miseries as well as all the mundane worldly affairs that he is forced to attend to while he is alive, and his ethereal and divine existence as an eternal being in the form of the spirit or the pure consciousness Atma which is free from all these fetters and inherently blissful and peaceful as well as wise and enlightened, is called 'Adhyatma Yoga'.]

13. Oh Nachiketa! Persons who are wise and enlightened like you are able to fully understand the profound spiritual importance and significance of the great truths of the pure consciousness known as the Atma or the universal 'self'. This esoteric and most secret knowledge is unraveled to them by hearing attentively about it, by intelligently grasping its meaning, by contemplating and deeply pondering on its spiritual import, and by not only accepting this irrefutable and quintessential truth but also implementing it in one's routine life¹.

Hence, it is my firm belief that the door to Brahm realisation is permanently open for you. [That is, seeing your commitment and firm conviction, I am sure nothing in this world can ever sway you from the spiritual path chosen by you, and no obstacle can ever stop you from realising your goal of reaching Brahm and enjoying the attendant beatitude and felicity. No one or thing can pull you down from the high citadel of spiritual bliss that you have accessed.] (13).

[Note--¹By properly analyzing what has been heard, one is able to become firmly convinced of its veracity and authenticity. Then when one applies the principles learnt in daily life, he experiences them in practical terms. This helps to bolster his faith in them and he needs no further prodding to remain firm in his conviction. When he learns about the great doctrines and maxims of the scriptures relating to the divine and holy Atma and the ultimate Truth of creation by either hearing about it from his

teacher or by studying about it himself from the scriptures, he comes to know about its essential form and nature which are sublime and subtle to the extreme. Application of intelligent mind helps him to understand and accept its import and significance fully, and then when he deeply contemplates and meditates upon its profound and truthful tenets, he comes face to face with that supreme Truth residing in his own bosom as his 'self' known as the Atma. This realisation makes him euphoric and ecstatic because he would have accessed that effervescent fountain of eternal beatitude and felicity that has been eluding him for generations till now. Having found it, he never thirsts for bliss and never feels scorched by worldly miseries anymore.]

14. Nachiketa replied, 'Oh Yam! Please preach me about the principle of the Atma which you regard as being independent of all deeds, which is beyond the rewards obtainable by doing various fire sacrifices, which is untainted by doing unrighteous deeds which are prohibited by the scriptures, which is different and separate from this world based on the theory of cause and effect, and which is separate and independent from the three dimensions of time such as the past, the present and the future (i.e. which is constant in all the three planes of time and space).

Please acquaint me about that supreme transcendental and quintessential Truth (14).

[Note—The peace and bliss that is obtained by realising the truth about the Atma cannot be obtained by doing good deeds, including auspicious ones. Similarly, the Atma cannot be tarnished by doing inauspicious deeds. The obvious reason is that the deeds, whether auspicious or not, are done by the gross physical body which is different, independent and separate from the Atma.

The world relies on the principle of cause and effect—i.e. if something has happened, there must be a cause that makes it happen. This implies that there was a beginning when a particular thing sprung forth. It would produce its own affects which would be the cause of other things to happen. This chain reaction does not apply to the Atma because the Atma is eternal, infinite and imperishable. Being such, it is also beyond the purview of the changes that happen in this world as each moment become a past the other moment. 'Truth' does not change like other things, including time which is divided or fractioned into past, present and future.]

15. Yam replied, 'Oh Nachiketa! I shall describe to you that supreme transcendental ethereal and divine entity and its state of exalted existence which has been repeatedly expounded and elucidated upon by the Vedas and its holiness and divinity reiterated and lauded by them. All the Tapas (austerities, penances, sufferance) and other righteous and auspicious deeds that the man does for his spiritual upliftment and attainment of emancipation and salvation of his soul are also meant as an offering for that entity and are done with the express purpose of realising that state of exalted existence by the spiritual seeker.

Such seekers who aspire to achieve their spiritual goal of 'Brahm realisation', to reach that citadel of exalted existence and obtain that divine stature which is most unique, eclectic and sublime, endeavour to observe various strict codes of conduct that can enable them to achieve success in their efforts. Such strictness includes observing the principles of Brahmacharya. [This is a life of extreme self control of the sense organs and observing continence, abstinence, renunciation and dispassion. This entails sacrificing worldly comforts and pleasures which are however perishable and transient in order to obtain eternal and permanent beatitude and felicity.]

Oh Nachiketa! That stupendous and magnificent state of Brahm realisation in which one comes in direct communion with the holy and divine entity is unique and

one of its kind. Verily, that splendid, glorious and astoundingly sublime entity known as 'Brahm' is represented by the monosyllable word-symbol of 'OM'¹ (15).

[Note—¹The word *OM* in the present context is a synonym for the supreme transcendental Being who is the cause of coming into existence, the development and the end of all that exists. The Sanskrit word for a 'letter' is 'Akchar' meaning something that is not perishable. Since OM is a monosyllable word, it is called an Akchar, and it aptly describes Brahm which is also imperishable, indivisible and one. OM is, for all practical purposes, a hypothetical name given to Brahm which is the ultimate Truth and Absolute in this creation. This is because when ancient sages and seers began to search for a word or symbol that would be the nearest analogue to what they meant and wished to describe in words, and which would incorporate the entire gamut of definitions explaining the phenomenon known as Brahm, they visualised it as a sound element reverberating in the cosmos, which they preferred to call Pranav and which was translated by them as the word 'OM'.

The monosyllabic word OM was found to be the nearest sound analogue to the cosmic vibration and its energy which was at the root of all physical existence as we know it today. Those wise sages and seers then used the various connotations of this OM to explain the concepts pertaining to Brahm, and treated OM as a synonym for the latter, a name and symbol for Brahm.

Further, they analysed this sound OM and split it into three or four constituent parts, such as the letters A, O, U and M, just for the sake of scientific analysis, study and comprehension of its profound importance and impact. Thus, they were able to explain the inexplicable Brahm by employing this means, albeit in a round about manner, which can just give an idea of the real thing to the seeker of the Truth. OM helped them to study Brahm from various angles and different perspectives for the sake of unraveling the great esoteric secrets of creation.

However, this analytical study which tries to limit Brahm by giving it a name of OM having three or four components A, O, U and M does not in any way alter the fundamental nature of the object of study—that is, it does not alter the fact that Brahm is unlimited and infinite, that it is immutable and indivisible, and that it has no name and form. In fact, even the Vedas which have tried to analyse Brahm in voluminous texts threw up their arms and surrendered by proclaiming that Brahm defies all explanations and definitions when they said 'Neti Neti'—that is, Brahm is neither this nor that, it is 'not this, not this'.]

16. This OM is the 'Akchar (i.e. imperishable; immortal) Brahm'; this OM is the most exalted, supreme and transcendental Brahm. An aspirant who realises the deep meaning and profound import of this Akchar* is able to achieve all that he aspires for; all his wishes are fulfilled (16).

[Note—Two aspects of Brahm are being described here—one is that Brahm which is the primordial, primary, eternal and infinite entity which is un-manifest, beyond description and has no physical limitations, attributes and characteristics, while the other form is the manifested revelation of this entity which has certain attributes and qualities. The former form of Brahm is called 'Nirguna Brahm', or Brahm which has no physical attributes, qualities and characteristics, while the latter variant is known as 'Saguna Brahm', or Brahm which has such attributes, qualities and characteristics. Both aspects of Brahm are equally true because they essentially deal with the same Truth, the first is that Truth in its primary form, while the second is its secondary form. Wiser and more erudite seekers seek the first form of Brahm much like an intelligent and highly successful student aims for the best of the available colleges to study any subject, while the same subject can be studied at any mediocre college as well. It is actually upon the student to make the best of the opportunity available to him, for merely getting into a top rung college does not guarantee any success in the learning process if the student is not serious about his studies. Similarly, worshipping

and pursuing both the Nirguna as well as the Saguna Brahm can be equally liberating for the soul of the seeker, what is more important here is the diligence and sincerity of the person.

These two paths are called the path of Gyan or knowledge and the path of Bhakti or devotion respectively. To worship something which has no physical presence and which cannot be visible seen and perceived but merely experienced and witnessed at a higher level of the mind and intellect is a difficult bargain for an ordinary man not too well groomed in metaphysics and spiritualism, except in case he has had an opportunity to have a communion with a wise teacher or if he has the inherent mental bearing and intellectual prowess for contemplation and deep thought. That is why realising Brahm by following the path of Gyan is considered a bit difficult by ordinary standards. On the contrary, those who prefer to follow the second path of Bhakti have an easier means because they have a known deity as their ideal and God on whom they can devote all their attention even while remaining engrossed in doing their mundane worldly duties and keeping their worldly obligations. But even as a medicine would benefit the patient whether or not it is taken by him willfully or is given to him against his wishes, both forms of worship of Brahm are beneficial for the spiritual well being of the aspirant.

*The word Akshar means ‘a letter’ also besides meaning ‘imperishable and immortal’. Therefore besides referring to Brahm it also refers to the monosyllabic word OM. This word is a Mantra which is a mystical formula vested with great powers and used in religious practices such as for the purpose of incantatory chanting during fire sacrifices, or repetition while turning the beads of the prayer rosary, or for concentration of mind during the practice of Yoga (meditation). An aspirant might have wishes other than obtaining emancipation and salvation in his mind while employing this OM Mantra, such as for example conquest during wars, or establishment of fame and glory, or even obtaining huge assets and a perpetual life so that the pleasures of the world can be enjoyed by him. Just like the case that the same drug which is used by a doctor to cure serious ailments can be used by others to kill, and the same atomic energy that can light the earth for eternity can also be used for destruction, this Akshar Mantra of OM can be either employed to achieve liberation and deliverance from this cycle of birth and death, or obtain mundane benefits.]

17. This imperishable OM (representing Brahm) is the ultimate and the best dependable means by which a spiritual seeker can become acquainted with the Atma; it can lead to self-realisation. It is the best means to employ in order to contemplate and meditate upon the supreme transcendental Being. [This is made possible by doing Yoga when OM is used as a Mantra to concentrate attention on the pure consciousness residing inside the body. OM is the universal Mantra used to repeat the holy name of the supreme Lord to focus one’s attention during meditative sessions. This OM helps to support the aspirant in his spiritual endeavour. It is the most reliable means by which one can realise his spiritual goal of Brahm realisation which would in turn not only provide immense eternal bliss to the seeker but also ensure his emancipation and salvation.]

When an honest and sincere seeker comes to know about the astounding powers and potentials of this OM, he relies upon it to reach the pinnacle of Brahm realisation. [Those seekers who understand that OM is a synonym for the supreme Brahm develop reverence for it with the same intensity that they have for Brahm, and faithfully rely upon it to reach Brahm. They are spiritually rewarded with the honour of having realised Brahm.] (17).

[Note—OM is the nearest analogue for Brahm, the macrocosmic and all pervading Supreme Being from whom the five basic elements of creation, i.e. sky, air, fire, water and earth, have come into being. Out of these five, sky and air are the subtlest

elements. Sound is an attribute of these two elements because friction in the air creates sound, and it needs the space of the sky to propagate. If one were to analytically break the entire creation into its basic and elementary units, one would come to these basic and fundamental five elements. Then one would observe that out of these five, sound is the one which represents the composite energy of both the sky and the air which are the subtlest of the five elements.

When analysed further, he deduces that when sound is traced back to its origin, there was 'no sound'—i.e. there was utter silence of nothingness! This silence spread and covered the entire length and breadth of the sky—i.e. the entire space of existence. Silence is synonymous with peace and tranquility—what more evidence would one need for this than the very evident fact that no sound is allowed around hospitals and sanitariums where a man goes to find solace and succour from his sufferings, or around schools where one goes to acquire knowledge!

This profound silence of nothingness is eternal because it is present before the first ripples of creation manifest themselves, and it would remain when everything finally comes to naught at the end of the creation. Therefore it is synonymous with the peace and bliss that the tormented soul yearns for; it is synonymous with Brahm. The attainment of this eclectic state is *Brahm realisation*.]

18. This eternally enlightened and wise Atma which is pure consciousness and the universal truth in this creation neither takes any birth nor does it die. The Atma is not born from anyone, nor does it give birth to anyone. This Atma is without a birth, eternal, constant, imperishable, truthful and universal. It does not decay and perish or develop into something better. It does not perish even after the body dies and perishes (18).

19. If a killer thinks that he can kill someone, or if someone thinks that has been killed by someone else, then both are wrong and ignorant. None of them know anything about the Atma, because the Atma—which is the true identity of any living creature—cannot kill anyone (as both the creatures have the same Atma in them), and it cannot be killed either by someone else (as it is eternal and infinite and imperishable). [The fact is that the Atma is present equally in both the killer and the killed. What is slayed is the gross body and not the Atma which is an ethereal and sublime entity like the sky or air. Can anyone kill or dismember the sky or the air? It is a height of absurdity and incredulity even to imagine doing it. Likewise, it is absolutely impossible to kill the Atma. Since the same Atma resides in the killer and the victim, how can one kill one's self in another form?] (19).

20. The supreme transcendental Consciousness is present in two forms—in a microcosmic and most atomic or miniscule form as the Atma of a living creature known as a Jiva¹, and in a macrocosmic form at the colossal level of creation known as the Viraat² which pervades the entire creation. The microcosmic form of the Atma lives in the cave-like subtle heart of the Jiva (the living creature).

Only few fortunate seekers who are selfless in their outlook, deeds and demeanors as well as untouched or un-swayed by worldly miseries and sorrows having their origin in ignorance and delusions are able to have an opportunity to visualise, witness, experience and realise the existence of that supreme entity known as pure consciousness in their heart. [That is, only few people are able to experience the presence of the Atma in their heart and thereby witness the presence of the supreme transcendental Brahm in their own self instead of somewhere outside in the heaven etc.] (20).

[Note—¹A person is known as a *Jiva* for three reasons. One, he is a ‘living’ entity and not a dead one, and second, he has a ‘soul’ or Atma residing in his own inner being. The third reason is that he is bound by fetters of ignorance as he is not able to see the Supreme Being residing so close to him in his own self and instead tries to seek him outside in the world such as the heaven by doing religious deeds. The result is quirky and hilarious. He pursues this world madly in search of happiness and peace, not realising that the fount of eternal happiness and peace is within his own self! This is the irony of the situation.

So, an ignorant person is one who does not realise this basic fact that this Atma which resides in his own self is his true ‘self’, while a wise person is one who realises this fact and is convinced of its veracity. Even as an ignorant person would remain in a dark room if he does not know where the switch of the electric light is located or how to light a lamp though the lamp is full of oil and the match is right in his hand, persons who are ignorant of the true nature of the Atma do not ‘see’ it (i.e. do not experience and witness it) and ‘benefit’ from its brilliant light of consciousness. That is, they fail to obtain eternal peace and tranquility by finding enlightenment and liberation from the fetters of ignorance in the light of self realisation and spiritual awakening.

²On the other hand, a wise seeker realises that the Atma residing in his bosom is an image of the supreme and pure consciousness of creation known as Brahm. This Atma is eternally blissful and is the true identity of the creature. The creature itself is an image of *Viraat*, i.e. it is the microcosmic manifestation of the macrocosmic Viraat Purush. The gross body of the individual living creature is the manifestation of the cosmic gross body of Brahm known as the Viraat Purush. Therefore, the individual creature is, in effect, Brahm in a miniature form. This profound realisation removes all causes of sorrows and miseries, because these negative emotions pertain to the gross body consisting of the perishable sense organs which is not the true self of the creature, and not to the subtle body consisting of the mind-intellect as well as the causal body wherein stays the Atma which is the actual ‘self’ of the individual. Such persons find eternal peace and spiritual comfort not available to their less fortunate brethren.]

21. The supreme and the most divine entity known as Consciousness is so esoteric, magical and mysterious that it defies explanation and logic. In spite of it being perpetually and permanently present at a certain place (for example the heart of an individual) and even while it appears to be asleep (when the body is asleep), it can be found somewhere else and it can move about everywhere without hindrance¹.

That supreme and majestic entity has no notion of self pride and ego whatsoever. Who else but me is competent to know him or be acquainted with him²? (21).

[Note—¹The supreme Brahm, who is the Lord of creation, has paradoxical qualities in him, such as those mentioned above—being unmoving as well as being constantly on the move, being fast asleep and moving about simultaneously. That is why Brahm is said to be beyond comprehension and the reach of the rational mind. Brahm displays such mysterious qualities as being minute like an atom as well as being so vast that numerous universes form only a part of his entire being.

By saying that he is permanently present at a definite place it is meant that one has not to wander about endlessly and without any hint of where to find him because he is present in his own bosom. He has only to search out the truthful Lord of creation in his own self. Again, by saying that Brahm is found elsewhere at the same time it is meant that he is omnipresent and all-pervading, being available to his devotees wherever and whenever they need him. Further, the idea that he is asleep has its foundation in the fact that the Atma, which is the pure conscious Brahm personified, is oblivious to the turmoil of the delusory and ignorance-ridden artificial external world, and instead it remains calmly ensconced in the heart of the creature and

submerged in the bliss obtained by meditation and contemplation. In other words, the Atma is perpetually in a state of bliss and peace symbolised by its sleeping posture. But this sleep does not mean that it is ignorant of what is happening around it, for if this were to be true, Atma would not be known as omniscient and all-knowing. Therefore, it moves everywhere in a subtle and ethereal form, reconnoitering and learning everything as the sub-conscious. The 'sub-conscious mind' remains active even while the 'conscious mind' is asleep—and this is why a man dreams.

²Atma and Brahm are dignitaries not easily known by all and sundry. They are accessible to those who are blessed with especial spiritual skills and metaphysical erudition. Yam means to say that only those who have woken up to the fact about the falsehoods of the mirage-like illusionary world along with its deluding charms which are transient and which trap the creature in their snare, and as a result of this awareness they have decided to forego everything which is untrue and impermanent in their pursuit of the ultimate Truth which would give them eternal peace and bliss—only such people are the ones who are eligible and competent enough to realise and gain access to the Atma and Brahm. That is, 'self-realisation' is the key to unfolding the mysteries of the Atma which is pure consciousness, and this is available only upon renouncing the illusive charms and deluding affects of this artificial material world. Such a renunciation is a difficult proposition for an ordinary man who is overwhelmed by the world's overbearing nature and bowled over by its magnificent and fascinating allurements.]

22. That unique divine entity known as the supreme transcendental Consciousness or Atma is without a physical gross body though it lives inside a creature having a gross body. It is immortal and eternal though it lives amongst those who are mortal and perishable. Wise and erudite men do not become ruffled and agitated or get emotionally upset and miserable once they have realised that supreme transcendental Atma which is all-pervading, all-encompassing and omnipresent (22).

[Note—The Atma is an ethereal entity and not gross like the body of the creature. But the irony is that the all-pervading, universal, infinite, imperishable, eternal, sublime and subtle Atma has to live in this body which is perishable, transient, mundane and gross. That is, the Atma lives in the body which shows none of the stupendous properties of the Atma. In fact, the body has attributes which are the opposite to those possessed by the Atma. So when the spiritual aspirant becomes aware of his true identity as the Atma, he would deem to have acquired the auspicious virtues possessed by the Atma as distinct from the attributes of the body.]

23. [In this verse, Yam describes the fortunate ones to whom the Atma reveals its virtuous form as their own 'self'.]

The holistic and eclectic knowledge of the supreme transcendental entity known as the pure consciousness or Atma is just not possible by giving and listening to religious discourses, or by the use of mind and intellect to learn about its presence and authenticity by applying logic and analytical abilities, or by hearing about it through scriptural discussions and debates. In fact, only those who are accepted by the supreme Lord as being worthy of such knowledge are fortunate enough to access it¹. For them, the Atma reveals its true form and nature, its true essence and virtuous existence all on its own² (23).

[Note—¹Only those persons who have a burning desire accompanied by diligence and sincerity to know about and attain closeness with Brahm and Atma, those who are steady and focused enough to overcome all spiritual hurdles and strive to achieve success in experiencing and witnessing Brahm and the Atma—only such people can have access to both. The rest fall aside and get lost like so many students who drop out of school and college before completing their educating.

²A wise, erudite, sagacious and enlightened seeker knows the basic fact that his Atma and his pure consciousness are one and the same entity. Aside of this fact, the Atma and Brahm are also one and the same entity. Therefore, having 'self-realisation' is like revealing one's true self and its true form. That is, it is unveiling the true form and nature of the Atma as the 'self', and at the same time realising the fact that the supreme Lord called Brahm resides in one's own bosom as his Atma or consciousness.

In other words, the seeker who has realised his 'true self' has indeed realised the truthful form and nature of both the pure consciousness Atma as well as the supreme transcendental Brahm.]

24. [In this verse, Yam describes the unfortunate ones who cannot have any access to the knowledge pertaining to the Atma.]

Those who remain indulgent in doing misdeeds and committing sinful acts (i.e. acts which are unrighteous and inauspicious), those whose sense organs are not calmed and in their control (i.e. those who have no self restraint, those whose sense organs are fidgety and restless, ever yearning for self-gratification, and those who cannot find peace as a consequence of this constant nagging), and those whose mind and intellect are equally restless and fidgety like the sense organs (i.e. those whose mind has not fully developed renunciation, detachment and dispassion from this world and its dazzling charms)—such persons cannot have access to the eclectic and sublime knowledge of the holy and divine Atma, they cannot experience and witness this astounding phenomenon of self-realisation and its accompanying thrill of eternal bliss and happiness in the absence of a holy and pious way of life even though they might be exceptionally brilliant in other forms of knowledge¹ (24).

[Note—¹To successfully realise the supreme Lord and establish an everlasting bond with him, it is not at all necessary that the person should be well educated and groomed in the scriptures and have scholarship in them, or be an expert in the knowledge which would make him worldly wise. The condition that makes him eligible to access the Lord, i.e. the criterion that makes him eligible for self-realisation and having an experience of the brilliance effusing from the Atma, is sincerity, steadfastness, honesty and focused pursuit of his spiritual goal besides firm faith and unwavering conviction in the divinity of his Atma and his own self. Without the fulfillment of these basic requirements, no one can ever expect a communion with his true self, which is his pure consciousness known as the Atma, which in turn is Brahm personified.]

25. [This verse tells us why that supreme Brahm cannot be known and comprehended.]

All living beings including the Brahmins and Kshatriyas¹ etc. are like fodder for that transcendental Supreme Being who gobbles up the entire creation at the time of death (i.e. at the time of final conclusion of the creation), including 'death' itself which aids him in eating everything (i.e. bringing an end to everything) in this creation but finally becomes his food along with others.

Say, who can ever know about such a mysterious and esoteric Being, whosoever he is and wherever he is? (25).

[Note—¹Humans are considered as the highest positioned species in the evolutionary ladder. Amongst the humans, the Brahmins who are the wise and senior most member of the human race are the most highly respected ones and symbolically occupy the throne of evolution as its emperor, while the Kshatriyas are the second in command and the warrior class in human society who can be likened to the numerous kings under the emperor. The symbolism is meant to stress the point that when such highly

placed and able members of the world are not left alone by that secret force of creation known as Brahm and they become his fodder, then what should one say of lesser mortals—they don't stand any chance. In other words, the astounding and most mysterious cosmic force that is the unquestioned and unchallenged dynamic Authority in this creation has the ability to devour everything in existence and still not feel whetted with it. It outlasts everything that exists, or would exist forever in any future frame of time. How is it ever possible to describe it; how is ever feasible to characterize it with this or that attribute or quality? How can one fathom the fathomless, and measure something that has no dimension?

That is why the wise scriptures prefer to describe it with the words 'Neti-Neti', i.e. 'not this, not this', or 'neither this nor that'.]

Canto 1, Valli 3

1. [In this verse, Yam asserts that the Jivatma, or the individual creature with the pure conscious soul known as its Atma, and Parmatma, or the supreme Soul, are intricately related to each other. But these two forms of the same conscious Atma have certain basic differences which distinguish one from the other. He also ascertains their habitat is in the heart of the individual.]

Yam said, 'A creature achieves a human body as a reward of its auspicious and righteous past life and the good deeds done in them. The best and the most holy location in this otherwise gross and impure body is the inner-self represented by the cave-like space of the subtle heart. So, when the creature is blessed with the boon of having a human body, its pure 'self' takes up residence in this holy site of the inner realms of the subtle heart.

The principal entity that lives in this inner-self exhibits two different personality traits which vary from one another. One is like a shadow and the other is like the sunlight. These two varying personalities are due to the fact that one facet of the principal entity enjoys or suffers from the deeds done by the creature while the other does not as it remains aloof and indifferent from the deeds done¹.

This fact is affirmed by those who are experts in the Vedas as well as by those who have selected the Nachiketa Agni three times and even by those who worship the five types of the legendary fire² (1).

[Note—¹The shadow is formed of any object that has a physical existence and not of an imaginary object. The very fact that a shadow has been formed proves the existence of the object. But a shadow can only form when there is sunlight, and not in the dark. Therefore, the object of which the shadow is formed is the 'principal' that is the cause of the formation of the shadow on the one hand, and on the other hand highlights the importance of the sunlight also. If this principal object is removed, no shadow would be formed in spite of the presence of the sunlight, and therefore the ability of the sunlight to create shadows would not be known. The shadow mimics the actions of the principal object; it moves with the object and does what the principal does. The sunlight is constant and steady, shining everywhere equally, and is not affected by the location of the principal object or what it does. On the contrary, the shadow is dependent upon the principal object. Whereas the shadow is dark and gloomy, the sunlight is bright and illuminating. The principal entity that links the shadow with the sunlight is the object of which the shadow is formed; in fact this principal object stands between the sunlight and the shadow to give both of them their importance and highlight their existence in relation with each other.

From practical point of view, this verse simply means that the pure conscious Atma or 'self' of the creature is essentially the same but still there appears to be two different types of creatures exhibiting two opposing characteristics. One type is that creature who remains engrossed in doing worldly deeds, enjoying or suffering from their consequences, and the other type is that who remains indifferent and unconcerned with what the body does. The former type of creature is ever restless and agitated, never finding peace and happiness as he is constantly being buffeted by the world and subjected to all types of turmoil associated with it. The latter type of creature on the other hand remains aloof from the deeds and is free from their consequences, thereby remaining in a perpetual state of calmness and peace.

The point to note is that the same Atma resides in both the creatures, but exhibit absolutely opposing characteristics. The first type of Atma is like the sunlight—brilliant, illuminating and enlightened, while the second type of Atma becomes its shadow—dark, gloomy and depending upon the mercy of the gross body to have its existence. This is because it is the gross body that does deeds, and if the gross body does good deeds, this second type of Atma would get happiness. Otherwise, if the body does sinful deeds this Atma would have to suffer the evil consequences.

The formation of the shadow is dependent upon the presence of the gross body, for no shadow is formed if there is no solid obstacle between the sunlight and the screen. The analogy is very clear here—the Atma that suffers from or enjoys the rewards of the deeds done by the creature is dependent on the gross body because it is the latter that actually does the deed and not the Atma. If there is no solid obstacle like the gross body of the man, no shadow would be formed inspite of the presence of the sunlight. Similarly, if the Atma decides that the body does not exist as far as it is concerned, and therefore it has got nothing with what the body does or does not, then obviously the Atma would not have to suffer from the consequences of the deeds done by the body.

This explains why the same pure conscious Atma is called a 'Parmatma' on the one hand and the 'Jiva' on the other hand. The same Atma has assumed two forms and both these entities are truthful themselves. But whereas one aspect of the Atma which represents its pristine form is eternally pure and uncorrupt and freed from the fetters of delusions and ignorance, the other aspect becomes mired in delusions and ignorance and as a consequence gets trapped in this mortal world. The former is called the Parmatma which is like a fount of light, and the latter is called the Jivatma which is like the shadow of its former self.

We observe here that there are *two versions of the same Atma*. Though primarily being one and the same, the Atma that resides in the bosom of the individual creature as its 'self' and the cosmic Atma that is universally present everywhere as the 'consciousness', begin to exhibit different attributes when the creature comes in contact with the external world through the medium of its body and its sense organs. The body is gross and so is the world, so their contact and communion has its negative effects upon the immaculate and pristine nature of the Atma. The Jivatma begins to think, erroneously though, that the 'body' is its true self instead of the pure consciousness known as the Atma residing in its bosom. This creates a paradoxical situation—on the one hand the Atma is regarded as pure and uncorrupt and untainted by falsehoods, and on the other hand the Atma appears to be neck-deep involved in worldly activities and tarnished by worldly corruptions. This latter type of Atma is attached to the gross body and the gross world. It seeks gratifications from the sense objects of this material world.

There is another interpretation of this verse. The creature is called a Jivatma because it consists of a body which has life and consciousness in the form of the Atma in it. This creature develops two types of tendencies when it begins to interact with the world of sense objects having their own fascinating charms. The Jivatma either remains detached from them or falls prey to them. In the former case, it remains in a total neutral and detached state of existence, a state which is natural and

inherent to the Atma, while in the latter case it gets sucked in the vortex of worldly delusions and consequentially lose its primary sheen, its pristine glory and its divine nature. The Jivatma of the first kind is like the Parmatma who is immaculate, holy and divine, while the Jivatma of the second kind becomes an ordinary Jivatma.

Therefore, what was primarily a symbolic *source of light* has now become like its *shadow*; what is shining white as a symbol of purity and dignified majesty now becomes dark and gloomy; what was eternally blissful and tranquil now becomes sorrowful and agitated; what was deemed to be enlightened and a fount of all knowledge now becomes mired in delusions and overcast by the long shadow of ignorance that follows it.

This is what is meant here—the Atma is inherently pure and conscious; it is a fount of wisdom and enlightenment; it remains un-obsessed with the world and free from its delusions. But when the same Atma comes in contact with the gross body and gets involved with its nefarious deeds, it gets sucked in the vortex of delusions, and under ignorance-laced charms of this world it forgets its prime nature and becomes a ‘shadow’ of its original ‘brilliantly lit’ form as the immaculate Atma.

The tainted Atma is a ‘shadow of the immaculate Atma which is the principal. The sunlight is the light of wisdom, enlightenment and self-realisation which enables the creature to make out the difference between the two types of Atmas—one Atma that is tainted and one Atma that is not tainted. Only in the light of this wisdom about what is true and what is false, what makes one creature find his liberation and deliverance while living in this world with a gross body and what makes the other remain trapped in the cycle of birth and death that the wise and erudite Jivatma become enlightened and see the reality.

This concept has been elaborately explained in verse nos. 3-7 by using the analogy of the ‘chariot’.

²This paradoxical fact is proclaimed by all wise ones, such as the people who are well versed in the knowledge of Brahman based on the Vedas, by those who are worshippers of *Nachiketa Fire*, or those who are deeply renunciate people who have nothing to do with this world and worship the fire element as the only source which can purify them and purge them of all their impurities, thereby paving the path of their attaining emancipation and salvation, and by those righteous householders who follow the path shown by the scriptures by diligently worshipping the five forms of the fire known as *Panch Agni* and perform the five forms of fire sacrifice known as *Panch Yagna*.

The *Nachiketa Agni* has been described earlier in this Canto in Valli 1, verse nos. 13-19.

The *five forms of Fire* ordained to be worshipped by the householder are the following—The five holy fires have been elaborately described in Chandogya Upanishad, canto 4, section 10 to 13. There are five formal divine fires—(a) ‘Garhyapatya’ (the fire of the household hearth), (b) ‘Dakshinagni’ (the fire used as a witness to making charities or any other religious festivity), (c) ‘Ahavaniya’ (the fire to invoke the Gods during a ritualistic sacrifice), (d) ‘Sabhya’ (the fire of the Vedic period which was continuously lit) and (e) ‘Awasathya’ (the fire of the later Smriti period). Worship of the three important fires have been described in Chandogya Upanishad, canto 2, section 24, while canto 5, sections 4-10, 19-24 explain their great symbolic metaphysical significance.

The Garhyapatya fire—This is the householder’s fire. A householder has land and farm representing ‘earth’ in which he grows food. This food is grown with the help of the light of the Sun, and it is cooked in the fire of the fire place in the house. Hence, the Garhyapatya fire, or the householder’s fire, is intrinsically present and is implied in these four entities. It is an integral part of these four. The earth has the ‘fire element’ because without heat and warmth, no seed would germinate and no life can survive on this earth. The food has fire present inherently in it because it is the energy

inherent in food which helps to energise the creature that eats it. The presence of heat in the sun does not need to be explained because it is very evident.

The Dakshinagni fire—is a witness to making of charities when some water is poured as libation to the Gods. It signifies that the Gods are offered water to drink. To give water to the thirsty is the greatest form of charity. Therefore, this fire is symbolically present in water, and when it is poured, it signifies that the heat produced by sins committed by the person has been doused. Charities and donations make a man famous and renowned, hence the allusion to directions of the earth. His glory shines like the bright moon and he is called a star among human beings. He is the most exalted amongst his peers and compatriots even as the moon is most prominent amongst the stars in the sky.

The Ahawaniya fire—is lit to invoke Gods, and the Gods live in the heaven; hence the reference to the sky, heavens and electric. Since Pran is the best form of the vital winds, the allusion means that the Gods are the most exalted forms that exist in creation. The ‘electric’ is a metaphor for immense strength, potent and power, which of course the fire possesses. This inherent quality of Electric that it possess most stupendous powers and strength is likened to the presence of Brahm in it even as the great power and strength present in a man is due to the Atma or Pran present in him. Even as a man is useless without the presence of Pran in him, the Electric would lose its importance if there was no Brahm present in it which gives it its punch and strength.

The five holy fires also refer to the five noble deeds or five auspicious deeds that every householder is supposed to do. They are called Panch Mahayagya and are the following—(a) Brahma Yagya—study and teaching of the Vedas and other scriptures that enlighten the man about the ultimate Truth known as Brahm, (b) Deva Yagya—the performance of fire sacrifices in which offerings are given to the sacred fire which sustain the Gods and are done to honour them, (c) Pitri Yagya—paying homage to the spirit of dead ancestors, offering oblations to them and doing religious activities for the peace of their souls, (d) Service to mankind called ‘Jiva Yagya’, and (e) Bhut Yagya—service to all the creatures including animals, insects, plants etc., such as giving them food, shelter and protection, i.e. taking care of them. These five sacrifices have been described in Ashramo-panishad, verse no. 3.]

2. [Yam now prays to the Supreme Being in order to invoke his blessings in order to empower himself to be able to cross over this seemingly endless ocean-like world. In order words, he wishes to emphasis that even he, who is superior to all other Gods and has therefore been made the custodian of Dharma (the upholder and torch bearer of righteousness and auspiciousness, probity and propriety), who is wiser than the rest of the Gods and had himself preached the auspicious Nachiketa Agni Vidya to Nachiketa, has to pray to the ‘Authority’ which is supreme in this creation. So, all those who seek emancipation and salvation must seek the intercession of that supreme Authority to succeed in their spiritual endeavours. Merely following any of the sanctioned paths leading to emancipation and salvation, no matter how potent and effective they might be and how diligently they are followed, or how eligible and competent the aspirant or seeker is, would be fruitless if the supreme Lord is not benevolent upon him.]

Yam said, ‘Let us be properly acquainted with the sacred Nachiketa Agni (the purifying fire of renunciation—refer 1/1/16) which is like a bridge to take the sincere spiritual aspirant across this fathomless ocean-like world of endless miseries and torments. Let such people be enlightened about the imperishable Brahm which is like a float (or boat; a ship) on which the aspirant can find fearlessness while crossing this horrifying ocean-like world.’ (2).

[Note—Two things are to be noted here—one, renunciation, dispassion and detachment with the body and the world are prerequisite essentials for stepping on the path of emancipation and salvation, and second, one has to take the support of the imperishable Atma and seek the blessings of the supreme Lord in order to do so. Firm belief in the imperishable nature of the Atma or the ‘true self’ of the aspirant ensures that he has not to seek Brahm anywhere outside than in his own bosom, making the entire exercise very easy even for them who have no wherewithal for elaborate rituals and sacrifices in order to attain freedom from the miseries engulfing them in this mundane world. In fact, emancipation and salvation are easily available to everyone, even the poorest and the humblest in the society, given the right approach to them. Emancipation and salvation do not depend on elaborate sacrifices or religious exercises. And this verse points this approach.]

3. [The following verses use the analogy of the chariot to elucidate the method of reaching the supreme Brahm.]

Oh Nachiketa! You can take the example of the chariot to understand what I (Yam) mean. Regard the Atma of the creature (i.e. the Jivatma) as the owner or the passenger of the chariot; the body as the chariot (vehicle); the Buddhi (intelligence) as the charioteer; and the Mana (mind and heart) as the rein (which controls the horses symbolising the various sense organs of the body)¹ (3)

[Note--¹The sense organs are very restless and fidgety, ever eager to cantor away in different directions like the horses attached to the chariot. If the horses are not put under tight leash, the chariot would topple over. Likewise, if one does not control his sense organs which pull him in different directions, he would fall over the brink. For example, the eye sees one thing and gets enchanted with it, inspiring the mind in turn to yearn for it. This mind then plots and plans how to get access to this thing and acquire it. It then orders the organs of action such as the hand and the leg to attempt to acquire this object. Meanwhile, the eye sees something else more enticing than the first, and changes its priorities. While all this is happening, the ear, the tongue, the nose and the skin wish to have different things simultaneously and pull the mind in different directions. They all want that the mind pay them equal attention, all at the same time. The result is obvious to see—the man is tossed like a leaf on a heaving ocean, his mind wanting one thing now and rejecting it in preference to another the next moment. There are five organs of perception—viz. eyes, nose, ears, tongue and skin, and if each behave like untrained spoilt horses, one can well imagine the disastrous consequences for the man and his peace of mind.

Refer Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 2, Brahman 5, verse no. 15 and 19.]

4. The wise ones say that if we were to treat the sense organs of the body as the horses of this chariot, then the different perceptions and functions of the world which relate to each of these individual organs of perception and action respectively are like the paths upon which these horses prefer to gallop away with the chariot. [That is, the sense objects of the world attempt to pull the respective sense organs towards themselves by offering to gratify their natural urges. As explained in verse no. 3 above, the result is that the man is tossed violently like a plank of wood on a rough ocean.]

Meanwhile, the Atma of the creature (the Jivatma) which lives in this body consisting of the gross sense organs and the subtle mind-intellect complex is called the ‘Bhokta’—i.e. someone who either suffers from the miseries that come his way by getting involved in the world, or the one who enjoys the pleasures and comforts of this world (4).

[Note—This Atma is the true ‘self’ of the creature, and as such it is deemed to be the one which employs this body with all its components to fulfill its desires. In the

present case where the example of the chariot is cited, it would mean 'to reach its destination'. If this Atma or the 'self' of the creature is wise and enlightened then its 'destination' would be to attain the supreme stature of being one with the universal Brahman and find the final emancipation and salvation for its self. On the other hand, if the Atma is unwise and covered by a veil of ignorance and delusions then it would think that enjoyment of the sense objects of the world is the aim of getting the body. The former Atma is regarded as the wise owner of the chariot who reaches his destination comfortably and in the least possible time, while the latter Atma is regarded as the stupid owner who does not know how to harness the horses, resulting in his chariot rocking and rolling on the way till it breaks apart midway, throwing him off to the ground and getting injured seriously.

In other words, the Jivatma (the Atma of a creature) is the passenger who would either reach his destination if the chariot (body) moves ahead properly, or would get waylaid, fall down and get injured if the chariot becomes uncontrolled. If the creature decides that it should pursue the pleasures of the world, then it is tantamount to its allowing the horses to run amok and throw the chariot off balance, while if it chooses to reach the high citadel where the Emperor (the supreme Brahman) resides then it would be wise for it to let the intelligent charioteer do the driving and keep the horses under tight leash. The former type of creature is called a deluded worldly creature, while the latter is known as the wise and enlightened creature. A spiritual aspirant is expected to be like the second Jivatma. The first type of Jivatma is the one who has to suffer because pursuing the world creates a chain of other delusions in its wake which have the net affect of trapping the creature in their magical snare from which it becomes difficult for it to extricate itself, while the second type of Jivatma is freed from the clutches of these delusory and entrapping falsehoods and is able to reach the truthful spiritual goal which gives it permanent peace and happiness.

The Jivatma, or a living being having an Atma, has wandered in numerous births and suffered a lot. Finally, he has got a golden opportunity to reach his destination without much trouble by sitting in a chariot represented by the body. The sense organs of the body are like the horses that pull it along. Now, if the Jivatma leaves the running of the chariot to an expert charioteer represented by his intelligent mind and its discriminatory and analytical abilities, he can be rest assured that he would reach his destination comfortably, while if he does not allow this expert charioteer to be at the helm of affairs and lets the horses representing the sense organs pull the chariot as they deem fit, then the chariot is sure to topple over, because the horses begin to pull it in all directions.

How does the wise intellect act as the expert charioteer of the Jivatma? When the Jivatma has become wise about his own welfare, he gives the brief to his wise intellect to act accordingly. The brief is to take him to the destination known as 'Brahman realisation' where there is perpetual peace and happiness. The intellect then takes control of the reins of the mind and heart in its hand and leads the horses represented by the sense organs towards the desired destination. The chariot moves smoothly and without causing any trouble for its exalted passenger.

The sense organs have a natural tendency of gravitating towards the sense objects of this world which are very alluring for them. It is indeed very difficult to pull them away from this world much like it is very difficult to move a horse against its wishes if it is grazing grass and refuses to budge. If either the Jivatma (i.e. the creature who is treated as the passenger in this example) or his charioteer (the intellect) are a little careless or callous towards their own fate and allow themselves to become dependent upon the horses (i.e. allow themselves to become subservient to the impulses of the sense organs), then the consequences would be disastrous for the welfare of the passenger who would never reach his destination happily and comfortably even if he manages to reach there at all. So, if the Jivatma puts his destination in the hands of the wise intellect which in turn would keep the sense organs restrained by using its sway over the mind and heart as well as the sense organs, i.e. by 'reining in' the

‘horses’ respectively, the chariot and the passenger would both reach their destination comfortably and in one piece as it were.]

5. Those who are of a low or corrupted intellect, those whose intellect has been eclipsed by delusions and ignorance about the ‘truth’ and is unaware about the real destination of the creature’s soul, and those who have no control over their sense organs and are unable to restrain them, are like the passenger of the chariot whose charioteer is not a skilled one and who is unable to control the horses which become wild and run amok in their path (5).

[Note—With reference to what has been said in verse nos. 3-4 above, if the charioteer is not an expert man, then the uphill ride of the chariot to take the passenger (the Jivatma or creature) to his destination in the citadel where the ‘truth’ symbolised by the supreme Brahm resides becomes a perilous journey. There is a great chance that the chariot would topple over some precipice or ridge and spiritually kill the creature. In other words, if the sense organs are not kept under proper control either because the intellect is not wise enough or the mind is weak and fragile, then inspite of the fact that the creature is innocent and sincere in reaching the goal of spiritual realisation, the destination becomes difficult for him reach. So the emphasis here is to first properly train the intellect and enable it to exercise control over the mind and heart (the Mana). It is only then that the creature is able to control the sense organs of the body.]

6. On the contrary, those who have a wise and well-trained intellect as well as a mind and heart which are well under control, such people are able to keep the sense organs of the body fully under their control much like the horses that are kept tightly under leash by an expert charioteer who knows how to rein them in and drive the chariot properly towards its destination (6).

[Note—The reasoning given above in verse no. 5 is extended further to emphasis that if the creature is wise and he can properly train his intellect to select the path carefully and diligently besides honing its skills at controlling the mind and using it as a rein to tame the sense organs of the body, then the creature is rest assured of reaching his spiritual goal of Brahm realisation or self-realisation with ease.]

7. Those whose intellect is under the spell of delusions and ignorance, those who have not been able to control their mind, and those who remain perpetually in a state of impurity¹ are not able to attain the supreme stature of Brahm-realisation or self-realisation.

Instead, they remain trapped in the snare cast by this world (and continue to rotate in the endless cycle of birth and death accompanied by its attendant miseries and sorrows)² (7).

[Note—¹The *impurity* here refers to the condition in which the sense organs are perpetually engrossed in enjoying their respective sense objects of the material world, the mind remains engrossed in thinking of the pleasures and comforts of this world and how to enhance and retain them, and the intellect is busy either supporting the mind in its worldly efforts or trying to find justifications for its own delusory dalliances. In this process, the Jivatma becomes tainted by the impurities of the world in which his body, mind and intellect remain engrossed. It is a natural phenomenon that one is affected by his surroundings. The surrounding in the present case is the corrupted world, so how can the Jivatma expect to remain free from its affects?

The sense organs of perception are five—ear which hears, eyes which sees, tongue which tastes, nose which smells, and skin which feels or touches pleasant things and derives immense pleasure from such contact. These sense organs, along with the five organs of action such as the hands which take or accept any material

thing, legs which take the creature towards its desired destination, the mouth which speaks and eats, the genitals which help it to enjoy sensual pleasures, and the excretory organs which help to eliminate the waste accumulated inside the body and empty its bowls so that it becomes ready to accept more rubbish, are like the receptive antenna for the subtle body of the creature consisting of the mind and intellect.

The mind and intellect is the apparatus which processes the incoming information gathered by the sense organs and then decide what to or what not to do. In other words, they act like the secretariat of the emperor-like Atma which sits ensconced in the causal body of the creature in the exalted space of its subtle heart. If an emperor has wise ministers manning his secretariat, then he gets enhancement in his fame and majesty, while corrupt and unscrupulous ministers lead him to his ruin.

²When under delusions, the creature begins to think that his body is his true self instead of the Atma, and then he thinks that the deeds done by the body have been done by him, and therefore he is entitled to their rewards. Since aspirations, yearnings, hopes, desires and expectations have no upper limit and they go on increasing when fed by ignorance and delusions of the creature vis-à-vis this world, then the creature can never ever hope to find contentedness and fulfillment, and this in turn drives him to strive for more and make greater efforts in order to seek contentedness and fulfillment. The chain keeps the creature bound to this world and its material charms, leading to the creature being forced to take a new birth every time he sheds his old body in the hope of enjoying the rewards of deeds done in his past life which he had not been able to fully and satisfactorily enjoy then.

At the same time, the creature has to suffer from the evil consequences of bad deeds done by him in the previous life if some residual punishment is still overdue because every punishment must run its full course if one is to be fully cleansed of the bad affects of the sinful act.

In short, the creature gets trapped in this world and coloured or tainted by its various shades of good and bad characteristic features.]

8. On the contrary, those who have a wise and enlightened intellect, those who have been able to exercise control over their mind and through the combined effort of both the intellect and the mind have put their sense organs under leash, and those who are free from all worldly corruptions and pollutions or impurities—they are the ones who are able to reach the pinnacle of spiritual attainment symbolised by Brahm realisation from where there is no return. [That is, they obtain final emancipation and salvation for their souls when it merges with its primary source, the supreme transcendental cosmic Soul of creation, and become inseparably one with it. So there is no question of their soul coming back to the world as a creature or Jivatma any time again in the future.] (8).

[Note—This verse describes what happens to the creature who is wise and follows the path of self-realisation. Such a creature is able to break free from the endless cycle of birth and death, and instead obtain salvation known as Kaivalya Mukti, which is liberation from the fetters that shackle the creature's soul or Atma to this mundane artificial world and deliver it from the torments of this world.]

9. A person who has a friendly charioteer who is wise, erudite, skilled and enlightened, and has his mind and heart under tight control (i.e. has a focused mind and restrained emotions), is able to cross over from this world and reach the supreme abode of Lord Vishnu (who is the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic grand manifestation of the supreme transcendental Brahm and the Lord from whom the rest of the creation, including the creator of the visible creation known as Brahma, was

born). That is, such a wise and erudite man is able to find his true destination in the form of the supreme abode of the Lord where his soul would find its final rest (9).

10. Compared to the sense organs of the body which are gross in nature, their respective sense perceptions which are subtler in nature are better and superior¹. Compared to these sense perceptions, the Mana or the mind is better and superior because it is subtler than the former². Compared to the Mana (mind), the Buddhi or the intellect is better and superior because it is subtler than the Mana³. And finally, compared to the Buddhi, the Atma which is pure consciousness is better and superior because it is the subtlest entity in the entire setup⁴ (10).

[Note—¹There are five *sense organs* of perception—viz. ear, nose, eye, tongue and skin. They form different components of the gross body of the creature. Their respective *perceptions* are hearing, smelling, seeing, tasting and feeling or touching. These perceptions are subtle in the sense that they cannot be physically touched or felt like their respective sense organs, but can only be perceived. For example, one can touch the nose or the ear, but one cannot imagine actually touching and feeling the sense of smell or hearing.

²The next entity in this progression is the *mind* which is subtler than and superior to the perceptions because it can control them. Only an entity that is superior to the other can exercise control over the latter. Since the sense perceptions are subtle and the mind is able to control them, it follows that the mind is superior and more subtle than these perceptions.

³The *intellect* is superior and subtler to the mind because it can control the mind. The intellect does not have any contact with the gross organs or the gross world, is more concerned with pursuing higher objectives for the creature such as the study of the scriptures and their intelligent interpretations, and giving righteous and noble advice to the mind as well as the Atma in the form of the ‘voice of conscience’ which would in turn drive the creature to opt to do righteous things instead of unrighteous things. The intellect is in direct contact with the Atma which is the ethereal and subtlest entity residing in the body of the individual creature.

On the face of it, the mind-intellect appears to be one entity, but this is not the case. They are two components of the brain—the first is the ‘mind’ that deals with the mundane affairs of life because it is in direct contact with the organs of the body and thorough it with the outside world, controlling the functions of the body and its interaction with the external world of material objects, and the second component is the ‘intellect’ that deals with the higher and ethereal aspects of life which require intelligent thinking, rational logic and analytical interpretations. This setup is like the air that has two layers—one which is heavier as it is nearer to earth, and the other which is rarefied as it is higher up in the sky. The air nearer to earth is polluted and heavy, but the air higher up is clean, pristine and light.

⁴The *Atma* is the Lord and Master of the whole setup and the subtlest entity in the creature’s body. It is the ethereal Spirit which has characteristic that are opposite to what is possessed by gross body of the creature. Even as a thing that is light and subtle is able to lift itself up and can rise higher into the atmosphere as is evident in the case of gas or hot-air filled balloon, the ethereal Atma can reach the highest pinnacle of Truth and spiritual achievement. It can extricate the creature from the swamp of worldly delusions in which he finds himself. The sense organs on the other hand have just the opposite tendency. These organs tend to pull the creature down towards the gross world and its gross objects. Even as a dense and viscous liquid such as honey is very sweet and alluring on the face of it, the attractions of the material world are also very enchanting and alluring for the sense organs of the creature who wishes to enjoy their sweetness and charms in a perpetual way just like a man wishes to keep on eating honey every now and then, remaining oblivious of the fact that that this indulgence might be injurious to his health.

So a wise man who wishes to rise above the mundane and reach the citadel of truthful spiritual enlightenment relies upon the strength of his Atma rather than on the body and its sense organs.

This concept has been elaborately explained to sage Narad by sage Sanatkumar in Chandogya Upanishad of Sam Veda tradition in its Canto 7. This Upanishad has been published in the series as part of the anthology of Sam Veda Upanishads.]

11. From this glorious and majestic Atma honoured by the epithet of ‘Mahat’ (i.e. one that is great and majestic), the invisible dynamic forces of creation called ‘Avyakta’ i.e. that which is not visible; that which is not manifest) is superior and subtler. [This invisible cosmic dynamic force of creation is the primary ‘Nature’ from which the rest of creation has come into being.]

The ‘Purush’ (i.e. the Virrat Purush) is superior and subtler than this Avyakta (invisible cosmic Nature)².

There is nothing superior to the Purush. He is the ultimate and final Authority in creation. That Purush is the final frontier, so to say, and he is the final abode for the soul of the creature (11).

[Note—¹The individual Atma is the microcosm of the colossus cosmic Consciousness. When Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness that is the ‘cause’ of this creation coming into being, decided to initiate the process of creation, its dynamic forces revealed themselves first. These forces at the cosmic level are collectively called ‘primary Prakriti or Nature’. It was from them that the rest of the process rolled forward. These forces were subtle, invisible and infinite just like the capabilities of the mind and intellect in the case of the individual creature.

²The supreme Brahm metamorphosed as the Viraat Purush once the process of creation started. This Viraat Purush is the macrocosmic gross body of Brahm, and is therefore also called ‘Ishwar’ or the supreme Lord. Since the man is an image of this Purush at the microcosmic plane of creation, he is called the de facto ‘lord’ of the mortal world because he is the most powerful and intelligent of all the species on earth.

It is from the Viraat Purush that the creator Brahma was born atop the divine lotus that emerged from his navel. In this role, the Viraat Purush is called Vishnu. Since this Purush is the original ‘creator or cause’ of this creation, he is actually the ‘real father’ who loves his off springs very dearly. This is why Vishnu or Viraat Purush is called the sustainer and protector of creation.

Being the cause of the entire creation, the Viraat Purush is the apex of the triangle-like creation which has the visible world on this earth of which the individual creature is a unit as the base and the Purush as its apex. The Purush shines from the top like the Sun in the sky. That supreme entity is called a ‘Purush’ because it uniformly pervades in and completely fills everything that exists. (Refer reverend Adi Sankracharya’s commentary on this Upanishad. This definition of Purush has been affirmed in Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, 2/5/18.)

The question arises that when a creature goes to the abode of Vishnu, why does he not return to this world? The answer is that when the creature finds a better environment for himself, when he finds that he has obtained an eternal fount of bliss and happiness, obviously he would not wish to return to the miserable existence from which he had tried to flee and reach this exalted stature. This is the thinking of the wise soul, whereas those who are under delusions come back because they get distracted midway as they are not sufficiently enlightened about the real goal of life. They find it hard to believe that there even exists a sublime state where there is eternal bliss and happiness, an exalted stature that is invisible but nevertheless true, because they are accustomed to believing in only those things that they can physically see and touch. So they believe that the world of material charm that is physically seen

and experienced by them is more truthful and tangible than the abstract state of self-realisation and ethereal existence.]

12. The Atma, the pure consciousness, which is present universally and uniformly in all the living creatures, does not shine (i.e. it does not make its presence felt) on its own. It is revealed to or it can be visualized by those who have a deeply penetrating spiritual insight and a sharp and receptive intellect (12).

[Note—The supreme Brahm or cosmic Soul which is the life and consciousness present in the bosom of all living creatures, right from the patriarch of creation known as Brahma to the single cell organism, is a very mysterious entity. It is covered by a veil of Maya or delusions which hides its true identity because it wants to remain anonymous and concealed from the glare of public eye much like the emperor who remains comfortably ensconced in his palace and accessible only to a handful of senior councilors. Who are such fortunate ones who have access and hold witness to Brahm's presence? They are the wise and enlightened ones who have firm conviction and faith in the proclamations of the scriptures about the truthful existence of such an entity. To take a simple example, only a doctor or a nutritional expert knows the beneficial affects of water; for the rest of us it just a medium of quenching thirst and cooking food. The water is the basic ingredient of milk and not vice versa. Food cannot be cooked and digested without water, and life cannot exist in its absence. Water is the elixir of life, and this honour is not available to milk.

So ordinary people go for the immediate benefits that the world offers to them, instead of trying to find out the foundation upon which the world rests. This research is the search of the ultimate Truth of creation. Since this Truth as far as life in this world is concerned is the pure consciousness known as the Atma, only those who are wise, intelligent and focused are able to realise this Truth because any research requires special skills, concentration, steadfastness and intelligence.

Further, since the Atma is universally present in all the creatures, it is not visible to the physical eye of the body because no one can see his own self except in a mirror or as an image in any other reflective surface. This mirror in which the Atma is reflected is the wise and enlightened mind-intellect that aids in self-realisation. It is in this mirror that one is able to see his 'true self' being reflected. If the mirror is tarnished and blackened, the image is not visible. Since this mirror is subtle and not gross like the glass mirror of this world, the image seen is equally subtle and beyond the criterions applied to images seen in this gross world.]

13. [This verse describes the progressive dissolution of all the diverse entities in this visible creation into one single divine entity that is supreme transcendental and universal Truth known as Brahm.]

A wise and erudite man should first dissolve or withdraw the different organs of perception and action represented by the faculty of speech etc. into the Mana (emotive mind). Then he should dissolve or withdraw the Mana into the Buddhi (the intellect). The intellect should be withdrawn or dissolved into the Atma which is enlightened pure consciousness that resides inside the individual creature. Finally, this individual Atma should be dissolved or merged into the supreme transcendental Atma of the creation that has a cosmic and universal dimension. This gives the final peace and tranquility to the creature for which he was so eager (13).

[Note—(a) This verse narrates the process of regression of creation. When a wise man realises the 'truth' of creation and wishes to go back to the origin of everything, he first withdraws the tentacles represented by his sense organs that are the antennas that help 'him', i.e. his 'true self' the Atma, to perceive the world. The mind is the controlling center of all the sense organs, and so when the mind decides to shut its doors to them, the sense organs are deemed to be withdrawn and dissolved in the

mind. The intellect is the senior half of the mind. Whereas the mind is like the office clerk who deals with the ordinary matters of the office, the intellect is the supervisor who deals with matters that require analysis and decision. All these components are actually the huge secretariat working for the Emperor's representative known as the Atma residing in the inner palace of the heart. They all serve this single Governor-General or Viceroy. That is, the final Lord is the Atma which is the 'true self' of the man. When the man has access to this exalted being, he need not bother about the subordinates such as the prime minister the intellect and his junior ministers such as the mind and other units of the secretarial setup. But soon the wise and enlightened man realises that this Atma is not the 'ultimate Authority'. On research he discovers that it is an entity that is transcendental and supreme, and that it is defined by the terms Absolute, Truth and Reality. This divine, esoteric and holy entity is Brahm.

In other words, the wise and erudite man concludes that if his 'true self' is said to be the pure conscious Atma, that this Atma of his is only an image of the supreme transcendental cosmic Atma which is infinitely and eternally more superior and powerful than this individual Atma of his, that the Atma is the ultimate Absolute, Truth and Reality, and since 'truth' cannot be two but only one, he finally concludes that his actual origin is in the cosmic Absolute known as Brahm. He also discovers that this method of regression from the known world to the unknown world is the easiest way to trace his origin in Brahm.

He can also visualize the process of creation by retracing this process of regression, and discovers that everything sprung forth from this single point known as Brahm and then progressed in successive steps to create this world as it is seen now and as it would be seen tomorrow in some different form because it is still continuing to develop and unfold. If the man's single 'individual self' with such limited reach and resources can have such varying personalities and stupendous abilities that it can create such a majestic world having a vast array of colours and contours, what wonder there is in the fact that Brahm who has infinitely greater powers and authority than the man's single self can create this vast universe?

(b) When a man is not aware of the reality, he is afraid of a length of rope thinking it to be a serpent. But when he becomes wisened to the reality, he loses all fears. Similarly, as long as the man thinks that the world is real he has fear of it in him, but as soon as the reality dawns upon him about its falsehood and pretensions, the fear vanishes. This is the difference between mind and the intellect—the former is subject to what the sense organs inform it, while the latter can analyse things for its self and then determine what is true and what is false.

Thus, the sense organs of perception which are the cause of all wrong information are withdrawn or eliminated from the scene, and with their elimination the mind finds peace and is freed from being constantly bombarded by wrong information. When the mind becomes calm, it frees the intellect to devote its energy to higher pursuits. At the later stage, the intellect also loses its relevance for the Atma which does not need its service any more because the Atma is self enlightened and self capable. So when the creature has realised his own true form, he does not need the support of the intellect to reach his spiritual goal. The intellect is needed only till the time full knowledge is not obtained about the truth, but once it is available, it becomes redundant.]

14. [This is a general call for spiritual awakening and acquisition of truthful knowledge.] 'Oh ignorant men! Wake up from the sleep of ignorance and shed your delusions. Go to the learned ones and acquire knowledge about the Truth'.

Those who are well versed in the scriptures and the essence of the profound Truth assert that this path leading to the acquisition of knowledge of the Truth is as difficult and intractable as the sharp edge of a knife¹ (14).

[Note--¹In other words, only a razor sharp and intelligent mind can enable the man to access this majestic and magnificent knowledge about the Atma. Any slip or carelessness would cut and bleed him seriously much like playing fools with the knife would cause a deep wound and might even prove fatal for him. That is why it is said that the path of 'Gyan', or pursuing the 'truth' by following the path of knowledge acquisition, is very difficult, daunting, hazardous and exceptional. It is full of pitfalls and very arduous to tread upon. There is a special Upanishad called the Kshurikopanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition that deals precisely with this concept and it is Chapter 11 of this volume.]

15. [This verse enumerates some of the uncountable virtues of the Atma.]

That which is beyond the reach of words (i.e. which cannot be described in words), that which is beyond the reach of touch (i.e. which cannot be verified by touching and feeling to establish its truthfulness), that which is without a form and shape (i.e. which has no fixed physical identity and contour, no physical attributes of colour, shape and texture that can be seen), that which is imperishable and does not decay or diminish, that which is beyond the purview of taste and is therefore bland or neutral (i.e. which has no attributes, characteristics and qualities), that which is eternal, constant and omnipresent, that which is without any smell (i.e. that which has no 'stink' emanating from it indicating its divinity and holiness; that which is beyond the purview of the perception of smell and related to this gross world because smell originates in things that grow on earth), that which has no beginning or end, that principal which is beyond (superior to) the definitions of majesty, grandeur and magnificence, and that which is steady, unchanging, immutable, indivisible and eternally truthful—verily, by being acquainted with such an eclectic, divine, holy and astoundingly magnificent entity known as the Atma, a man is freed from the mouth (clutches or fear) of death' (15).

[Note—This eclectic state of existence can be achieved only by the man who is wise and self-realised because he has come to understand the metaphysical truth about his own self that his true identity is the Atma which has the stupendous qualities mentioned in this verse, and that this Atma is no ordinary entity. Besides this fact, he also becomes aware of the fact that the body is not his true self and its decay or sufferings should not affect him in any way. It is the body that dies and suffers, and not the Atma because the latter is an eternal and blissful entity. This fundamental realisation frees him from all causes of fear of death. Refer also to note to verse no. 12-13 above.]

16. Those wise ones who preach and listen to this profound wisdom preached by Yam for the benefit of Nachiketa and listened attentively by the latter, are lauded and honoured even in the Brahma-loka (i.e. in the abode of Brahma in the heaven). That is, those who become learned in this great wisdom about the Atma are honoured even by the Gods because this knowledge was difficult for them to access (as mentioned by Yam himself in Canto 1, Valli 1, verse no. 21-22.) (16).

17. A person who attentively hears the secrets and mysteries unraveled in this holy scripture with firm faith and conviction in the assembly of Brahmins (learned people), or during the days when dead ancestors are honoured and oblations are offered to them¹—verily, such people become eligible and competent to obtain an eternal reward by way of attaining eternity and truthfulness for themselves as well as for their ancestors. [That is, they become eternally freed from the bondage of birth and death along with their ancestors if this Upanishad is heard and understood during the auspicious period when ancestors are honoured.] (17).

[Note—¹While one is offering oblations to dead ancestors, one comes face to face with the reality and certainty of death and what would happen to him after death. It is the ripe time to hear this Upanishad because it helps a man to focus his attention on doing something that would free him from becoming a wandering ‘spirit’ instead of finding permanent liberation and deliverance. The stature of dead ancestors is not a very high one because these spirits keep on lingering in a state of suspended animation in some junior heaven, waiting for their time to come back to this world or go higher up to the heaven. The very fact that the ancestors are living in a ‘spirit form’ and need water and food to quench his or her thirst and hunger establishes that they have not found permanent peace. Worst, they depend upon their descendents to give them water and food, so they are not even independent like the man who at least can fend for himself.]

At such a time, when a man hears about permanent liberation and deliverance and freedom from the fear of death, he literally grabs it with both hands. His mind is most receptive now while he is remembering the fate of his ancestors who have become ‘spirits’ instead of finding permanent emancipation and salvation as compared to the time when he is comfortably enjoying the fruits of his worldly exploits, when he is rolling in wealth and sensual pleasures and is therefore the least concerned about what happens after death.]

Canto 2, Valli 1

[Previously it has been said that the glorious Atma which is the pure conscious self of the creature can be witnessed and experienced only by a sharp and penetrating intellect. Now the question arises what special qualities does the intellect have without which the Atma cannot be realised? Therefore, this Valli elucidates upon the reasons why Atma cannot be so easily realised so that remedies can be found to remove these hurdles because only when a disease is properly diagnosed can remedies searched for it and administered to cure it.]

1. The self-created supreme Lord known as ‘Swaayambhu’ had created the different organs of perception in the body with their receptive openings facing outwards¹. That is why the creature can perceive external stimuli originating from the sense objects of this material world, but is unable to perceive anything related to the Atma residing in his own bosom so close to his self.

Those fortunate and steadfast persons who have a strong will power and a burning desire for ‘seeing’ (realising, witnessing, getting acquainted with) the truthful ‘Pratyhagatma’ (i.e. the pure conscious Atma which is all-knowing, omniscient, self-illuminated and eternally enlightened) endeavour to exercise exemplary control over their sense organs, such as for example the eyes. [When they wish to see the sublime and divine light burning eternally inside their own bosom, they would have to shut the window to the outside world. In other words, when they close the window of the body by which the mind-intellect sees the outside world, it is only then it would be stopped from being promiscuous and turn inside to see what is available there. When the eyes are closed tight shut, the mind would not be disturbed by the enchanting sights of the external world, and it is only then that it would be able to focus its attention on the light emanating from the Atma. When the external window is closed and still there is light inside, the mind-intellect is left to wonder about the source of this illumination. It is only then that it discovers the presence of an enigmatic and mystical entity that is

all-knowing, omniscient, self-illuminated and self-enlightened residing in the bosom of the self This is the Atma that the mind-intellect has been searching for.] (1).

[Note—¹All the organs of perception face outside—viz. the eyes open outside the body and so do the nose, ears, mouth housing the tongue, and the skin which also acts as the external covering of the body. The senses that they perceive, or the stimuli that they pick up would naturally come from the area where they are directed at much like an electronic radar or radio telescope in modern times which picks up signals from the area of the sky where they are pointed. That is why we can hear the sound emanating from the outside world but not hear the beating of our own heart, or we can see an injury on the skin but not the clot of blood inside the body for instance. We can see such a beautiful world outside but we cannot see the internal organs of our own bodies, such as the heart or the lungs. If the sense organs cannot allow us to observe such basic parts of the body because of the fact that these sense organs are only pointing outwards and therefore cannot 'see' inside, how can we expect to show us the Atma? The answer to this perplexing question lies in controlling these organs from remaining hitched to the outside world of material objects so that the mind-intellect can have time and energy to devote to the realisation of the Atma.

²The organs have a natural affinity for the pleasures and comforts obtained from the objects of this world. They would not like any restraint being imposed upon themselves much like the horses of a chariot. Therefore, it requires a Herculean effort to divert them from the outside to the inside much like the effort to divert the flow of a river. It is not though that it is impossible to do so for we have witnessed how a man can, given the will, effectively tame the river and build huge dams on it to harness the energy of the humble water to produce electricity and irrigate lands which had not known these benefits for centuries. So everything is possible if effort and sincerity is there.

The stimuli received from the external world are processed in the brain consisting of the mind and intellect. So as long as the organs of perception are not stopped from remaining busy in their nefarious activities, the mind-intellect complex will have no time to devote to higher objectives of life. But when the sense organs are restrained it can do so.

Therefore, only when one is able to see oneself with his 'inner eye' of wisdom and enlightenment as not being the gross physical body but something higher and ethereal, all his desires and tendency to be extrovert would vanish, and he experiences absolute peace and tranquility. This is the culmination of 'self-realisation' process.]

2. [This verse describes the subtle difference between a wise man and an unwise man.]

Unwise, deluded and ignorant people are the ones who remain engrossed in pursuing the pleasures and comforts offered by the objects of the material world which are inherently perishable and transient. Such persons remain trapped in the tentacles of death which is spread everywhere¹.

On the contrary, wise and enlightened persons recognise the futility of this pursuit and instead concentrate their attention on something that is eternal, truthful, perpetual and steady. They therefore focus their attention on realisation of the pure conscious Atma and shun any desire for having anything of the external world which is transient and impermanent² (2).

[Note—¹Anything which is transient and subject to decay and ruin is a metaphoric representative of death because death is the opposite of permanence and eternity. The world would come to an end one day along with all its fascinating and enchanting allurements, and so would the body of the creature along with its sense organs. So, both comrades would die and become history one day. It is highly stupid to hoard assets which are perishable and impermanent. Such people are called 'ignorant and

unwise' because they yearn for perishable things instead of yearning for things which have permanence and stability.

²On the other hand, a person is considered wise, sagacious and prudent when he would desire for things which have a long life so that one can enjoy the pleasures associated with them for eternity. On research it is found that the world and its objects do not fit the bill, so a wise and erudite man avoids them by a long barge pole. He comes to realise that the only entity which is eternal and steady is the pure consciousness present in the form of the universal Atma in his own bosom. This is why he does not desire any thing pertaining to this material world.

Every noble impulse has its roots in mankind's higher nature. The more he attunes himself to it, the more powerful and potent its influence grows. This is the difference between a wise and self-realised man vis-à-vis an unwise man engrossed in pursuing the pleasures of this perishable world—the former has attained a higher state of moral and spiritual living as compared to the latter.]

3. It is on the inspiration and behest of the Atma that a person comes to know whatever is to be known in this world and enjoys the pleasures of whatever is to be enjoyed in this world, such as seeing and enjoying different sights (by the faculty of sight located in the eye), tasting and enjoying everything that is worth it (by the faculty of taste located in the tongue), smelling and enjoying everything that is worth smelling (by the faculty of smell located in the nose), hearing words and enjoying their worth (by the faculty of hearing located in the ear), touching and feeling everything and deriving immense pleasure and comfort from such sensations (by the faculty of touching and feeling that are located in the skin), and enjoying sexual gratification and pleasures (through the genital organs).

Thus, what is not known to the Atma? The Atma enables a man to learn everything in this existence as it is the 'only' conscious entity present inside the otherwise gross and inert body which would not have been able to do anything left to its own accord. The Atma is indeed most enlightened about everything, being omniscient and all-knowing.

In other words, what can be out of reach of the knowledge of the Atma, and by extension what can not be known through the medium of the Atma?

This is verily that entity. [In other words, the supreme, transcendental, esoteric and mysterious entity that knows everything and which is powerful enough to enable the sense organs of the body and the mind-intellect to know about both the gross as well as the subtle things in this world is known as the Atma.] (3).

[Note—The creature learns about the external world and develops attraction and then attachment for it only because the consciousness present in his bosom makes him enlightened about it. In other words, one creature recognises the presence of the other creature because the consciousness present in the first creature makes him aware of the second creature. Likewise, it is the consciousness present in the body that enables the mind and intellect to determine that any given object is charming or repulsive. This is proved by the case when the dead body from which the consciousness has left not being able to do anything—it would not get attracted towards anything at all and neither would it develop revulsion for anything. The body is not alive on its own but it depends upon the Atma to keep it alive and enjoy the objects of this world. In other words, the only element of any real worth in the body is the conscious Atma.]

4. That consciousness by which a man is able to consciously see things that appear to be real both during sleep as well as during the waking state of his existence is called the Atma. It is a great and majestic entity honoured by the title of 'Vibhu' (meaning the Supreme Being who is omnipresent, all-pervading, omnipotent, all-powerful,

eternal, steady and magnanimous by nature). By knowing it or becoming aware of it (i.e. by becoming self-realised because the Atma is the truthful 'self' of the creature), a wise and self-realised man does not grieve and feel sorrowful or miserable under any circumstances (4).

[Note—Self-realisation entails the realisation of the fact by the man that the Atma is his truthful identity, that this Atma is the Supreme Being or Brahm personified, and there is no difference between the two of them. Since the exalted Atma is blessed with the virtues defined as 'Vibhu', i.e. the qualities possessed by the supreme Brahm, and this Atma is the 'true self' of the man, it follows that he is also as exalted as the supreme Brahm in his purest form. With this view, the man has no reason to feel dejected and sorrowful for anything as he is no ordinary being but the Lord himself personified.]

5. When a wise, erudite and self-realised person is enlightened of the fact that this Atma is the one who enjoys the rewards of all deeds (i.e. is the supreme authority for whom all deeds are done and is the one who is being served by the body when it does any deed), that this Atma is the one who bears the Pran etc. (i.e. it is the authority which enables the body to have 'life' by bearing various life-giving and life-sustaining vital winds and performing various functions pertaining to the sustenance of life in this world), and that this Atma is the authority who rules over all time frames such as the past and the future (i.e. is the authority that has been the king and commander of the world since its conception and would be so even till eternity)—such erudition and enlightenment precludes the necessity for the man to struggle to protect such an exalted and all powerful entity known as the Atma. [For example, a man need not bother about the safety of the Emperor as the latter is capable of taking care of himself.]

Such an exalted, divine, transcendental and supreme Atma is indeed known as the 'Ishan' or the Lord of this creation. Verily, it (the Atma) is that (Brahm) glorious Divinity which possesses these virtues (5).

[Note—A man does anything for his own comfort and pleasure. Does he know who he is, or is he aware of the person whom he so proudly calls 'I or Me' and for whom he and his body have been toiling for so long? This verse answers these fundamental questions—for now it is established that it is the Atma which is the true 'self' of the man and the entity for whom all efforts of the body are made.

Only a living body bears the Pran (breath) and other vital winds, and since consciousness and intelligent behavior is the yardstick to judge whether anything is worthy to be called 'living', it follows that the Atma is the one which bears the signs of life because a body bereft of the Atma cannot bear any signs of life.

Everything, including the body, is perishable and impermanent in this creation. So what was that which was present before everything else came into being, and what is that which would be present after everything comes to a naught so that new life can sprout from it? Well, the unequivocal and resounding answer to this quintessential question is that it is the 'pure conscious Atma'.]

6. Those wise and erudite persons who are aware of the existence of the divine Being who was born as a result of Tapa (severe penances) even before other elements such as the water etc. were created at the beginning of creation, and that this divine Being subsequently took up residence in the cave-like heart of all living beings that came into existence when the world was created (as their Atma)—such persons are the ones who know the truth and the reality of this supreme Principal of creation. [They are the ones who realise that it is the supreme Authority who lives amongst all the creatures, does everything, and enjoys the results of every deed.]

Verily, that divine entity is indeed the supreme, transcendental, esoteric and majestic Atma representing Brahm (6).

[Note—In the beginning there was only Brahm who had no attributes and definitions. This Brahm was known as Ishwar because it was the Lord of what was to come into being in future. Since something cannot be produced from nothing, it follows that this 'Brahm' was the divine and mystical entity that existed between the time the previous creation was consumed and the new came into being. Brahm had 'life' and was 'conscious' because only a living entity having consciousness can do Tapa and decide that it would do something, which in the present case was to initiate the process of creation.

So, when Brahm in the form of Ishwar decided to do Tapa in order to initiate creation, the first unit that was born or revealed was known as Hiranyagarbha, the cosmic subtle body of creation. This Hiranyagarbha was all-knowing and omniscient like the parent Brahm. The genesis of creation describes how the other building blocks of creation known as the primary 'Bhuts' or primary elements such as sky/space, air/wind, fire/energy, water and earth, in increasing degree of grossness, came into being from this primary Hiranyagarbha. When the creation finally took its shape, Brahm assumed a cosmic form that was sublime and invisible but all-pervading and omnipresent. This was the gross body of Brahm, and it was called the Viraat Purush. When the creature's body was created, it was in the likeness of this Viraat Purush, and Brahm entered this body as the Atma or soul and ruled the world from inside the creature's inner self. Since Hiranyagarbha is the first manifestation of the un-manifest Brahm and therefore its closest representative, he was regarded as being synonymous with Brahm. The Viraat Purush was Brahm's gross cosmic body, and its image in the form of the creature's body was therefore Brahm in a microcosmic revelation.

In other words, the Lord who rules the world from inside the bosom of the creature is none other but Brahm.]

7. The cosmic dynamic force and vital life-infusing energy of Mother Nature which is endowed with divine god-like powers is called Aditi (called the 'mother of Gods'). She has manifested herself as the Pran (i.e. as the life giving and sustaining vital winds present in the body). This Aditi accompanied all the other Bhuts (the primary elements of creation such as the sky, air, fire, water and earth) as they revealed themselves in the form of this creation. Once this gross world was moulded out of the Bhuts, this Aditi secretly and quietly entered the gross body and took up residence in the secret cave-like chamber of the subtle heart from where she controlled all the activities.

Verily, this Aditi is nothing but dynamic powers of the supreme, transcendental, esoteric and majestic Brahm manifested in the form of the pure conscious Atma that lives in the heart of the creature (7).

[Note—The cosmic dynamic forces of creation are visualized as Gods who personify them. At the cosmic level of creation, these dynamic forces of creation revealed themselves as the Prakriti or Nature. Since this creation was nurtured by this Prakriti or Nature in its womb, it was called 'Mother' of creation. That is why we refer to it as 'Mother Nature'. According to mythology, the mother of Gods is known as Aditi, and that is why Mother Nature is referred to as Aditi. When this visible world came into being, Brahm entered in the body as the Atma which is the pure consciousness, but the Pran and other life-giving forces were called Gods as they were assigned specific functions in the whole setup.

Since the philosophy of the Upanishads treat Brahm as a non-dual, immutable and indivisible Divinity, it follows that whatever that exists in this creation is one or the other form of Brahm. Therefore, not only the Atma but also the Pran and the other

Gods that govern this body of the creature are Brahm personified. Even the Bhuts are Brahm in these forms.

Now, life and Pran (i.e. the vital winds which infuse life in the otherwise life-less body of a creature) are synonymous with each other as much as is life and Atma (which is pure consciousness present in the creature's bosom). While the Atma represents the all-knowing and omniscient Brahm, the Pran represents the creative and sustaining aspect of the latter and it is therefore known as Aditi. Together, Atma and Aditi represent the majestic and stupendous authority of Brahm. This is the essence of this verse.

'One who gives birth, one who initiates, one who teaches, one who feeds, and one who protects from fear—verily, all these five are to be treated as a Father' (Subhashita Manjari).]

8. Just like the hidden embryo that is nourished in the womb of a woman, the most powerful fire element known as Jatveda¹ (so called because it is as glorious and brilliant as the Sun God—the 'Jatveda') is present between the two Aranis².

When this Jatveda fire is ignited by rubbing of the Aranis, it is regularly and consistently worshipped and adored by worshippers who offer oblations to it during a fire sacrifice.

Verily, this primarily invisible cosmic 'fire' element that reveals itself as the sacrificial sacred fire is most powerful and potent as well as so sacred that the entire fire sacrifice revolves around it, and all offerings meant for the Gods are given to it instead of the Gods. It is indeed Brahm personified. [All the offerings made to the physical fire burning in the fire pit are meant for the Fire God, the deity who is worshipped in this physical form and who is regarded as a personification of Brahm and a representative of all the Gods.]

It is the Atma because without the fire being lit, the fire sacrifice cannot progress even for a fraction of a second (8).

[Note—¹The *Jatvedas* is the name of the Sun God as well as the Fire God. The sun is indeed the most evident form of the fire element and possesses all the virtues and qualities of the latter. This Jatveda fire is like the cosmic fire present in the cosmic cauldron represented by the celestial sun which is comparable to the pit of the fire sacrifice done by the creator at the time of the beginning of creation. The Tapa that the creator did at he beginning was to create the energy needed to initiate the process of creation; it was done to empower the creator to initiate the process of creation. This Tapa is the symbolic rubbing of the Aranis.

With reference to the fire element we find that essentially it has only one uniform identity known as 'fire', but its energy, vitality, heat and light is revealed in an astounding variety of forms and shapes giving rise to the situation where this one fire is known by different names. Likewise, the same non-dual Brahm which has conceived the cosmic embryo called the Hiranyagarbha (like the woman harbouring the embryo conceived by her in her womb) reveals its self in the form of this myriad world (just like the embryo taking birth as an infant of different species) of such stupendous variety that it defies imagination.

Since only the emperor is paid tribute and not the junior kings, and since without 'fire' the embryo would not have got its energy to develop into a creature and then create an entire world around it by its own efforts, this Jatveda fire is honoured and revered as the manifestation of the supreme, transcendental, esoteric and powerful Brahm who is very enigmatic and all-pervading.

There is a great significance of using the analogy of the fire produced by rubbing the Arani to symbolise Brahm. It implies that Brahm is present everywhere and at all times just like the fire element, but it requires a lot of vigorous and diligent effort and holiness of purpose to actually invoke and reveal him much like rubbing the drills to

create the fire during the sacred fire sacrifice. Once revealed, this fire needs to be honoured and revered with due respect, and it then becomes most potent and provider of all desired rewards, whether they are related to worldly matters or spiritual matters. The stupendous potentials and powers of the 'fire' are too obvious and well known to be elaborated upon—it can burn to ashes all the impurities with which it comes in contact and purify the primary element which had those impurities. In other words, with Brahm realisation, all the impurities clinging to the creature are eliminated and the glorious nature of its true 'self' known as the Atma comes to the fore.

²The *Arani* is the wooden drill consisting of two parts used to kindle fire during a fire sacrifice. Its two parts are rubbed vigorously against each other to light the hidden fire element present inherently in the wood, and it is this fire that is first used to light the firewood put in the fire pit of the fire sacrifice.

The Agni or fire represents the cosmic forces that stand for energy, vitality, heat and light. This fire element is universal and is invisibly present everywhere, but it reveals its presence only if the circumstances become favourable—and the rubbing of the Aranis during the holy ceremony is symbolic of this favourable circumstance.

The two parts of the Arani represents the two aspects of this creation—one that is visible and gross, and the other that is subtle and invisible. When the worshipper researches about the latent 'truth' inherent in these two forms of creation, it is his symbolic vigorous rubbing of the Arani to light the fire. The symbolic 'sacred fire sacrifice' in this case is the endeavour to attain Brahm-realisation and getting acquainted with the Truth and Reality of creation, an objective for which even the physical fire sacrifice is actually done.

Performance of fire sacrifice should be done by expert men who are well versed in its intricacies. The offering made to the fire pit is consumed by the burning fire, which means that they are 'accepted' by it. Only a senior can accept an offering made by those who are junior to him, and offerings are made to honour and pay one's tribute to those who are truly exalted, honourable, revered and worthy for offering obeisance. A fire sacrifice is made to honour Gods, and these Gods are represented by the 'fire element' alone because it is invoked first and it also reveals first during the entire exercise. In fact, if the fire cannot be kindled, the entire sacrifice would lose its relevance. Therefore, the most important element worshipped during the fire sacrifice is the sacred and divine fire which is Jatveda as it represents the fire of the Sun.

The *embryo* in its initial phases is just a jelly-like blob of mucous which gives no hint that one day a complex structure called the creature would emerge from it. But as this embryo grows it develops different organs having varying shapes and functions. All eggs are also similar in shape from the outside, but when they hatch they reveal a wide variety of animals, birds, worms and insects.

When the first primordial embryo was produced as a result of doing Tapa by the creator, it was nurtured in the womb of Mother Nature which is the dynamic active principal of Brahm. So the embryo, known as the Hiranyagarbha, represented the 'fire element' in its nascent form, and it was nurtured by Brahm in the cosmic womb of Nature. It was from this embryo that the Viraat Purush was born. This Viraat represented the sum total of all the gross bodies of the would-be creation because it was from him that the rest of the creation would eventually evolve. Hence, the 'spark of life' represented by the fire element was revealed first in its tangible form as Hiranyagarbha which incorporated the entire forthcoming creation in its bosom much like an ordinary embryo of any living creature. The embryo of any living creature is the cosmic embryo called Hiranyagarbha in a miniature form.]

9. All the dynamic forces of creation personified as various Gods live in the vast realm having the dimension measured by the point from where the sun rises and where it sets. No one can cross this boundary as it is the farthest point of creation.

This outer boundary of creation is symbolic of that Brahm (who has been described in the previous verses) (9).

[Note—The rising of the sun is a metaphor for the dawn of creation, and its setting for the conclusion of creation. Everything that has come into existence naturally must exist within this boundary. Since Brahm is all-encompassing and all-inclusive, since nothing exists outside of Brahm, this outer periphery of creation from where the sun rises or the creation originates, and where it sets or the creation concludes, is Brahm. Nothing exists beyond this outer boundary; hence there is no question of anyone ever going outside this periphery.]

[Note—Everything that exists, including the Gods, are tied to this central core of creation called Brahm. This Brahm is like the hub of a wheel. If Brahm were to be removed from the scene, the entire edifice of creation would fall apart much like a wheel from which the central hub has been removed—all the spokes and the outer circumference of the wheel are kept in position because they are tied to the central hub, and once this is removed, all would dismantle on their own.]

10. [This verse deals with the concept of non-duality pertaining to Brahm.]

That essential Principal that is reflected in this body as its life and soul is the same that is reflected outside of it, and vice versa. A person who (is foolish and ignorant enough to) sees duality in this essentially non-dual divine entity is indeed deluded and he goes from one mortal existence to another, i.e. he oscillates between birth and death (10).

[Note—Brahm is the ultimate entity which lives in the body of the creature as its consciousness known as the Atma or soul as well as its vital life in the form of the Pran. This is at the micro level of the individual creature, and the same thing is replicated at the macro level of the entire creation. It is the same Brahm in the form of consciousness that does this or that while in the body of this or that creature. At the same time, this consciousness of the individual creature known as its Atma is the ultimate consciousness and truth in creation known as Brahm. Therefore, anyone who sees any difference between the two is deluded and ignorant of the fact.

Such people think that ‘I who am living on this earth and the supreme Lord who possesses the pitcher of eternity and bliss living high up in the heaven are two different entities’. This is the cause of all their miseries because they spend numerous lives searching that ‘high heaven where the pitcher of bliss and eternity is to be found with the supreme Lord’, which they would never find because it is not anywhere ‘there’ but ‘here’, inside their own bosom itself about which they are not aware.

This is the reason why those who have an erroneous notion of duality about Brahm keep on taking births and dying continuously, whereas those who realise Brahm as a universal non-dual entity which resides in their own self as well as in the rest of the creation in equal measure find eternal peace and rest for their souls. They would not have to search Brahm and the pitcher of eternal bliss anywhere else but their own bosom.]

11. This essential Truth (known as Brahm who is the Supreme Being) is realised only through the medium of a wise, erudite, enlightened and fine-tuned mind-intellect apparatus which is free/clear of all delusions, confusions, perplexities and distractions as well as is steady, focused and diligent in its pursuit.

There is no question of there being any kind of duality or doubt leading to any confusion or perplexity regarding this essential Truth. But unfortunately, in spite of this unequivocal fact if a person still persists with his delusions about it, then such unfortunate ones court and accept death willingly, and go on courting and accepting it endlessly (11).

[Note—This world is perishable and impermanent; the only thing that is not is the eternal Truth known as the pure conscious Atma. This Atma is synonymous with Brahm. Since ‘truth’ can be only one and not two, those who have doubts about whether something that is true is one or two are indeed stupid and deluded to the extreme. Such people hanker after the pleasures and comforts of the visible world because they think that what is practically seen and witnessed is more tangible and trustworthy than something that is simply not visible and witnessed directly. In this world they see a myriad variety of things and uncountable number of creatures, some as friends and others as rivals and enemies etc. Thus they remain trapped in a mirage-like world of ‘this’ or ‘that’ experience and this or that relationship. They forget that all this or that is perishable along with the world in which such things live.

The fundamental thing which would not perish and would last forever, but ironically which is not so easily visible and remains hidden behind a veil of illusions, is the eternal Truth which ignorant and deluded people have denied in the first place when they sought their peace in the perishable objects of the artificial world and had not believed what the scriptures have asserted. Therefore, they cannot find eternity and peace. They go from one life to another pursuing that illusive peace and bliss in their ignorance of the truth.

Such people seek solace and comfort in objects of the world which are inherently impermanent, so how can they give him eternal peace and bliss? They forget the irrefutable truth about the real source of eternity and everlasting peace and bliss as proclaimed by the Upanishads, and therefore they go on taking birth and dying endlessly.]

12. The supreme transcendental Being known as the ‘Purush’ (i.e. one who resides inside any place and completely owns that place; here referring to Brahm) resides in the thumb-sized subtle space or sky (known as the ‘Hirdya-Akash’) present in the heart of the living being as his Atma or pure consciousness. This supreme Lord known as Ishan is the omniscient one who knows about the past and the future (as well as the present), and is the Lord who rules over all time zones (refer verse no. 5)¹.

A wise, self-realised and enlightened person who has become acquainted with that Supreme Being as described above has no cause of fear from any quarter; he does not worry for his own self and protection of his gross body. [This is because he has understood the eclectic truth about his truthful identity, that ‘he’ is not the gross body but the Atma, and that no one can ever harm the Atma as it is eternal, imperishable, ethereal and most powerful entity in this creation. At the same time, he does not have any malice towards and hatred for anyone; he does not speak ill of anyone because the same Atma that resides in his body also resides in the body of the other person.]²

Verily, that most exalted, supreme and transcendental Being described in this verse is indeed Brahm (12).

[Note--¹That is, being eternal and the all-knowing almighty Lord of creation, he commands everything in existence, whether it belonged in some time in the past, would belong to the future, or belongs to the present time. As he is eternal, he outlives all mortal creation and its creatures, and therefore he precedes and follows everything that has a physical existence in this creation. Refer Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 19; Shwetashwatar Upanishad, 3/13.

²A person who has become wisened to the great and irrefutable truth about the Atma which is his truthful ‘self’ realises that the Lord of creation is residing very near to him. In fact, the Lord is protecting the person from within him by residing in his own heart, as well as from the outside by being omnipresent everywhere and ready to reveal himself whenever needed. Further, erudition and enlightenment about the all-pervading nature of Brahm also ensures that the wise man begins to see the same Brahm in all the creatures uniformly, and therefore he treats all of them with the same

respect and love which he would reserve for his dear Lord. This outlook, whereby he stops criticizing others and hating them, preempts all ill-wills, and with it all causes of fear of being harmed by one's enemy are eliminated. Now there are no enemies but all are brothers having the same Lord as their parent.

A wise man realises that his soul is immortal and is distinct from the gross body. It is this body that becomes old and dies; it is this body that is hurt and suffers from injuries. The Atma can neither be hurt nor can it die as it is blessed by the divine virtue of eternity and imperishability. Once this wisdom dawn upon him, all reason of fear of death vanish.]

13. That supreme transcendental Being residing as the Atma in the thumb-sized subtle space of the heart of the creature is like a flame with no smoke. [That is, it is like a brilliantly burning fire which has no smoke. This is a metaphoric way of saying that the Atma or the supreme Brahm have no taints or faults that can taint or tarnish their exalted stature.]

That Lord is the ruler who rules over all that exists—whether it relates to anything that existed in the past or would exist in the future (or pertains to the present).

Verily, that supreme, transcendental, esoteric, unique and majestic entity is indeed Brahm (13).

14. Even as the rain water falling upon summits of hills and mountains go downhill and form numerous streams going in various directions, meandering along vast stretches of endless land, a person who sees duality in this world, i.e. who sees, believes and follows numerous paths shown by so many religious dispensations, doctrines and philosophies, gets entangled in their labyrinthine confusions, and forgets in the process about the fundamental Truth¹. Such persons follow these uncountable paths and get lost in them much like the water getting lost in the vast plains once it comes down from the summit of the mountains² (14).

[Note—¹There are many religious believes, philosophies and doctrines in this world. All basically teach the man about the supreme Lord known as Brahm, albeit in different languages. If that Lord is truthful then he cannot be two or more, but only 'one' and unequivocally 'one'. These numerous paths create a lot of confusion for a spiritual aspirant as to which is the 'more truthful' path than the other. These labyrinthine religious theories make him forget that all these different paths and doctrines tell about the 'same' universal and immutable Truth known by numerous words and names. Therefore, the man gets trapped in the perplexities and confusions created by the unnecessary web of philosophies and doctrines propounded by different streams of religion. He forgets that all teach about the one and the same Being who has manifested as the pure conscious 'self' of the man himself.

What more proof does a discerning man need for the existence of the 'universal self' than his own body in which this 'universal self' called the Atma resides? On close examination he discovers that his body functions in the same way, has the same ingredients, has the same anatomy, biochemistry and physiology etc. as the one of his enemy as well as his friend. Surely there must be some entity or force that is common to all living beings. This common denominator is the universal Atma or soul so much venerated and regarded as Brahm personified.

So, the only difference between wisdom and ignorance is how this entity 'I or Me' is interpreted. A wise man knows that his gross physical body is not 'I or Me', instead it is the pure conscious Atma that comes under that definition. On the other hand, an ignorant man thinks that his gross body which he sees with his own eyes and which relates more to his physical existence in this material world and helps him

to relate with it at the gross physical level of existence is the one that is regarded as his 'I or Me'.

²The allegory of the rain water coming down from the top of the hill or mountain forming numerous streams and then dispersing and getting lost in the vast plains below is a symbolic way of saying that if the man gets misled by numerous doctrines, he becomes lost and loses his own truthful self in the vast plains symbolic of the endless nature of various dispensations, doctrines and philosophies.

Besides this, he remains dissatisfied with his present life and the doctrines he follows at present because they have not given him his desired peace of mind and rest to his tormented soul. So naturally he gets disillusioned and seeks a second opinion. This goes on endlessly because there is no dearth of moral and spiritual advisors and self-proclaimed spiritual doctors. Instead of getting any cure, the disease gets worse and chronic. The only remedy then is to seek the guidance of a realised man who knows the truthful way out of this quagmire. And this guidance is provided in the Upanishads, such as the present one.]

15. Oh Gautam (i.e. Nachiketa, as he is born in the lineage of sage Gautam—see note to Canto 1, Valli 1, verse no. 1)! Even as any type of water when added to a larger body of clean and pure water becomes clean and pure like the latter¹, a wise man's Atma also becomes pure and clean when he understands this fact (as elucidated and expounded in this Upanishad)² (15).

[Note—¹There is another interpretation of this verse. Yam has used this analogy of the water assuming the characteristic of the larger body of water to explain the concept that the individual Atma of the creature, no matter how tainted it had become due to its follies in this world, when it merges with the cosmic Atma it loses its taints and flaws and instead becomes as pure as its parent body, the cosmic Atma. In other words, once the wise and enlightened man realises his 'true self' as an image of the supreme transcendental Brahm, he would have literally poured his egoistic self in the vastness of the cosmic Brahm, and then all his past sins and evil vestiges are washed off and he becomes indistinguishable from this cosmic Brahm.

Another way of explaining this concept is this. When any given amount of water is put in a vessel it acquires the contours and characteristics of this vessel. For example, it assumes the outlines and colour of a glass tumbler in which it is held, though everyone knows that water has no shape and colour. Similarly, when the Atma enters a body of a creature, it has to assume the characteristic features and special attributes typical of that particular creature. For example, though the Atma in a grown-up man and a child is the same, their behaviour varies vastly, and similarly the behaviour of a man would naturally be vastly different from a monkey.

The consciousness is like a pure drop of water—it is inherently pure, unpolluted and clean even as a molecule of water consisting of two atoms of hydrogen and one atom of oxygen is inherently and fundamentally pristine pure and absolutely clean. From the atomic view point, no one can corrupt this water molecule. What is regarded as 'dirty water' is the external feature of water, not its basic chemical formulation which remains constant and uncorrupted in all forms of water. Similarly, the Atma is constant and uncorrupted, but it depends upon the person in whose body this Atma resides how he uses this clean slate to write upon—it may be corrupted if the unwise person allows his mind to become dirty and tarnished by pervert thoughts, and it can be crystal clean and shining if the person diverts his attention to nobler thoughts and higher meanings in life.

In other words, this explains why and how the same Atma can become mired in Vasanas and Vrittis (worldly passions and desires and their attendant temperaments and tendencies) and lead to the downfall of the man if he is negligent and careless about his own spiritual welfare, while the same consciousness can make a man

become elevated to a high pedestal of self-realisation and enlightenment that would pave the path for his liberation and deliverance, his emancipation and salvation.

²One should therefore abstain from unnecessary and endless debates as well as from following numerous paths seeking spiritual solace and salvation because these numerous debates and paths would create more confusion and perplexities. Instead of it a wise man should follow the *one* path shown here by this Upanishad—it is the path of non-duality, the path that shows the universality and uniformity of the truthful pure consciousness known as the Atma, and its unique esoteric and enigmatic qualities which make it so divine and holy. This Atma exhibits all of the vital characteristic virtues so unique to the supreme transcendental Divinity known as Brahm, and they include such virtues as being, inter alia, eternal, imperishable, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, almighty, all-pervading, all-encompassing, and a fount of beatitude and felicity.]

Canto 2, Valli 2

1. The abode of that supreme transcendental Brahm—who is known as ‘Aja’ (unborn; without a birth because he is eternal and imperishable)¹ and resides in the bosom of the individual creature as its Atma (pure self and consciousness)—has eleven doors². A person who devotedly and faithfully worships and honours that reverend Lord (i.e. Brahm as the Atma) has never to worry about any grief or miseries (for such negative concepts do not touch him)³.

He becomes free from the fetters caused by doing deeds (as every deed would have certain affects or consequences, and the creature that does the deed is bound by the laws of nature to suffer or enjoy these consequences). Therefore, such a man is freed from the chain of deeds and their consequences even while he is alive⁴.

That enigmatic and majestic entity, the realisation of which sets the man free from the chain of his deeds and their consequences, and which lives in the abode (the body) having eleven doors, is verily the one divine entity known as the supreme transcendental Brahm (who resides in the bosom of the individual creature as the pure consciousness known as the Atma or soul) (1).

[Note—¹The question arises that if Brahm or Atma is *unborn*, then why did take a birth? The answer is that the Atma has not taken a birth, but only changed its abode from the old body to the new body. The body is subject to old age, decay and death, while the Atma which represents the supreme Brahm in the body of the individual creature is imperishable, constant and eternal. This phenomenon has been explained by the example of the caterpillar going from one twig to another by contracting its body and withdrawing itself from the first twig and then alighting on the new twig by expanding its body and catching hold of the new twig to transfer itself to its new abode. This example is cited in Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 4, Brahman 4, verse no. 3 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition.

²The abode of the Atma in which it resides in order to fulfill its obligations of having to undergo sufferance due to the bad deeds done by it during its previous life or to enjoy the rewards of the good deeds done in that life is the gross body of the creature in the present life. It is compared to a *city* or fortress because the sovereign Atma representing Brahm resides in the central citadel of the body known as the heart. Even as any city or fortress has doors or gateways, this body also has *eleven doors*. They are the following—two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, one mouth, navel, anus, genitals and Brahm-randhra (the hair like slit on the top of the head).

³A citizen living in a city or fortress who is acquainted with the king does not have to worry about anything, as all matters that might worry a man, such as attack

from enemies, or being robbed by thieves, or any other worldly worries or pecuniary needs, etc. are all taken care of in the kingdom of a generous and benevolent king. This is a metaphoric way of saying that when a wise, erudite and enlightened man understands that the supreme Lord is within his own self, he simply not bothers about the outside world or even about the protection of the body (i.e. the city in which he lives) because it is the duty of the king (i.e. the supreme Brahman) to take care of the welfare of his subjects and give them protection. Thus the man is freed from such mundane worries to freely pursue his vocation and profession, which in this case would be self-realisation and Brahman-realisation which leads to liberation and deliverance of the soul from the fetters that shackle the creature to the cycle of birth and death.

⁴It is the body that does any deed, and not the Atma. Under the influence of various Vasanas and Vrittis (worldly desires and passions and relevant temperaments and behavioural patterns), the creature begins to erroneously identify itself with the deeds done by the body because it is deluded into believing that the gross and perishable body is its 'self' and therefore the deeds done by the body are being done by 'him'. He forgets that this is not the case, as the 'true self' is not the gross body but the pure, incorruptible consciousness known as the Atma. Now when deeds are done by someone, then the same person is bound to either suffer or enjoy their consequences.

Therefore, once the Atma begins to erroneously identify itself with the body, it sets off a chain reaction that binds it to the deeds done by the body and their consequences. Once realisation dawns upon the intellectual horizon of the creature that its Atma is immaculately pure and his true conscious 'self', while the entity that does the deed is the body which is a distinctly separate entity from this Atma, he has neither to suffer from the bad effects of those deeds nor entitled to enjoy the good effects. That is, he becomes totally detached and dispassionate from the deeds and their results or rewards because they do not affect him in any way. Hence, the fetters created by the deeds in the shape of compulsory sufferance or enjoyment do not impinge upon this man's Atma. This is tantamount to saying that such a wise and self-realised man continues to do deeds with his body but remains free from their consequences. This is possible under one specific condition though—and it is total neutrality, a sense of complete detachment from and profound dispassion towards the deeds and their consequential good or bad results.]

2. [This verse describes the manifold forms in which the same conscious Atma has manifested itself.]

The divine entity (referred to in verse no. 1 above) which is sinless, pure, immaculate, incorrupt, holy, virtuous and true is like a wise Swan. [It is the 'Swan' because it is the wisest amongst all living entities. The word also implies that it lives in the subtle space of the heart of the living being just like a swan floating on the surface of a tranquil mountain lake. In fact, many Upanishads treat the Atma living in the heart of the creature as the Swan—e.g. the Hamsopanishad.]

It is honoured by the epithet of 'Shuchi' means someone who is marked by purity, holiness, virtuousness, cleanliness and immaculacy. It also means one who is shining white like the celestial Sun; someone who is sinless and faultless.

It is all-pervading and omnipresent like the space of the sky. Therefore, it is also as vast, fathomless and immeasurable like the deep space of the sky called the 'Antariksha'.

It is like the 'Hota', i.e. like the holy man who offers oblations to the sacred fire during the fire sacrifice. [Since the word 'Hota' is directly linked to the sacred fire, it implies that this divine entity is synonymous with the fire element. In other

words, it possesses all the glorious virtues of the sacred fire that is universally worshipped by all those who wish to worship Gods.]

It is like the central part of the venue where the fire sacrifice is held and the Vedas are recited. That is, it is the central fire pit bearing the sacred fire where the Hota offers oblations to the Fire God representing the supreme cosmic powers of creation. [That is why it is called 'Vedishad'.]

It is like an honoured guest (an 'Atithi') in the household represented by the gross body of the creature. [This is because the Atma, the pure consciousness that resides in the body of the creature is regarded with the same reverence as one honours one's guest.]

It resembles the Soma liquid kept in a vessel to be used during fire sacrifices, hence called 'Duron-sat'. [It refers to the Atma residing in the heart of the creature. The heart is the 'vessel or container' in which the Atma lives. Since it is a holy and pure entity, it is compared to the Soma which is a sanctified liquid used during fire sacrifices.]

It has revealed itself in gross visible form as humans ('Nri-shat') as well as in subtle and invisible forms as Gods and other spirits ('Var-sat').

It is as the vast and measureless sky ('Vyom-sat'). It is revealed as myriad life forms universally present in water as the water-borne creatures (such as snails, oysters, alligators etc.—i.e. it is 'Abjaa') and on earth as various life-bearing forms such as crop represented by rice grains ('Gojaa').

It is manifested as the sacred 'truth' (Divinity; Brahm) that is revealed as the result of 'fire sacrifices' ('Ritjaa').

It is revealed as the grand rivers etc. that have their origin in the mighty mountains ('Adrijaa').

It is the cosmic Truth that is universal and uniform, that is most grand and majestic, that is magnificent and stupendous ('Ritam Brihat') (2).

3. That eclectic, powerful and mysterious divine entity which takes the Pran wind (i.e. the exhaled breath) upwards and the Apaana wind (i.e. the inhaled wind) down the intestines¹ while living secretly ensconced in a microscopic form (as 'Vaaman')² in the core of the heart of the living being as the pure 'consciousness' is the one that is lauded, worshipped, revered and honoured by all the Gods³. [That entity is the supreme transcendental Brahm present as the pure conscious Atma of the creature residing in his bosom.] (3).

[Note—¹This concept has been elaborately explained in Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, 3/4/1-2.

²According to the commentary of revered sage Adi Shankaracharya on this Upanishad, the word *Vaaman* refers to the one who is worthy of worship and adoration. Obviously, if there is any entity that is worth adoring and honouring in the body it is the 'consciousness' called the 'true self' of the man. This consciousness is eternal, imperishable, divine and holy as compared to the rest of the components of the body which are not only worthless and subject to decay and ruin but would be of no consequence if there were no consciousness in the gross body. A dead body is useless even though all the components of a dead body are the same as when it was alive, except for the fact that 'consciousness' has left it.

This word 'Vaaman' also refers to the dwarf incarnation of Lord Vishnu in which the Lord had measured the entire world in his two steps, with the third used to subdue the haughtiness of king Bali. This word is used to denote an entity that is dwarfish in appearance but is nevertheless colossus and most majestic beyond imagination.

³The Gods mentioned here refer to the patron Gods of all the different functions of life and the various organs of perceptions and actions in the body. The organs of the body perform their functions to help and serve that supreme 'consciousness' known as the Atma or the 'true self' of the creature which keeps the otherwise dead and inane body alive and active besides being an intelligent entity. These individual organs of the body, such as the eye, nose, ear, tongue and skin (i.e. the organs of perception) as well as the hands, legs, mouth, anus and genitals (i.e. the organs of action) serve their Lord (Brahm or Atma) and pay tributes to him just like citizens serve and pay tributes to their king.]

4. When the living entity (i.e. the conscious Atma or soul or Spirit) present in the body of a man leaves it or discards it at the time of death and goes to another body to assume another birth, the earlier body becomes worthless and despicable; nothing is left in it that is of any worth or of any importance. It is shunned by all, even by those who had been so closely related and attached with it. The body that was so important and loved just the other moment becomes hated and treated with contempt when 'life and consciousness' leaves it. [A dead body is disposed of as early as possible. No one adores it and feeds it anymore. It becomes a liability on the same family members who had so dearly showered their love and affection on it while it was alive. What makes them loathe it now? What is that thing that this body now lacks which has suddenly made it so useless and loathsome?]

Verily, that entity which gave the body its worth and after leaving of which the body becomes absolutely useless and immediately disposable is the supreme transcendental Being that is known as Brahm. [This Brahm was a resident in the body as the pure consciousness called the Atma or soul.] (4).

[Note—Even as the citizens suffer as soon as the king abandons the city and goes permanently to another place to reside, the organs of the body become redundant when the Atma leaves it. That is the reason why the Gods of the various organs pay tribute to the Atma because they know its worth and importance vis-à-vis their own survival. Refer Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, 4/3/37-38.]

5. No man (or any living being who has a body) is kept alive by either the Pran (breath) or the Apaana (the wind that moves down the intestines and controls ingestion of food, its digestion and the elimination of waste through the excretory organs). The principal entity that keeps a man alive is another one and it is upon this entity that even these two vital winds called Pran and Apaana themselves depend.

So it follows that this principal entity is surely separate and distinctly independent from the body and its various components, both the gross as well as the subtle. [This exalted and supreme entity is the pure consciousness known as the Atma living inside the bosom/heart of the man.] (5).

[Note—None of the organs of the body or its various functions can have independent existence; all of them are interdependent. They work in coordination with each other so that the body can function normally. Coordination implies that they cannot keep the body working on their own individual account or ability, and have to rely upon others. So there must be something that coordinates their activities and inspires them to do so, someone to command and regulate them besides providing them with their respective authority, power and energy to function. Surely that entity is superior to them much like a King who uses the different organs of the state machinery to help him look after his kingdom and carry on with his work though the king himself does not do anything physically. All the seemingly independent units of the state machinery have their own importance and use, they have been delegated the power and authority of the King and act on his behalf, but if the King leaves the kingdom

they all lose their importance and relevance. Here, the Atma is like the King while the organs and other vital factors in the body are like the ministers and other functionaries of the King. They serve the King and act on his behalf, and get rewarded accordingly. But their authority and power comes from the King; they cannot supersede the King.]

6. Oh Gautam (i.e. Nachiketa who was born in the family of sage Gautam—see note to 1/1/1)! However, now I shall narrate to you the esoteric secrets of Brahm who is most enigmatic and mysterious, Brahm who is eternal, infinite and truthful.

I shall also describe for your benefit what happens to the Atma after death of the creature (i.e. where it goes, what is its fate, and what becomes of it after the body perishes) (6).

[Note—This topic of death and what happens after death is a most debated one and many Upanishads have dealt with it in detail elsewhere. Some of these are the following—Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, 3/1/3, 3/2/11-12, 3/9/28, 4/3/12, 4/3/36, 4/4/1, 5/10-5/11, 6/1/1-6, 6/2/2, 14-16, etc.; Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 5, Section 3-10; Kaushitaki Brahman Upanishad, Canto 1; Taittiriyo-pahishad, Valli 2, Anuvak 6; Katho-panishad, Canto 1, Valli 1, verse no. 20; Canto 1, Valli 2, verse no. 1-6; Canto 2, Valli 2, verse no. 6-8; Canto 2, Valli 3, verse no. 4-17; Subalo-panishad, Canto 11.

What happens to ignorant people after death is explained in Brihad Aranyak 4/4/1.

The *three great Truths* to be remembered at the time of *death* have enunciated in Chandogya Upanishad, 3/17/6. They are—(1) You are eternal and imperishable; (2) You cannot be demoted, degenerate, become fallen and digressed; and (3) You are basically most sublime, subtle, atomic and a microcosmic image of the vast and macrocosmic supreme Brahm.

The metaphor of the *tree* has been brilliantly employed to explain ‘what happens after’ death in Brihad Aranyak 3/9/28, and in Chandogya 6/11/1-3.]

7. Depending upon the deeds done by a man during the present life and their attendant consequences, as well as the level of spiritual awareness and understanding of what the ‘truth’ is that he has developed as a result of knowledge acquired by him by studying and hearing of the scriptures, he leaves the present body at the time of their death) to be rewarded with a destiny in accordance with these two premises.

Thus, so many of them enter different types of wombs to acquire a new life in a new body which has mobility (i.e. they become one or the other living organism in this creation belonging to the zoological kingdom), while there are so many still others who acquire a body which is immobile (such as numerous shrubs, herbs, plants and trees etc. belonging to the botanical kingdom) (7).

[Note—Some creatures take a lowly birth as animals, worms, birds and insects or other numerous organisms further down in the zoological kingdom such as bacteria, amoeba etc. Some take a new birth in the higher rung of the evolutionary ladder as higher animals such as monkeys and humans. Even amongst humans, there are numerous categories of people—some of high pedigree and noble birth, some of low birth, some having a low birth but achieve great heights in life, and some doing just the reverse.

On the other hand, some enter their new life as members of the botanical kingdom—as uncountable varieties of plants, trees, herbs, grass, algae, fungus etc. This verse shows that even in ancient times the sages were aware that plants have life.

The type of destination that a man reaches depends upon a combination of what type of deeds he had done in his previous life or what type of knowledge he had

acquired. The deeds decide the rewards or punishment due to him, while the knowledge helps him to decide what best to select from the available options.

For example, suppose a man has done immense good deeds during his lifetime, so he is destined an honourable place after death. But suppose his knowledge and definition of what is considered as a 'good reward' is limited to the enjoyment of worldly materialistic life and its attendant material comforts and sensual pleasures, then he would yearn to become some rich man or king to live it out fully in the next life. On the contrary, a man who is wise and erudite would use this golden opportunity to further rise higher in his spiritual stature and seek the community of learned people so that in the final analysis he can achieve perpetual and eternal peace and bliss for himself. So the latter man would become some great ascetic or sage or philosopher who would spread the good news and then wind up his play once and for all.]

8. The supreme transcendental Authority known as the Purush (i.e. the supreme Brahm) keeps awake even while the rest of the creation sleeps¹. He constantly keeps on updating the record of the consequences that each individual creature must face as a result of the deeds done by him. That is, the supreme Lord keeps on arranging for the rewards or punishments for the deeds done by the creature though the latter might think that once the deeds are done and he has gone to sleep after finishing them off, they are forgotten and buried. He is sadly mistaken as this is not the case. He is bound to suffer from or enjoy the rewards of each deed done by him.

This principle authority is known as the supreme Brahm. It is immaculately pure and as potent as the 'Shukra' (sperm). [The sperm is marked with the vital characteristics of life. It bears the genes of life; it is the carrier of life. Without sperms no new life can come into being. In this sense, the sperm is a metaphor for Brahm.]

This Brahm is eternal and imperishable; it is a fount of bliss and happiness just like Amrit which is the divine elixir of eternity and imperishability as well as of bliss and happiness.

No one can cross the boundaries set by Brahm. That is, no one can violate the laws of Nature and creation laid down by him. [It also means that since Brahm is all-encompassing and all-inclusive, there is nothing that exists outside of Brahm, and therefore there is no question of one superseding Brahm.]

The entire creation is founded upon and supported by Brahm. Verily, this principle Authority of creation described here is indeed Brahm² (8).

[Note—¹There is another way of interpreting this idea. When a man sleeps, his body is apparently as good as dead. All his external organs cease to function. He begins to dream, and in his dream he constructs such majestic and fascinating worlds which the living body can never hope to ever acquire and even imagine. So obviously there must be some different entity or 'self' which creates this fascinating world and then lives in it, complete with an active body and its agile organs. Now, this mysterious entity 'lives' even when the gross body virtually 'dies' when the man is asleep. When he wakes up, this is like a new birth for him because the present world is completely different from the world of his dreams.

²'This' unique, unexplainable and most esoteric entity is known as Brahm. Brahm is the only worthwhile entity in this creation much like the Atma is in the gross body of the creature—refer verse no. 1-3 above. Since life and consciousness are synonyms, it follows that Brahm and Atma too are synonyms. Just like an individual creature cannot survive without the presence of the Atma in its body, the creation cannot survive without the presence of Brahm that pervades uniformly in it.

Why is this creation 'hollow' without Brahm? Well, the world that the man creates while he is asleep has no actual existence, it has no substance or pith in it; it is simply an imagination of the mind. That is why it is hollow, and when this logic is

extended to the entire creation at the macro level with Brahm as the one who creates it, then it also becomes hollow. That is, even as the world of dreams has no real existence, the huge world created by Brahm is also similarly hollow. But this is difficult to believe because we see the world and witness it first hand. Well, it is not so hollow after all because Brahm has subtly entered it as its conscious Atma and got dissolved uniformly in it much like a piece of salt in water, to completely permeate it.

Therefore, with the truthful and pure consciousness or Atma representing Brahm pervading throughout the creation uniformly, this creation is indeed not so hollow after all! This is the great mystery of creation; it is the text book instance of a typical paradox—neither of the given two instances is true, but they are not untrue also.

When Brahm has pervaded the entire creation and controls it from within, it obviously follows that nothing can exist outside its periphery and can violate its orders. For example, no water in which salt is dissolved can call its self non-salty.]

9. Even as the same fire element which is universally present in the entire creation (as its energy, heat, light, vigour and vitality factor) assumes as many diverse forms as the need arises¹, the pure conscious self called the Atma of all the creatures, which is fundamentally immutable, indivisible, constant, uniform, non-dual and one single whole, has similarly assumed as many forms as there are numbers and types of creatures². This Atma is inside the individual creature as well as outside of it in the form of the Atma of the other creature at the micro level and of the entire creation at the macro level (9).

[Note—¹The *fire element* is the cosmic principal manifestation of the dynamic powers of Brahm that provide this creation with its energy, vitality, heat, illumination etc. The main operating virtue is ‘energy’ and it is well known that energy can not be destroyed but it only changes its form and shape as the need arises. For example, when something needs to be burnt and destroyed, it becomes ‘fire’; when illumination is needed it transforms into ‘light’ energy; when something is to be warmed, it converts its self into ‘heat’ energy etc. This fire element is latently present in a very subtle and secret form even in the water element which outwardly shows properties quite the opposite of the fire element. This becomes evident when we consider how large underground hot water springs are found on earth, how aquatic life survives below frozen lakes in the arctic regions, and the fact that hot water can scald a man with the same ferocity as direct contact with fire.

²The body is like the mould in which the pure molten gold is put to make a piece of jewelry. The *Atma* is like the uncorrupt pure metal gold, while the body is like the mould in which this Atma is ‘cast’. When the Atma has to assume a new body as described in verse no. 7 above, it does not alter the basic nature and fundamental truth of the Atma as the truthful and pure consciousness. The only thing that changes is the outwardly appearance and characteristics of the Atma in this new role. It is like the case of a theatre artist changing attires to suit different roles.

Even as a wise jeweler sees the value of the ornament in its ‘gold’ content, a wise man sees the ‘Atma’ as the only worthy entity in the entire setup.]

10. Even as the wind or air element which is universally present throughout the creation, pervading in it uniformly, is one, immutable and indivisible, but it appears to have different names, shows different virtues and characteristics which give it different dimensions depending upon the needs and forms it takes¹, the supreme transcendental Being known as Brahm similarly appears to be of so many myriad forms having uncountable characteristics depending upon the form it assumes in this creation. That is, the same Brahm in the form of the Atma, the pure conscious ‘self’, is known by different names and shows different characteristic features depending upon the gross body that the creature takes in each of his births although Brahm and

its synonym Atma are basically one, immutable, indivisible and non-dual pure consciousness that powers everything that exists in this creation.

Verily, this Brahm is the Atma which is present inside the creature as its pure consciousness as well as outside of it as the macrocosmic Consciousness of the entire creation (10).

[Note—¹The *wind* has so many names, such as typhoon, hurricane, storm, cyclone, tornado, twister, gale, breeze, whirlwind, current of air and stream of air etc. but it does not change the basic fact that all these are names given to the same dynamic force of Nature known as the wind element. It is air which fills the entire void of the space of the sky and is called as ether at the cosmic plane and atmosphere in the context of the earth and other planets.

Wind or air represents the grand virtue of Brahm to show ‘movement’ and ‘life-injecting’ capabilities. When the process of creation was set in motion, the elements that successively came into being were sky, air, fire, water and earth. We notice that the order starts with the element that was the subtlest, i.e. sky, and reached the element that is the grossest, i.e. earth. The rest occupy a space in between in decreasing order of subtlety. If the creation was to maintain its self then it must have ‘mobility’, and since the sky does not move, Brahm decided to create the air element took care of this aspect. There was another bonus—this air virtually moved from one place to another to spread the ‘good news’ that the supreme Lord has decided to renew vibrant forms of life from the dismal dark that prevailed after the last doomsday deluge. Like the herald of the King, the air element went to all the corners of the cosmos to spread the good news about the arrival of Brahm. This is a metaphoric way of saying that consciousness would now spread throughout the length and breadth of the cosmos like ink gradually spreading in a tumbler of water to colour the whole water in its likeness! By and by, it would be impossible to distinguish this colour from the water. Similarly, it became impossible to separate the consciousness from this creation. In other words, the Brahm became universally present in the entire creation as the air element that is also universally present in all the corners of the world.

The same wind or air element has been assigned different names when it resides inside the body of a creature and helps it to carry on its functions. The Subalopanishad, Canto 9, verse no. 1-14 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition asserts that there are *twelve vital winds* present in the body. It lists their functions as follows—(1) Pran—this controls eyes and the faculty of sight (verse 1); (2) Apaana—this controls ears and the faculty of hearing (verse 2); (3) Vyan—this controls nose and the faculty of smell (verse 3); (4) Udaan—this controls the tongue and the faculty of taste (verse 4); (5) Samaana—this controls the skin and the faculty of touch (verse 5); (6) Vairambha—this controls speech (verse 6); (7) Mukhya—this controls the hands (verse 7); (8) Antar-yaam—this controls the legs (verse 8); (9) Prabhanjan—this controls the anus (verse 9); (10) Kurma—this controls the genitals (verse 10); (11) Shyen—this controls the Mana or the thoughts and emotions (verse 11); (12) Krishna—this controls the discrimination, intellect and wisdom (verse 12); (13) Shwet—this controls Ahankar or the notion of ego, pride, arrogance, vanity etc. (verse 13); (14) Naag—this controls the ‘Chitta’ or the faculty of concentration, memory, sub-conscious, reasoning (verse 14).

According to the Trishiki Brahmin Upanishad, 1/5 and 2/77-87, as well as Paingalo-panishad, Cantos 2, verse nos.3 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, this vital wind is of *ten types* depending upon the function that the wind element performs in the body of a creature. Amongst them, there are five winds which are considered more important than the rest. As such, these five are called the main ‘Pran’, or ‘Panch Prans’, and they are the following :--(1) Pran, the wind element, as breath, that is exhaled as well as inhaled, and which is responsible for infusing and sustaining life in the body; it is considered the chief wind in the whole setup because without

life no other wind would be of any significance to the creature; (2) *Apaan*, the wind that passes down the intestines and is responsible for digestion of the food taken by the creature and its excretion through the anus and urinary organs (kidneys); (3) *Samaan*, the wind that is responsible for equal distribution of nourishment throughout the body, as well as in circulation of blood; (4) *Udaan*, the wind that helps the body to rise and move about, it also helps the body to expel toxic waste gases in the body through the nostrils and mouth in the form of exhalation and cough; and (5) *Vyan*, the wind that helps in maintaining equilibrium and pressure within the body, and it also controls the functioning of the other winds.

Besides the above, there are five subsidiary winds which act more like assistants to the chief *Prans*. They are-- (1) *Naag*—this junior wind which helps in exhaling breath and belching; (2) *Kurma*—this subsidiary wind helps the eyelids to open and shut; (3) *Krikar*—this creates the sensation of hunger; (4) *Devdutta*—this creates sleep; and (5) *Dhananjay*—it prevents decay and deformation of the body immediately after death for some time.

So the basic idea is that inspite of the fact that the wind or air is the same element everywhere, it is given different names and assumes different functions depending upon the given circumstance. Similarly, the same consciousness is given different names according to the body that it assumes and the functions that it performs in the scheme of things of creation. But when one peers deep and understands the fundamental principle, he realises that what is seen externally is very misleading and illusive. The hidden fact is quite the contrary, and it is that the same *Brahm* present in myriad of forms in this creation.]

11. Though the Sun is like the eye of the world (because it provides light without which the entire world would be in dark and nothing would be visible) but it never gets tarnished or affected by the various faults and blemishes of the world unlike the case of the eye of the creature's body which is the organ that is not only affected by this deluding artificial world but is also one of the main causes for the creature's downfall and his getting tarnished by the corruptions of the world. The eye is instrumental in getting the creature trapped in endless horrors of the world and shackled to it by strong fetters till an unknown time¹.

Similarly, the universal Consciousness that lives in all living beings as their *Atma* is untainted by anything related to the external world. It is not at all affected by the numerous miseries and troubles that the creature is subjected to in this world as all of them relate to his gross body which is completely different from this pure and immaculate *Atma*² (11).

[Note—¹Unlike the gross organ called the *eye* which has a tendency to see only things that are appealing to it and not at things that it does not like, the *Sun* is unbiased and it 'sees' everything in equal measure. The sunlight uniformly provides light to the entire world, without any kind of discrimination. Again, the numerous faults of this artificial world of sense objects have a tainting affect on the creature because he sees them and gets influenced by them. The eye becomes an important instrument in this delusion and demotion of the creature because the eye is the first organ by which a man sees the enticing charms of this artificial world and is convinced of their existence because he 'sees' them first hand.

This is how the 'mirage of the desert' works. It is the eye that first sees it and forces the mind to believe what it sees, though all men who go to a desert are warned about this phenomenon and are told to be wary of it. But does he do it?

The eye makes the man aware of the charms and attractions of this deluding world of material objects. Once the man sees these enticing offers, his mind gets biased and then the chain reaction is set in motion whereby the man is trapped in this net of delusions and hallucinations.

The role of the eye in trapping the creature in the snares of this world can be visualized by taking the example of the bird caught in a bird catcher's snare or the fish caught in the net of the fisherman. The eye of the bird is the only instrument that makes the bird—which is otherwise a free air-borne creature—to see the bait and then the mind creates a desire to go and eat it. The result is that the bird gets caught. Similarly, the fish is caught by the fisherman because the poor creature sees the bait at the end of the fishing line and goes to bite it. Had the fish no eyes, it would not see this bait and would have remained free for ever. The eyes of the bird and the fish have landed both of them in a horrible condition, resulting in their death. These two examples would help to illustrate how the 'eye' plays havoc to the freedom of the Spirit of the creature.

The Sun is not affected by the filth and dirt of the earth that is illuminated by its light. It is not concerned about the huge cosmic debris floating in the cosmos, nor bothered by the innumerable despicable things its light brings to the fore on this earth. It continues to illuminate the realm nevertheless, remaining unconcerned or unaffected by anything in the least. It is compared to the eye because it enables the creature to see the world by allowing various images of the external world to enter the body and perceived as sight by the brain when they are illuminated by the light of the Sun. That is why, one cannot see in the dark. That is, the Sun and the eye have a direct relation. Even at the time of creation, the Sun God took up his symbolic residence in the eye of the creature's body. It was a clever mechanism by which the supreme creator ensured that the creature would be able to see this world. The world is 'illuminated' for the creature by this symbolic Sun present in the eye. No other organ can do it. Without the eye, the world would be a dark and foreboding terrain instead of the fascinating and charming place it is. This is at the micro level of creation, but at the macro level it is the Sun which lights the world for the entire creation to see it.

²The metaphor of the Sun remaining uncorrupted and untainted inspite of illuminating this corrupt and tainted world is used to emphasis the point that the pure consciousness known as the *Atma* that enables the eye to see things in this world is itself uncorrupt and untainted. This *Atma* is equally radiant, splendidous and illuminated from within like the celestial Sun, and it illuminates the inner realm of the creature by way of light of wisdom and enlightenment just as the Sun illuminates the vast external world by its sunlight. Even as the Sun is not affected by the despicable and deplorable nature of things which it lights, the *Atma* is also not tarnished by any of the things that the creature's eyes sees and enjoys in this world. It retains its immaculacy and pristine nature as well as its eternal poise and calm, its perpetual state of blissfulness and tranquility inspite of all the worldly upheavals in the form of numerous miseries and torments that the creature is subjected to.

The pure consciousness known as the *Atma* is the pure 'self' of the creature and is like the inner eye of wisdom and enlightenment inherent to all the living beings. It is not affected or moved or tarnished by any of the worldly miseries and torments that afflict these creatures in less or more degree. In other words, it remains indifferent and dispassionate about all worldly matters, neither involved nor concerned by them or their consequences as though it was a neutral external observer and not one who lives inside the body and part of it. This happens because the *Atma* is not a participant in what the body does. Therefore it is also not affected by the consequences of these actions taken or deeds done by the body.

The link between the *Atma* and the outside world is the physical body, and once a wise and self-realised man establishes this relationship and understands the fact that his 'true self' is not the body but the *Atma*, he would no longer be affected by whatever happens to an entity that is not 'him', i.e. the body which is extraneous to his 'true self'. What worse can happen if the body suffers irreparable damage because of certain circumstances in which it finds in this world which might result in its death? Well, an enlightened man is not the least perturbed, rather he is comforted,

because then his 'self', the Atma, would be liberated from this body-like prison and set free like the bird escaping from the cage. So, there is no wonder that the wise, erudite and enlightened man gives a damn to how miserable and troubled the body feels while it lives and interacts with this world.]

12. That supreme transcendental Being who is non-dual, only one and immutable, who keeps every one under his command and control (being the almighty Lord of creation), and who has revealed himself as the pure conscious Atma residing in the bosom of all living beings—he is so mysterious, magical, mystical and enigmatic that though he is one, immutable and indivisible he still transforms himself into all the numerous forms that exist in this animate as well the inanimate world.

A wise, erudite, sagacious and enlightened man who has the wisdom and erudition, the intelligence and the insight to see or perceive or witness the presence of that enigmatic and fascinating supreme Being in his own bosom as the pure conscious Atma which is eternally enlightened and self-illuminated as well as eternally blissful and happy—he is the only person who experiences eternal state of blissfulness and happiness. No other person can enjoy this privilege (12).

[Note—The concept of 'seeing' the Atma is like an image seen in the mirror. The principal of whom this image is formed is the supreme transcendental Brahm. The image has the radiance and splendour which is equivalent to that of the principal of which it is merely a reflection. But to form any image some kind of reflective surface is needed and this surface is the mirror. In the case of the Atma, the 'surface' from which the illumination is reflected is the intellect and wisdom. The cleaner and polished the mirror is, the clearer will be the image; so the more uncorrupt and untainted the mind-intellect of the creature is the better would it perceive the Truth known as Brahm or Atma.]

13. That supreme transcendental Principal (i.e. Brahm in the form of the Atma) is the only eternal and imperishable entity amongst everything that has come into existence because all of them are mortal and perishable. Even amongst the divine Gods who occupy exalted position in the hierarchy of creation, this Principal is the supreme Divinity and the most exalted cosmic Consciousness in creation.

This supreme entity known as the Atma single handedly fulfills all the desires and aspirations of the creature. [This is because the Atma is like the dynamo that drives the creature. Without the consciousness being present in the body, the latter would not be able to do anything. This is a metaphoric way of saying that the Atma is the central hub around which the wheel of desires and their fulfillment revolves. A body without consciousness would not live and be aware—or be 'conscious'—of the world to desire anything and then strive to fulfill this desire. The body is driven by the consciousness present inside it to do deeds and take actions. Therefore it is said that the Atma helps to satisfy desires.]

A wise, erudite, sagacious and enlightened man who has the wisdom and erudition, the intelligence and the insight to see or perceive the presence of that enigmatic and fascinating Supreme Being in his own bosom as the pure conscious Atma, which is eternally enlightened and self-illuminated as well as eternally peaceful and calm, is the person who experiences eternal state of blissfulness, peacefulness and tranquility. This privilege is not available to anyone else (13).

14. Wise and erudite men regard this eclectic source of eternal and infinite beatitude and felicity which cannot be described in words as the knowledge that enlightens one

of the ‘pure conscious self’. Indeed, it is the knowledge of the supreme transcendental Brahm; it is the knowledge of the pure conscious Atma.

Say, how can one get to know of and be acquainted with this Brahm; how can it be known to us? Is it manifested in some known way so that one can know about it, can witness it and can verify its presence? Or else, is it so mysterious and enigmatic that it is not possible to perceive its presence in physical terms like other things in this world, but is rather the subject matter of subtle experience and subtle perception that comes within the jurisdiction of the wisened and enlightened mind and intellect? (14).

15. That mysterious, enigmatic, esoteric and subtle abode of Brahm has no physical sun, moon, stars or lightening in clouds, then there is no question of the physical fire being present there. [That is, Brahm does not reside in any physical place having physical features such as the sun etc. present in the heaven. This implies that Brahm has no physical abode known as a heaven! It is an all-pervading and all-incorporating divine entity that has a diffused existence which is not physically discernible by the gross organs of the body like seeing some high palace on a mountain top where some high priest or some emperor lives. In fact, Brahm resides in the person’s own heart as his own conscious self. So where is the question of Brahm residing in some distant heaven with the sun, moon, stars and electric to accompany him?]

Everything is illuminated by its light, everything is seen and observed in its light, and everything is witnessed and experienced by its light. There would be no knowledge and no awareness in its absence. It is the universal and all-pervading cosmic Consciousness personified. It is this ‘consciousness’ that lights up the world and gives it its vital spark of life (as the sperm, as the sun, the moon and the stars, as the air, the fire and the water elements, as the earth to rest upon, and as the sky to find sufficient space to live and grow) (15).

[Note—Brahm is consciousness personified as the Atma of the living world. ‘Light’ is a metaphor of consciousness and of knowledge, wisdom and erudition. The term ‘light’ here does not refer to any physical source of illumination as we usually understand ‘light’ to mean, but the illumination that comes with wisdom, erudition, sagacity and enlightenment about the Truth.

All illuminated entities in this creation such as the sun, moon, stars, lightening and fire derive their natural light that shines for eternity as well as the energy to keep being perpetually lighted from some divine, supernatural and inexhaustible source, and ‘Brahm’ is that source. In other words, Brahm is the dynamic principal in creation that is latently present in all things which shine and give out light. It is like the case of the atom which is behind the infinite source of atomic energy which man has harnessed to light up his huge cities.

Therefore, since knowledge is also a form of light that illuminates the dark mind and removes its darkness of ignorance, it is synonymous with Brahm who personifies the best of the illuminated and glorious virtues present in creation.

Brahm is self-illuminated because only an entity that has its own light can illuminate others. For example, the celestial sun has its own light and therefore it can illuminate the moon, but the moon cannot illuminate either the sun or the stars on its own account because it has no light of its own.]

Canto 2, Valli 3

1. [The analogy of a vast tree is used in this Valli to conceptualize the essential form and nature of Brahm. This manifest world has been envisioned as a huge tree,

complete with all its external features such as the leaves, flowers, fruits, branches, stem etc. If there is a tree then there must be a root. This root from which this tree grew and from which it draws its nourishment, but which remains hidden from view and is present even when the tree is cut down, is symbolic of Brahm. Refer also to *Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad* of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 3, Brahman 9, verse no. 28 compares the living being with a tree and describes the difference between the inanimate world and the animate world, i.e. the world which does not have an Atma and the world which has an Atma. The *Rudra Hridaya Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda which, in its verse no. 41, describes that the body of the creature is like a tree where two birds live, one bird representing the Jiva (the living creature who thinks that the body is its true self) and the other is Ishwar (the conscience that inherently lives in each individual). The latter represents the voice of Brahm.]

The huge creation, which is like an inverted holy Fig tree, has its roots at the top¹ and the branches at the lower end². It has been here since time immemorial.

This tree is a metaphor for the supreme, transcendental and divine Brahm which is the principal entity in creation. This Brahm is marked by unique virtues of being the only eternal and imperishable entity in this creation.

The entire creation is founded upon this single principal entity; it finds its support, its solace and its succour in this principal entity. The entire creation is dependant upon it, based upon it, and relies upon it. [Refer also to 2/2/8-9.]

No one can supersede it and undermine its authority, supremacy and sway over the whole creation (1).

[Note--¹The *root* of this mysterious tree representing this huge creation is the source from which this tree has derived its energy and nourishment to grow into such a colossus structure. This root provides the necessary sustenance to enable it to have such a long life. Even as any tree is anchored to the ground by the root and draws its nourishment through the root, this creation relies upon the supreme Authority known as Brahm to base its self, draw its nourishment and get its sustenance. It is Brahm that supports the huge edifice of this creation and protects it as well. Without Brahm this tree-like creation would have no existence. It would topple over and perish. But even as the root remains hidden from view and what we see is the stem, branches, leaves and flowers, this Brahm remains hidden from view and what we see it the multi-coloured canvas known as the world of immense diversity.

The root of any tree will be present where it can anchor the tree firmly and from where it can draw nourishment to sustain the huge life form manifested as the external structure of the tree. Since in the case of the world-like tree Brahm is not only the anchor but also the primary source of life as its creator, as well as is the sustainer and protector of this world, the root of this tree is symbolically depicted to be present 'high up in the heaven' where this supreme transcendental Brahm is symbolically said to reside. This location is a metaphor for something that is most exalted, lofty, glorious, dignified, high-ranking, supreme and authoritative. This high position is occupied by someone who is the Emperor of creation, and this Emperor is Brahm. Hence, this world-like tree is regarded as having its roots in the heaven. Since the root is invisible, this symbolism is most appropriate because Brahm is also invisible. And since without the root the tree cannot be in existence, the very existence of the visible world is an ample proof of the existence of Brahm at its root.

The world-like tree grew from this single root and then developed numerous branches and shoots, having uncountable number of leaves, flowers and fruits of different colours, fragrances, sizes and shapes etc.

This 'root' representing Brahm is like a fount of Amrit which is the elixir of eternal life and which enables this tree seemingly sustain itself for eternity.

The great sage Adi Shankaryacharya describes this symbolism of the tree succinctly in a very charming way. "This tree's *root* is the supreme transcendental Brahm as determined by the Vedas. Its *seed*, i.e. the basic reason why the tree came into being, is the notion of Avidya or ignorance of the reality which leads to the generation of various worldly desires, yearnings, aspirations, hopes and expectations. These in turn start the chain of deeds to accomplish success in fulfilling them, and the consequences or results of these deeds. Its first *sprout* is known as the invisible Hiranyagarbha which is the macrocosmic subtle body of creation. The *trunk* of this tree represents the gross body of all the creatures in this creation. It has *grown and developed* when watered by various unending worldly desires and yearnings known as 'Trishna'. Its *new shoots* are represented by the creature's mind-intellect complex, the different organs of the body, and the material objects of this world that attract them. Its *leaves* are symbolic of the various scriptures, schools of thought and philosophies along with their different branches. {It is to be noted here that the green leaves carry on photosynthesis by which the tree is able to synthesise certain elements on its own that it cannot absorb from the soil. In other words, the study of the scriptures helps the man to imbibe new information and acquire new knowledge with which he was not born, and he would suffer from this metaphoric deficiency if he does not study the scriptures.} Its beautiful and attractive *flowers* represent the good deeds done by the creature, such as religious sacrifices, charity, austerity, penance, sufferance for noble cause, and other noble deeds. Its sap or *juice* is symbolic of the various emotions and sentiments that the creatures have in this world, such as the emotions of happiness and joy or sorrows and miseries. Its *fruits* represent the numerous means of livelihood, diligent endeavours and sincere efforts made by all the creatures to sustain themselves and live out their dreams, and the consonant rewards of these enterprises. It is founded upon the *ground* of having desires, passions and aspirations for enjoying the rewards of one's industry, enterprise and diligent efforts. Brahma the creator, and other Gods and divine beings are like the different *birds* who have built nests on this cosmic representing the seven Lokas or abodes.

These seven divine abodes are the following—According to Brahmaand Puran (BP) and Vaaman Puran (VP) there are the following lokas-- 'Bhu' or earth [BP-3,4,2-18]; 'Bhuvaha' or the space between the earth and the heaven [BP-3,4,2-19]; 'Swaha' or the heavens known as Brahma's abode; the space beyond the earth's atmosphere; cosmic wind represented by the solar wind blows here [BP-3,4,2-20]; 'Maha' or the world created by Brahma pronouncing the divine word Maha meaning the great heaven or the outer space; it is believed that great sages and seers stay here; it is 1000 Yojans or appx. 8000 miles away from the Swaha Loka [BP-3,4,2-21; VP-52,21-22]; 'Janaha', so called because it was to be inhabited by the humans and the cows [BP-3,4,2-22; VP-52, 22]; 'Tapaha' or the Loka where great amount of austerity and penances are done; it is said to be 60 million Yojans or appx. 60 x 8 million miles away from the Janaha Loka [BP-3,4,2-24; VP-52, 23]; and 'Satyam' or the truthful heaven where the supreme Lord has his abode; it is 300 million Yojans or appx. 300 x 8 million miles beyond the Tapaha Loka [BP-3,4,2-25; VP-52, 24].

The seven Bhuvans or Lokas according to the Vedantic view are the following:-- the seven organs of perception situated in the region of the head—viz. the two eyes + two ears + two nostrils + one tongue/mouth = seven.

This symbolic world-like tree is buffeted by gusts of wind and it sways in the breeze, its leaves shivering and shaking to create a subtle rustling *sound* which appears to indicate that the tree is either groaning under its agonies or exulting in its majestic glories. Other sounds include the chirping of birds perched on its branches, squeaking of frolicking monkeys, pecking of the woodpecker quietly gnawing away at the wood, the bees humming around flowers, the squirrels and such other life forms

hopping and jumping on its branches, etc. These sounds around this tree are symbolic of the numerous sounds that are heard in this vast world. We find the paradoxical situation where one creature is exulting in happiness and joy while his compatriot is wailing in sorrows and rolling in miseries that fill this world. Other sounds include the sonorous recitation of hymns of the scriptures and chanting of Mantras during religious ceremonies—indicating the rustling of leaves. All these sounds are indicative of the cacophonous life that exists in this world. They also stand for the variety and diversity of creation as indicated by the numerous emotions and sentiments that are expressed by the creatures in this world. In short, the life surrounding the tree is a microcosmic depiction of the life in this vast creation.

²This tree has its *trunk and branches* pointing downwards because they represent various forms of life in different planes of development in the manifested world. Some of these forms are very low while some are of a higher level. There are numerous levels of existence indicated by the diversity seen in this world. For example, there is the heaven, the hell, the world of spirits, the earth and the sky, the world of the botanical kingdom and that of the animal kingdom stretching from single cell organisms to complex structures as huge trees and human beings respectively. All these life forms are lower than the stature occupied by the supreme Brahm. This fact is symbolised by the tree having its branches pointing downwards instead of upwards from where Brahm is located.

The ‘root’ of this symbolic tree is called ‘Brahm’ because it is the grandest and the most important of all the parts of this cosmic tree. Since this Brahm is the ‘truthful’ creator, sustainer and nourisher of this tree-like world, it is called *Amrit* which is the ambrosia that sustains eternal life. Since this tree has its origin in a hoary past about which nothing is definitely known and would continue to grow till the time about which nothing can be said with certainty, it is akin to having an eternal life as long as the its root is alive. Therefore, the tree is nourished by the Amrit (the ambrosia of eternity) that it draws through its roots in Brahm because the latter is the eternal wellspring of this Amrit.

Something that is ‘truthful’ has to be eternal and imperishable because ‘truth’ is always constant and steady, and therefore the root of this tree representing Brahm is eternal and imperishable because Brahm has these eclectic virtues.

Since this creation is ‘created’ by Brahm and is ‘not’ Brahm himself, it is separate from it, and therefore it is non-eternal and perishable unlike Brahm. This world is like the presence of water in a mirage formed in a desert, or the magical world of illusions created by a magician, and therefore it does not have any pith like the stem of the banana tree. Even as a mud pot of any shape or size would break to become mud and nothing else, when the outer facade of tree-like world collapses then all that remains is its root in the form of Brahm.]

2. This entire creation has its origin in that Brahm which is like its *Pran*¹ or ‘vital life’. This creation is inspired by Brahm to do what it does. This Brahm is like a stern Lord with a raised baton². Those who recognise Brahm as such obtain eternity and fearlessness from death³ (2).

[Note—¹The word *Pran* has two connotations—one is ‘life’ itself, and the other refers to the ‘vital wind’ that infuses and then sustains life in the body of the creature. Both these meanings are applicable to Brahm, for the latter is the spirit which forms the essence of life in this world, and it the vital force that drives the entire creation with its powerful dynamic energy and forceful inspiration. The living world moves about because of the wind or air element in it, as the latter is the one element amongst the five primary ones (the others being sky, fire, water and earth) that has the inherent virtue of self-movement. The ability to air to cause movement is proved by the movement of leaves in a fig tree at the slightest breeze, or the air-filled balloon which remains very restless.

²Brahm is a benevolent and magnanimous Lord, then how can he be so *stern* as to inspire fear in his subjects by holding a baton to bash someone? The symbolism of a harsh taskmaster is used for Brahm to emphasis the point that his orders, his rules and regulations, his divine presence and supreme authority is so awesome and inviolable that no one dares to supersede him. This fear factor is needed to regulate this creation, otherwise all the creatures would recklessly do whatever they think fit, creating chaos and anarchy in this creation. See verse no. 3 below.

³A person who is well acquainted with the Emperor of the realm has no fear from any quarter. Likewise, a wise, erudite, enlightened and self-realised man who has recognised that supreme authority as his own Atma has nothing to fear from. Since the Atma representing Brahm is eternal and it is the person's true and pure 'self', the question of dying does not also arise, and with it the fear of death vanishes. Consequentially, this realisation of the Atma and of Brahm makes the person feel that he is eternal and imperishable. The basic premise of this thinking is that this person knows that his body which dies and perishes is not his true 'self' which is the pure conscious Atma.]

3. [It is out of the fear* of this supreme transcendental almighty Authority (i.e. Brahm), it is to honour its dignity and pay respect to its high exalted stature, it is to maintain the decorum of his high office and the supreme state of being the divine creator of all that exists and therefore superior and senior to everything else in existence, it is to uphold and respect the sanctity of its sacrosanct and inviolable commands and observe the rules and regulations framed by it in order to keep the creation regulated and working systematically and orderly, that everything and everyone in existence, from the miniscule to the grandest, is compelled and obliged to obey its commands and pay tributes to it.]

It is out of respect of that divine and exalted almighty Authority (known as Brahm) and out of fear of punishment by violating its sacrosanct commands that the Fire burns¹.

Similarly, the Sun rises and shines to give its light, heat and energy to the world (because this is the duty assigned to the Sun by the same supreme Authority).

It is out of the fear and respect of this Authority (or under the sacrosanct and inviolable command of that Authority) that Indra (the king of Gods)², the Wind God (representing the vital air element)³, and the fifth divine entity known as the Death God⁴ (i.e. the Yam God) move actively and diligently to perform their respective duties with agility and eagerness, without resting even for a while and showing no callousness and lethargy (3).

[Note—¹The *fire* exhibits its special qualities of producing heat and light to keep the creation warm and illuminate the realm for the creature to see. The fire burns things which come in its contact which is a metaphoric way of saying that it either punishes them for their misdeeds and sinful acts by reducing them to ashes, or purifies them by burning all the impurities that taint them. The fire actually carries out the mandate given to it by the supreme Authority known as Brahm.

²*Indra* is the God who controls the clouds and rains. So this verse implies that the Emperor Brahm uses his knight Indra to ensure that all the corners of his kingdom get rainfall which is a metaphor for showering the blessing of life on this earth. Further, Indra is also the chief God who rules over all the other Gods representing the various 'Indris' or organs of the body, implying that the Supreme Being known as Brahm uses his assistant known as Indra to exercise control over all the organs of the body at the micro level, and over all the units of the creation at the macro level.

³The *wind* element is at the very foundation of life because besides moving the clouds in the sky to the places where rain is needed, it also sustains life in the entire creation in the form of the vital airs called 'Pran'. These airs present inside the body

of the creature help it to perform all its functions, including moving about. This factor of 'movement' is a vital sign of life. In fact, if the air does not show its inherent virtue of movement then life would suffocate to death. That is why of all the internal functions of the body, only 'breathing' shows movement in the way of expansion and retraction of the chest area.

But it must be observed that sometimes this air becomes absolutely calm for a short while before resuming its movement, thereby indicating that left to its own accord it would like to rest like all other elements in creation, but is compelled to move under the 'fear' of being punished by the overbearing authority of the tough taskmaster known as Brahm. It is not that Brahm is cruel and without compassion, but he has to bear a tough stance and a rigid outer face if he has to keep the state machinery of his creation moving and performing in a well-oiled and synchronized manner in order to serve the larger interest of creation by regulating the population by his stern demeanours. It is a common observance that if the chief administrator shows outwardly affection and sweetness of demeanours, his subordinates would gradually become less vigilant and alert because there is no element of fear left in them.

⁴It ought to be remembered that this discourse is being given by the God of death himself, i.e. by the *Yam* God. So one might ask why this God continuously kills the creation which Brahm has so assiduously sustained, nourished and developed. Yam explains this here—he is doing it on Brahm's express commands; he is merely carrying out the mandate given to him by the Emperor of creation, and this brief is to keep the population under check by bringing about death. Yam is also the god of Dharma, hence he is also responsible to judge the creature according to the life he has led before death. Like any wise King having a hangman in his duty just to punish criminals in order to maintain law and order in his kingdom, Brahm has employed the services of Yam to exercise his control over this creation.

Now, why would Brahm want his own creation be killed by Yam? It is because an ecological, evolutionary and developmental balance has to be maintained. If no one dies, the creation would have no place for new species, and there would be no space and food to sustain those who are already born. Beside this, the fear of death and punishment for evil deeds done in one's present life keep the world on its toes and ensures that for the most part righteousness and nobility holds the upper hand. But when things get out of hand, Brahm reserves the right to conclude this creation, and Yam is again assigned this formidable task.

*This concept has also been described in Taittiriyo-panishad, Brahmanand Valli (i.e. Valli no. 2), Anuvak 8, verse no. 1, which is Chapter no. 2 of this volume.]

4. If one is wise, clever and judicious enough to have acquired the eclectic and sublime knowledge¹ pertaining to this supreme transcendental Truth known as Brahm while he is alive in this world then he is able to free himself from the fetters of birth and death. [That is, if he is able to acquaint himself about his own 'true self' as the pure conscious Atma which is imperishable and eternal, he does not perish with the body when the latter dies. In other words, such a man has attained what is known as 'Jivan Mukti'—liberation and deliverance while one is alive.]

If not, then certainly he has to acquire a new body and remain wandering in numerous wombs (i.e. taking newer births every time his old body becomes old and dies) [This happens because he has regarded the body as the 'self' instead of the Atma, and therefore is liable for the deeds done by this body. This forces him to take a new birth to complete the unfinished agenda of the body, and also to either suffer from or enjoy the consequences of deeds done by this body.] (4).

[Note—¹The *knowledge* referred to here is the knowledge of the truthful and pure ethereal Spirit or soul or Atma which is eternal and imperishable, and which is the

‘true self’ of the creature. Once one realises that he is not the perishable body but the imperishable Atma, that this Atma has nothing to do with this world and its attractive charms which are all deluding and illusionary like the water seen in a desert mirage because the Atma cannot be subject to delusions and illusions as it is eternally enlightened and wise, and that this Atma neither suffers from any punishments or enjoys the rewards for the deeds done by the body which is however a distinct and separate entity from the Atma, the person is deemed to be liberated from the bondages of the body and its accompanying horrors.

When the wise person realises that his Atma does not enjoy anything of this sensual material world, and that this Atma is ‘he’ in his truthful form, that wise person would lose interest in taking birth again with a new body because he would have realised that if he wants true freedom for ‘his self’—i.e. for his Atma—from the horrors of the world, he would have to cast aside the very cause of the entire problem, and this ‘cause’ is the body. So why would and why should he be so stupid enough to commit an error when he knows that he has nothing to gain from it, but only to lose his independence and the only chance to break free from the vice-like grip of this world and its accompanying agonies?]

5. Even as one can see a sharp and clear image of an object in a clean mirror, one can also observe the divine glow of the pure conscious Atma in the mirror of one’s intellect and mind which is uncorrupted and untarnished by any worldly taints and blemishes, or which is not veiled by the smoke of any delusions and ignorance.

In the abode of the Spirits called Pitriloka (i.e. the abode where a man’s Spirit or soul goes after death), this view of the Supreme Being is not clear¹. Similarly, in the higher world of Gandharvas (celestial dancers and singers), the view of the Supreme Being is like an image seen in water².

It is in the third type of abode called the Brahma Loka (the superior heaven where enlightened souls go, and where Lord Brahma the creator is said to reside) that a clear view of the Supreme Being is possible. There, one can clearly discern the difference between the Atma (the individual soul of the creature) and the Parmatma (the supreme Soul of all the creatures) much like one observes the shadow and the sunlight respectively³ (5).

[Note--¹This is because these *spirits living in the Pitriloka* have a lingering memory of their past lives and the creatures that they knew as their kith and kin. This is evident from the fact that offerings are made to dead ancestors by members of their families and by no one else. Say, who is a relative after death? This conception of having a ‘relation’ on earth who would pay homage and give oblation to the dead Spirit of the dead man shows that the link has not been completely broken, that in spite of death the erstwhile living man has still been veiled by ignorance and delusions and that he maintains his symbolic link with this material world. There is no wonder then that he has to take a birth again. Since this is the opposite of having real wisdom and enlightenment, it is not expected that such dead ancestors who live in Spirit form can have any chance of witnessing the Supreme Being or Brahm or their ‘true self’ while in that form. It is much like a state of *dreams* wherein a man dreams of this world and maintains his imaginary relationship with it, ‘dreaming’ or imagining of things in this world which he is not able to acquire with his physical body while he was in the waking state of consciousness, but for which he has an yearning and fulfills this yearning in his dreams.

²The image formed in water is not stable but keeps on changing every other moment with each ripple or any kind of movement on the surface of the water. This image appears to be distorted and fractured because of the movement in the water which makes it look unsteady, shaky, simmering and wavy. It is hard to get a clear view of the principal object based on its reflection formed in water. The view of

Brahm in the abode of *Gandharvas* is compared to this view because the Gandharvas are said to be experts in creating a dream-like world of fascinating charm much like the stage of a theatre company or the sets in a film studio. They are dazzling and simmering in their brilliance on the face value, but basically illusionary and are dismantled once the show is over. They have no permanency. Likewise, the vision of Brahm that is available to those who reside in this abode is equally temporary and illusive as well as distorted and ever-changing.

The allusion to the fascinating and charming abode of Gandharvas is to highlight the fact that those people who are enchanted and taken for a ride by the magnificent charms of this world, ignorant of the fact that it is not going to last long like the magical world created by the Gandharvas while they perform in the heaven, are not able to have a truthful vision of the Supreme Being residing in their own heart as their Atma. They are blinded by worldly dazzle and brilliance of illusionary charms of this materialistic world. They remain engrossed in enjoying this materialistic enchanting world and its fascinating charms, and have no inclination or temperament or mental tuning to receive the frequency of this transmitter known as Brahm. They virtually remain ignorant of its transmissions although these ethereal waves are present all around them, as if it were a failed or wrongly tuned radio receiver!

³Here, the Atma is like the shadow or image of the principal Parmatma, while the latter's brilliant light forms the contrasting sharp background against which this Atma is seen as distinctly as one sees a shadow against the background of the bright sunlight.

The implied meaning here, according to the reverend sage Adi Shankaracharya, is that it is easier for a man to realise Brahm while he is alive in this world, because after death it would be very difficult for him to determine which abode he would be allocated as this allocation is the exclusive prerogative of the Yam God, the god of death and adjudicating authority for the destiny of the dead creature depending upon the deeds done by him while he was alive and on which decision the creature has no control. It is almost a Herculean task to reach the *Brahma Loka*. So if one is sincerely interested in getting to know the Supreme Being then why should he not make efforts in this direction while the going is easy for him as a living being and while there is still time to rectify his thinking and modify his approach to life?]

6. These sense organs of the body of all the numerous living organisms have the basic characteristic that they are impermanent. They take birth along with the body and die along with it. These organs have different inherent tendencies and habits, different inclinations and temperaments in different creatures spread over a wide swathe of creation with uncountable number of species, genres, families, lineage and habitats.

A wise man who understands this basic fact about these sense organs (and their principal abode which is the body) does not have any regrets for them or feels sorry for them, and neither does he grieves for them (that they are suffering in this world or would die one day) (6).

[Note—In other words, a wise and erudite man realises that these organs are subject to constant decay and ruin; this is their fundamental nature and characteristic feature. So there is no point in grieving over the death of the body, because this body is nothing else but a cluster of these organs. Further, he realises the fact that his Atma is *not* one of these organs because it does not decay and die like these organs.]

7. The mind is superior to these sense organs. The intellect is superior to the mind. The majestic entity known as Mahaa-tattwa which is the great and the grand Principle of creation represented by the pure conscious Atma is superior to the intellect.

The entity that is called 'Avyakta' (something that is invisible, intangible, unmanifest and without attributes) is superior to the Atma (7).

[Note—This is because the subtler the thing is the finer is its texture, and therefore it is placed higher up in the ladder of metaphysical world. For example, the air is invisible, lighter and more diffused in this creation than the fire element, and that is why it is more subtle than the fire. In the present case though the Atma is not visible *par se*, but its manifested form as the living being is very much in gross entity and physically seen as compared to some entity defined as ‘Avyakta’—i.e. that which is not visible at all. This latter entity is the ‘Prakriti’ or Nature. It is from this Nature that the rest of creation has got its characteristic qualities. Nature decides the personality of a creature and his mental setup and temperaments. While the Atma is limited by the body in which it lives, the Nature is a cosmic phenomenon which has no boundaries and limits. Nature encompasses the entire gamut of visible and invisible creation.

The meaning of this verse is similar to Canto 1, Valli 3, verse no. 10. It is repeated here to emphasis its importance and significance once again.]

8. The Viraat Purush, who is the manifest cosmic form of Brahm, is superior to the indescribable and intangible divine entity known as Avyakta (Nature or Prakriti)¹. This Viraat Purush has a cosmic all-pervading form which has no physical features of its own but assumes the features of the body of the creature in which he lives as its Atma².

A man finds eternal peace and beatitude by getting acquainted with this knowledge. He is freed from the fetters that shackle him to ignorance and delusions about his own true self as well as about the ultimate Truth in this creation. He consequentially finds eternity and felicity because he discovers the nature of his ‘true self’ as the abode of the imperishable and eternal Brahm who has revealed himself both as the Atma and the Parmatma (the supreme Atma) (8).

[Note--¹This *Avyakta Prakriti* or un-manifest sublime Nature represents the subtle but dynamic cosmic powers, forces and energy of the supreme transcendental Brahm which were employed to bring about existence of this creation with all its profundity and variability. It is the subtle Shakti or invisible dynamic powers and potentials of Brahm that are not physically visible or verifiable but remain hidden in this creation in a latent form but nevertheless controls each and every of its actions and functions.

The invisible Nature called Avyakta Prakriti is the active and dynamic half of Brahm instead of the passive Principal that is represented by the Viraat Purush. This fact is depicted iconographically when it is shown that Vishnu is reclining peacefully with closed eyes in a state of sleep as if meditating while lying on the bedstead made up of the ocean serpent called Sheshnath who floats on the surface of the celestial ocean of milk called ‘Kshir Sagar’.

Brahm likes to work quietly without any pretentious behaviour and showmanship. That is why he has revealed his stupendous powers in a quiet manner, i.e. as ‘Avyakta’— as something that is not apparent.

²The *Viraat Purush*, according to metaphysics, is the gross body of creation and it is this body which is the source from which the rest of the cosmos was moulded or created or manifested. That is, the entire creation, both visible and invisible, is a manifested or revealed form of this Viraat Purush.

Purush has been defined in Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 2, Brahman 5, verse no. 18 explicitly as the cosmic all-pervading form of the Supreme Being who had entered each and every body of all the creatures that came into being in this creation, and took up his residence there as the pure conscious Atma.

According to reverend Adi Sankracharya’s commentary on Katho-panishad, Canto 1, Valli 3, verse no. 11 and Canto 2, Valli 1, verse no. 12, the word ‘Purush’ refers to that supreme entity which uniformly pervades in and completely fills everything that exists. It also refers to one who resides inside any place and completely owns that place. Therefore, this word Purush refers to the supreme

transcendental Brahm who has taken up residence in the gross body of the creature at the micro level and in the Viraat Purush at the macro level. This Brahm pervades throughout them in a uniform way even as the sky and the wind element occupy all available space in the creation. That is also why sky is considered as a nearest analogy of Brahm because even the other all-pervading element, the wind/air, is present in it and not outside of it.

According to Vedanta therefore, the word Purush refers to the primary and supreme creator of creation known as the Viraat Purush who represents the macrocosmic gross Male body or aspect of the cosmos and is the first macrocosmic gross revelation of Brahm. Ultimately, this Brahm is the Supreme Being who has revealed himself as the Viraat Purush. The creation unfolded from this Purush when he metamorphosed as the gross body of the entire creation, visible and invisible. Therefore, he is the sum-total of all the gross bodies of all the creatures taken together in this creation at the macrocosmic level, and it is from his macrocosmic body that the entire creation was moulded. In other words, the Viraat Purush represents the entire spread of the cosmos. At the micro level of the world, the individual creature is the counter part of Viraat Purush. In other words, the individual gross body of the creature is the microcosmic form of that Viraat, because the entire creation is a manifestation of the same Viraat; it is an image of Viraat.

In the Purans, he is also known by other names, such as Vishnu, the sustainer. Since the Viraat is the male aspect of creation and the primary source of life, Vishnu is also regarded as the creator as well as the sustainer of the creation. But since Vishnu, as Viraat Purush, is the macrocosmic gross body of Brahm, the supreme transcendental Being, he is also regarded as being synonymous with Brahm. The entire universe has been created by Vishnu's passive powers using Shakti as its active power and partner.

The word 'Viraat' refers to something that is vast, colossus, immeasurable, fathomless, and infinite and beyond all terrestrial yardsticks. The supreme Lord encloses the entire creation from all sides like an envelop, and at the same time he remains uniformly and inseparably present throughout the creation like salt which has been dissolved in water. At the time of creation, the Trinity Gods, i.e. Brahma the creator, Shiva the concluder, and Vishnu the sustainer, had all emerged from the Viraat Purush. According to Purans, this Viraat and Lord Vishnu are the same divine factors of creation. The subtler form is known as Viraat, while its grosser form is Vishnu—though the terms 'subtle and gross' are only relative and for the purpose of understanding, because both are the same indivisible Brahm who is non-dual and immutable.]

9. [This verse defines what the Atma representing the supreme Brahm is like.]

It is not possible to physically see the form of the supreme Brahm represented by the pure conscious Atma or the soul of a creature. It cannot be seen by the physical gross organ of sight in the body known as the eye. It can only be perceived by constant meditation and contemplation which envisages a diligent and sincere coordination between the discerning, wise and intelligent mind that has been trained to be under control, and the heart that has unflinching faith and steadiness of conviction about that Brahm firmly engrained in it.

Those who have witnessed and experienced the supreme Brahm in the form of the pure consciousness called the Atma are able to obtain eternity as well as everlasting beatitude and felicity (9).

10. [This verse defines the state of ultimate realisation or the attainment of the Absolute which is akin to the state of existence known as Samadhi which is a perpetual state of meditation wherein the man remains in a state of constant bliss and peace.]

That state when all the five organs of perception (eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin) withdraw themselves and forsake their natural propensity to be extrovert and perceive external stimuli, and join the mind and intellect to turn inwards (i.e. when they become calm and focused on doing introspection and meditation), it is only then that the ultimate stable state is reached. This state is called the 'Param Gati' or the ultimate state of exalted existence for the creature. This is the Absolute state of existence when no ifs and buts remain. [During this state, all external world along with its entire gamut of delusions and miseries cease to exist. The only thing that does is the conscious presence of the 'self' or the sublime Atma.] (10).

11. [This verse defines Yoga or a state of deep meditation.]

That state when the organs, including the mind-intellect, become calm and steady as well as focused on the Atma (i.e. when it is in a perpetual state of contemplation and meditation), is called Yoga. [This word Yoga means a union or coordination between any two entities. Here, coordination has been established between the creature's physical existence and his ethereal existence.]

In this exalted and sublime state, the man is free from all delusions and ignorance pertaining to this gross world, because Yoga symbolises the coordination of the stupendous and eclectic powers associated with creation and destruction¹.

Yoga has the potential to bring about the dissolution of this world, as well as to create this world² (11).

[Note--¹In other words, the process of *Yoga* bestows to the creature the astounding powers that the supreme Brahm possesses. It is true because Yoga establishes coordination between the energetic behaviour of the sense organs, the magnificent powers of the mind and intellect to think and analyse and determine the truth, and the inner intuition represented by the glow of insight effusing from the conscious Atma. This magnificent synchronization helps to harness the cosmic forces of Nature represented by each of these units which were hitherto working against each other and getting dissipated. Now they can be focused on one point much like focusing the sun's rays at one point by using a magnifying glass. This creates a situation when the stupendous dynamic forces of creation reveal their potentials and enables a man to do even the impossible tasks. This fact has been repeatedly emphasized in Yoga Upanishads.

²When the sense organs are restrained and the mind controlled as a result of Yoga, this world ceases to exist, which is another way of saying that its dissolution has been brought about. But once Yoga empowers the practitioner with astounding mystical powers, he can create anything he wishes much like the Supreme Being.

We can interpret it in another way. The harnessed energy of the mind can be used for constructive purposes as well as for destructive purposes even as mankind can use the astounding power of the atom for beneficial or destructive purposes. Therefore, Yoga can be employed as a tool for self and Brahm realisation, or to acquire mystical supernatural powers to obtain worldly fame, wealth and influence.]

12. That transcendental consciousness known as the Atma (called the 'self' representing the Supreme Being or Brahm) cannot be explained or defined or understood using the faculty of speech. Similarly, the mind cannot grasp it as it is beyond its comprehension and reach, and the gross organ of the eye cannot ever hope to see it in physical terms as it sees other gross objects of the world.

Except those who convincingly affirm that 'it is', i.e. who are very assertive and positive about the truthfulness of the axiomatic maxim proclaimed by the scriptures that the 'Atma does have an incontrovertible existence', no one else can ever hope to get acquainted with this Atma, no non-believer can have access to this

divine Principal of this creation as it is very sublime, subtle, ethereal and invisible. [That is, only those who are enlightened and self-realised can have personal experience of the Atma and bear witness to its presence. When they assert that 'It is' they are being truthful and honest about something they have had a firsthand experience of. No other person can have access to this most esoteric, enigmatic and mysterious entity of this creation.] (12).

[Note—The world has a physical existence that is very much in evidence and cannot be denied. Its numerous units take birth and then die only to be reborn again. Since anything that has a verifiable existence must have some root or origin from which or from where it has come into being, it follows that there must be something unknown to us which is the cause that gave rise to this world. Nothing can happen without a cause; nothing can come into existence from the void of nothing. That is, there must be something, no matter how inexplicable, indefinable, mysterious and secretive, from which this creation has come into being and into which it would collapse and disappear after death or end of creation before reemerging from it again in the next phase of creation. This mysterious entity is the cosmic Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness at the macro level which has transformed itself as the Atma at the micro level of creation. This Atma assumed a body which it sheds at the time of death to assume another body for a new birth.

At the time of the final annihilation, all the individual Atmas collectively collapse and merge with the cosmic Atma known as Brahm just like all the rivers fall in the fathomless ocean to become indistinguishable and inseparable from it. Even as the water of this ocean is evaporated and transformed into rain-bearing clouds pouring this water on vast stretches of land much far away from the ocean to replenish underground water sources and irrigate the land mass, but in the final analysis come back to their point of origin in the ocean, the Atma of all the individual creatures originate from the single cosmic Atma, spread in all the directions of the creation as all forms of life, only to finally collapse and come back to their original parent cosmic Atma known as Brahm and merge with it.

In more mundane terms, we can take our own example. The fact that we are here implies that we had some ancestor from whom we descended, and there would be someone to live long after we are dead and gone. We have not seen that ancestor and we would not see our distant descendent. But because we have not seen that ancestor or we would not see that descendent does not mean that they did not exist in the past or would not exist in the future? It's highly preposterous to even suggest this. Likewise, even though we have not seen the supreme Brahm, the very fact that the world exists—a fact that no one can deny—and that it would die to be reborn again proves beyond doubt the existence of Brahm.]

13. One should be first convinced about the truthfulness of the principal entity in creation known as the Atma, one should properly research, analyse and then determine the truthfulness of the Atma, and then be very affirmative and assertive when one makes the statement 'It is'. That is, when a man makes a choice between two situations—whether the Atma exists or not—his assertion that the 'Atma does indeed exist' must be faithful, truthful and honest; it must not lack conviction. The statement that the Atma 'is' must be based on sound principles and intelligent thinking, and not merely impulsive. It must be founded upon personal experience and not heresy. [This is because personal experience of anything makes one believe about it more convincingly than when one merely has a second hand knowledge about it. Once the basic fact is determined, one can find out more about it by other means, but no matter what others tell him his conviction would never be swayed and he would never have any doubts because he has witnessed and experienced a particular thing himself.]

A person who has succeeded in knowing and being convinced of this eclectic universal truth about the Atma is blessed by the benevolence and benediction that accompanies such realisation. [That is, he derives the maximum benefits that come with self-realisation as well as Brahm-realisation. He is filled with overwhelming bliss and happiness at having discovered the grand truth of creation along with realising who he actually is. This realisation in turn opens the gate for his liberation and deliverance from this deluding world of ignorance-ridden miseries. He finds his peace and tranquility even while he is alive and carries on with his worldly responsibilities.] (13).

14. When all desires of a creature are dispelled or eliminated from his heart and mind, it is then that the mortal creature becomes immortal and attains the supreme state of Brahm-realisation while he is still alive and has a gross physical body¹ (14).

[Note—¹This concept is very easy to understand. A creature has so many inherent Vasanas (worldly passions, yearnings and desires) as well as Vrittis (natural inclinations, temperaments and tendencies) that determine his behaviour, outlook and thinking in this world. They are so immense and illusive that it is impossible to fulfill all of them in one life, and even if it is possible to fulfill the old ones, newer ones keep on sprouting continuously. When the time of death arrives, it is natural that some unfulfilled desires are still left over, and so the creature takes another birth in order to fulfill them in his new birth.

On the contrary, if there are no desires, there would be no cause for remaining attached with the world. This is because the desires can be fulfilled only when the creature makes efforts to fulfill them, and it is the body that is a prerequisite for this to happen. Further, since desires having their origin in various Vasanas and Vrittis always pertain to the world, when they are dispensed with the need to interact or deal with the world is also simultaneously dispensed away with.

So when the desires are eliminated, the creature is deemed to have found immense peace and tranquility, virtues which are the hallmarks of that state known as Brahm-realisation. And since such a creature has no left-over desires at the time of death, there is no cause for him to seek a new body or life to fulfill the unfulfilled desires.

The concept of obtaining Jivan Mukti or liberation and deliverance from this world while the creature is still alive has been elaborately described in a number of Upanishads. The concept of Jivan Mukti has also been elaborately explained in other Upanishads, notably The concept of Jivan Mukti has also been elaborately explained in other Upanishads, (i) Krishna Yajur Veda tradition—*Yog Kundali Upanishad*, Canto 3;; *Akchu-panishad*, verse no. 32-39; as an answer given by sage Ribhu to sage Nidagh in *Tejobindu Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse nos. 1-32; as an answer given by Lord Shiva to Ganesh in Canto 4, verse nos. 18-33 of *Varaaha Upanishad*. (ii) Atharva Veda tradition—*Annapurna Upanishad*, canto 2. (iii) Shukla Yajur Veda tradition—*Adhyatma Upanishad*, verse nos. 12, 43-47; *Mandal Brahmin Upanishad*, Brahman 2, Section 3, verse nos. 6-7; *Muktiko-panishad*, Canto 2 as an answer given to Hanuman by Lord Ram when the former requested the Lord to explain the concept to him.]

15. [This verse summarises the teachings of the Upanishads.]

When the mortal man is able to untie all the numerous ‘Granthis’¹ or knots of his heart that shackle him down, it is only then that he is able to attain eternity; it is only then that he finds liberation and deliverance.

Verily, this is the essence of the teaching of all the Upanishads (15).

[Note—The *Granthis* are like a warts on the person’s Atma. They tend to rob him of his Atma’s original pristine beauty and divine charm. The word Granthi is

metaphorically used to mean the various knots that tie the man to this materialistic world of delusions and artificiality from which he finds difficult to liberate himself. It is like the case of a prisoner tied in shackles, and he must first free himself from them before he can find real peace and happiness in his life. The Granthis symbolise the various Vasanas and Virittis (worldly desires, passions and attractions, as well as natural temperaments and inclinations that are inherent to a creature) that hem the man in, and keep him in perpetual fetters. All the numerous delusions and ignorance-based corrupting influences of the world are like the so many knots that tie him down to this world full of miseries and sorrows. They are like ugly warts on his 'true self' which is pure consciousness that is otherwise immaculate, divine, holy and eternally beautiful. It is only when a man is able to break free from the binding affects of these Granthis that he can ever hope to find true emancipation and salvation for his soul.

It ought to be noted here that the heart is the emotive center of the man, while his mind-intellect is the center of his wisdom, erudition, knowledge, intelligent analysis and discriminatory faculty that makes him conscientious about what is right and auspicious and what is not. By saying that the knots of the heart are to be broken and not mentioning the mind-intellect as being tied in these knots, this verse implies that it is the wise and intelligent mind-intellect that would help a man to untie or break open these knots present in his heart.

Another reason for the heart being single out for having these Granthis is the fact that the Atma is living in the subtle space of the heart instead of the mind-intellect. This Atma is virtually held captive by these Granthis, and as soon as the man is able to knock these Granthis open, the ethereal Spirit known as the soul of the man is set free.]

16. The heart has one hundred one Naadis (tubular ducts in the body such as the nerves and veins; in the present context however they would mean the 'nerves'). Out of them, one goes right up to the top of the skull and opens out by the hair-like slit there¹. The seeker of who wishes to have access to Amrit (the elixir of eternity and bliss representing Brahm and the soul's final emancipation and salvation) allows his Pran (literally vital winds; here implying the various vital dynamic forces present inside the body that keep it alive, including the consciousness that pervades throughout the body) to go up through this Naadi and rise high up to reach for the citadel where the pitcher of Amrit is located in the top of the head². [That is, proper wisdom, erudition and enlightenment ensure that the man can attain eternal bliss and a sense of spiritual ecstasy even while having a gross body. It also implies that this eternal bliss and spiritual high is obtainable only through the medium of the body and not otherwise. In other words, Jivan Mukti is more enjoyable than Videha Mukti—this is because in Jivan Mukti the man is able to actually enjoy the spiritual ecstasy and elation that he would not be able to enjoy without the body in his Spirit form upon obtaining Videha Mukti. This reaching out for the high citadel located in the top of the head is symbolic of reaching out to attain an exalted stature Brahm realisation because the supreme transcendental Brahm is said to reside in the highest point in the creation, which in this case of the body is the cranium. This state is akin to accessing the ambrosia of eternity and everlasting beatitude and felicity.]

All the other Naadis move downwards in the body, symbolising that the Pran is moving downwards towards this world instead of moving upwards. [This is comparable to the case of the inverted Fig tree mentioned in verse no. 1 of this Valli. This tree has its spreading branches pointing downwards symbolising the colossus visible world with its myriad variations, and the root at the top symbolising Brahm. In the case of the body, the Brahm Randhra at the top of the skull is the symbolic root

which draws the eternal elixir of life in the form of bliss and ecstasy that comes with enlightenment and self-realisation.]

In other words, if the Pran keeps on moving in all the rest of the Naadis that branch out to other lower parts of the body in different directions, it symbolises the fact that such a person takes different births depending upon the various desires and hopes that his heart and mind harbour and nourish during his lifetime. He would remain trapped perpetually in the lower lives if he does not endeavour to rise high from his existing state. He would remain perpetually trapped in the whirlpool of birth and death in this ocean-like world (16).

[Note—¹This spot is called the *Brahm Randhra*, and it is like a hair-like slit through which an ascetic allows his vital wind and other dynamic forces of life called the Pran to escape. At the time of creation, the supreme Brahm had entered the body through this slit and had taken up residence in the head in the form of wisdom, erudition, enlightenment and knowledge that are the virtues possessed by the mind-intellect in order to control the creature from that exalted high place which is like a symbolic citadel of the city represented by the man's body. Verse no. 1, Valli 2, Canto 2 also describes this body as a city. All the Upanishads dealing with the concept of meditation or Yoga describe how this is done in detail.

The Naadi that goes up to the top of the head and through which the Pran escapes along with the Atma to provide liberation and deliverance to the creature is called Sushuma.

²This is a metaphoric way of saying that he aims for the final emancipation and salvation of his Atma by allowing it to move upwards and reach for the citadel where Brahm resides by acquiring wisdom and enlightenment. Since the mind-intellect is located in the head, and since Brahm is synonymous with these virtues of wisdom and enlightenment, it is said that Brahm resides in the top of the head in a symbolic manner. Further, the Upanishads that describe the philosophy of Yoga narrate in detail how final liberation and deliverance of the creature is obtained by breaking through the Granthis and allowing the Pran and the Atma to reach the Brahm Randhra which is the opening of the Sushumna Naadi in the top of the head mentioned in this verse.

This going up of the Pran and escaping through this opening in the cranium is like a prisoner escaping from the prison and finding his freedom. The Atma, which is an ethereal Spirit trapped in the gross body of the creature, first finds freedom from its inner cell in the heart by opening of the locks of the gate symbolised by breaking of the Granthis as mentioned in verse no. 15 above. Then this Atma has to find a way out of the prison representing the gross body. If it escapes surreptitiously then there are more chances of it being caught and punished, which would be the case if the Atma leaves the body without proper planning. But if it moves out in a well planned and dignified manner by realising the mistakes it had made in the past that had resulted in its captivity in the first place, then it would ensure that it would not do anything similar again so that it can remain permanently free once it goes out of this prison.

So, when the man becomes wise and enlightened about the true form of liberation and deliverance that is described by the Upanishads, then he would coordinate all the vital energies and dynamic forces of his body to break open the Granthis and remove all other hurdles that come in the way of his Atma from finding permanent liberation and deliverance. He would also have realised that the Atma's real and truthful freedom is when it becomes aware of its true ethereal form as the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm which is the universal and all-pervading absolute Truth. In order to attain this high citadel of Brahm, the Atma emerges through the head and escapes into the outer cosmos to become one with it.]

17. The divine supreme Purush (i.e. the Supreme Being known as Brahm) that resides in as the sublime ‘true self’ of the man in his subtle heart, i.e. the Atma or pure consciousness, symbolically measures the size of a thumb.

Even as the stalk, when removed from the long reed called Munjaa, can be seen and held separately, one should endeavour to distinguish the subtle and sublime Atma from the gross and inane body, and observe their difference. [This reed is used to make long ropes after removing its central stalk. Similarly, one should remove the Atma and see it as an independent entity from the body.]

One should understand that this Atma is ‘Shukra’ or literally ‘white’, implying that it is divine consciousness, most immaculate and pristine pure. It is an embodiment of Amrit which is the elixir that provides eternity, bliss and ecstasy unbound. [That is, a wise man must understand that the Atma is not like the body. Whereas the body is mortal and full of shortcomings, the Atma is eternal and immaculate.] (17).

18. When Nachiketa was thus taught by Yam, the God of Death, he became enlightened about the divine, eclectic and sublime knowledge as described in this Upanishad. He learnt about the fundamental philosophy of Yoga by which one finds liberation from both the artificial materialistic world and the gross inane body, and instead finds eternal bliss and peace for himself. Nachiketa obtained the sublime state of Brahm realisation and self realisation. He freed himself from the fetters of all ignorance and their accompanying delusions, becoming absolutely untainted by their corrupting influences.

Thus, he became liberated from the fetters that shackle an ordinary creature to the cycle of birth and death, and obtained deliverance from it. In other words, he obtained ‘Jivan Mukti’, i.e. he obtained de facto freedom from the shackle represented by this gross body and found emancipation and salvation even while he still had a body and lived in this world. [That is, he did not die to find this final emancipation and salvation, but on the contrary continued to live in this world like a liberated man who is free from any kind of bondage. This ‘bondage’ is caused by ignorance of the truth and reality, and it is akin to the darkness of the night. But once wisdom, erudition and enlightenment dawns upon the man’s mental horizon, its light removes all the delusions to which he was subjected to in the darkness of ignorance. He can see the pristine ‘truth’ and feel liberated from illusions. He becomes aware about his own self and about the ultimate Truth and the absolute Reality of creation. In other words, by becoming ‘Jivan Mukta’, he not only freed from all fetters which tie an ordinary man to this world and the body, but also became eligible to enjoy the spiritual ecstasy and highest degree of beatitude and felicity that comes with Brahm realisation.]

Verily, all others who would become enlightened about the divine, sublime and eclectic spiritual knowledge that was obtained by Nachiketa would also attain the same supreme and exalted state of eternal spiritual blessedness, of eternal beatitude and felicity that was attained by him.

Indeed, all such people (who would become enlightened about the profound spiritual tenets that were taught by the Yam God through this Upanishad to Nachiketa) would become Brahm-realised, Viraj (neutral and indifferent to either the notion of something being good or bad) and free from the fetters or fears of death (because he would realise that his true self is the Atma which never dies, that what dies is the gross body which is however not his ‘true self’, and hence all causes for fear of death would vanish).

Indeed, they would become one like Nachiketa himself (18).

[Note—So what is the conclusion of the teaching of Yam? It is that the Atma, which is pure consciousness and representative of the supreme transcendental Brahm residing in the very own bosom of all the creatures, is the true self of every living being, and that it is inherently blissful, immaculate, imperishable and eternal besides being distinct from the gross inane body and its accompanying problems vis-à-vis the external world of sense objects that is hallmarked by artificiality and delusions.

So the wise, self-realised and enlightened creature who has obtained awareness of who he actually is becomes eternal and fearless because he would no longer have to die or suffer from the horrors of this world. This is because these are the properties of the gross body and not of the ethereal Spirit known as the pure conscious Atma.

On the contrary, if under deluding effects of ignorance the creature thinks that his body is his self then of course he is trapped in the quagmire of horrible delusions pertaining to this material world and its numerous problems that bind the creature down in their vice-like grip. Such a deluded and ignorant creature takes repeated births and dies instead of finding eternal emancipation and salvation.

In short, the answer to the eternal question of ‘what happens after death’ depends upon the mental outlook and level of spiritual enlightenment of the living being himself and not on anyone else. The same creature might find eternity if he wise enough to see the ultimate Truth, and he might be submerged in delusions and trapped in this cycle of birth and death if unaware of this Truth.]

----- Shanti Paath -----

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Chapter 2

Taittiriya Upanishad

Taittiriyo-panishad forms a part of the Taittiriya Aranyak of the Taittiriya branch of the Krishna Yajur Veda. This Aranyak has ten chapters, out of which the seventh, eighth and ninth chapters have been recognised as Upanishads, hence the prefix ‘Taittiriya’.

The Upanishad has three Cantos called ‘Vallis’, each having a number of sub-cantos called ‘Anuvak’.

The first Valli is called ‘Shiksha Valli’ and it has twelve Anuvaks. The second Valli is called ‘Brahmanand Valli’ and it has nine Anuvaks. The last Valli is called ‘Brighu Valli’ and it has ten Anuvaks.

Briefly, the Shiksha Valli, as the word ‘Shiksha’ indicates, is a collection of devotional hymns for the purpose of teaching and imparting eclectic knowledge about the Divine, along with the codes and rules to be strictly observed in pursuance of this knowledge. It briefly narrates the guidelines that a disciple, who has joined a hermitage for his formal education, should follow and practice in his daily life and conduct, and in the process outlines the major milestones that are to be covered during the tenure of his studentship in the course of acquiring formal education of the scriptures, and in getting acquainted with the great Truth about one’s own self as well as that Truth which forms the basis of all scriptural teachings. It is like a preliminary or preparatory class which prepares the student for the next stage of his spiritual education which would follow in the next Valli.

The five great Sanhitas which are collections of hymns describing various codes pertaining to the Adhi Loka, Adhi Jyotish, Adhi Vidya, Adhi Praj and Adhyatma, the different Vyahritis (i.e. the primary sounds created at the beginning of creation and which form the basis of the rest of creation) such as OM, Bhu, Bhuvaha, Swaha, etc. along with their importance have been described briefly in this Valli. Finally, the teacher outlines the great tenets that the disciple should use as a ready reference to guide him in his life to make it worthwhile and auspicious.

The Brahmanand Valli, as the name suggest, deals with the eternal beatitude and felicity obtained by Brahm realisation. It emphasises the importance of recognition of the Supreme Being residing secretly as the Atma in the cave-like heart of the creature, along with description of the five Koshas or sheaths that surround the Atma.

The Bhrigu Valli describes how sage Varun, the father of sage Bhrigu, had satisfied his son's eagerness to learn about the eclectic virtues and divine qualities of Brahm, the Supreme Being. Varun emphasised that the majestic presence and glory of Brahm is to be experienced by the aspirant himself and it is not a subject that can be taught like other topics of the material sciences. Each unit of creation, such as Anna (food), Pran (vital wind), Mana (mind and heart), Vigyan (knowledge and intellect), and Anand (pure bliss and happiness) which form the basis of the five Koshas mentioned in Brahmanand Valli, are to be perceived as a manifestation of the divine Being, thereby ensuring that the entire being of the creature becomes one whole and composite entity completely infused and soaked in the divinity of Brahm-realisation and its accompanying eternal bliss and an ecstasy of spiritual dimensions. Finally, the characteristics of such attained and self-realised persons are narrated.

Valli 1—Shiksha Valli

-----Shanti Paath-----

ॐ_सह_नाववतु_।_सह_नौ_भुनक्तु_।_सह_वीर्यं_करवावहै_।_तेजस्वि_नावधीतमस्तु_।_मा_विद्विषावहै_।_
-----ॐ_शान्तिः_।_शान्तिः_!!शान्तिः_!!!_

The meaning of this Shanti Paath is given in appendix no. 1.

Valli 1, Anuvak 1

[This Anuvak no. 1 contains the prayer said during the initiation ceremony when a new disciple is inducted into the religious fold by a teacher. In earlier times, great sages had hermitages where students came from far and wide to study the scriptures. A mass or individual ceremony was organised for the investiture and the prayer of this Anuvak was said on the occasion. It is to be noted that the same prayer was repeated when the formal education was completed, i.e. during the valedictory function, and the disciple was formally bid farewell by the teacher. This happens in Anuvak 12 which is the last section of this Valli or Canto.]

1. OM salutations! Let the God known as Mitra¹ be benevolent and munificent upon us. Let him bestow us with great auspiciousness and welfare.

Let Varun God² be benevolent and a provider of happiness and peace to us.

Let Aryama God³ be benevolent and a provider of happiness and peace to us.

Let Indra⁴ be benevolent and a provider of happiness and peace to us.

Let Brihaspati⁵ be benevolent and a provider of happiness and peace to us.

Let Vishnu whose steps are very huge and measureless⁶ be benevolent and a provider of happiness and peace to us.

We salute and pay our obeisance to the supreme transcendental Brahm.

Oh Vayu⁷, the Wind God! We salute and pay our obeisance to you as you are a manifestation of the supreme Brahm. It is indeed you who is known as Brahm; you personify the glories and the grand virtues of Brahm.

You are also called Rit and Satya. [The word 'Rit' means righteousness, while 'Satya' means truth. Hence, Brahm is an embodiment of righteousness and truth.]

Let that sublime and supreme Brahm (who is personified by the above divine entities) protect me.

Let that sublime and supreme Brahm protect my teacher.

Let that Brahm protect both of us.

OM salutations! Let all our (i.e. the disciple's and the teacher's) torments⁸ be calmed down and be dispelled. Let all our torments be calmed down and be dispelled. Let all our torments be calmed down and be dispelled (1).

[Note—¹The word *Mitra* literally means a friend. The word refers to the Sun God because it is the Sun that supports and fosters life on this earth and is a partner in its wellbeing and development. It is the Sun that provides all energy, heat and light to the world. Pran is also the best friend of a creature because it is the breath that not only injects life into the body but also supports it. The Mitra God is one of the twelve Adityas, the Sun Gods who are born from the mother of Gods known as Aditi. He is regarded as the patron God of peace, friendship and tranquility. He is equivalent to Savita (Rig Veda, 5/82/9). He is the patron God of the day (Atharva Veda, 9/3/18). He is said to support the three worlds, viz. the terrestrial, the sky above the earth, and the heavens (Kath Sanhita, 23/12). The newly born fire is regarded as the Varun God while its lighted form is Mitra (Rig Veda, 5/3/1). Mitra God protects his devotees from the fear of old age, death and sins (Rig Veda, 3/59/2). Mitra is usually worshipped in the form of the Sun God. He is one of the principal deities of the Rig Veda. In association with the Varun God (Water God and patron deity of the clouds) he gives rain. This is obvious because without the heat of the sun, evaporation of water from the oceans would not take place and therefore the clouds would not form. The cycle of season is also governed by the Sun God.

The Mitra God resides in the heavens (sky) and impels the people of the world towards constructive activities.

In the Vedas, he appears in Rig Veda—1/151/1, 3/59; Atharva Veda—3/8, 19/19/1 amongst other places.

Mitra God is usually shown in the company of the Varun God, and the duo is known as *Mitra-Varun*. The Mitra-Varun God represents the twin factors of creation that are opposite to each other and help to maintain a cosmic equilibrium, such as the appearance of day (Mitra) and night (Varun) together. It is obvious that the day and night cohabit and it is impossible to imagine life without any one of them. Similarly, it is impossible to imagine life without either fire or sun represented by the Mitra God, and water or moon represented by the Varun God. Mitra-Varun are depicted as eternally youthful (Rig Veda, 3/54/10). They appear together in Rig Veda—1/37, 1/152, 3/62/16-18, 7/501, 7/61, 10/132/2-7; in Atharva Veda—5/24/5; in Yajur Veda—7/9, 21/8.

²*Varun* is the Water God, the patron God of the water element and its many manifestations such as the cloud, river and ocean (Gopath Brahmin, 1/1/7). He is regarded as the king amongst the Gods (Taiteya Sanhita, 3/1/2/7). He is regarded as the patron God of the night (Atharva Veda, 9/3/18). The Duloka (the heavens) and the

Prithivi (earth) are under his control and command (Rig Veda, 6/70/1). He determines the path taken by the Sun God during his journey across the sky (Kapisthal Kath Sanhita, 3/4). Varun God is so-called because he surrounds or engulfs or encompasses the whole world and everything where he is present as is the case of the dark rain-bearing clouds that covers the sky (Nirukta, 10/3), and as the dark veil of night (Atharva Veda, Saayan Bhasya, 1/3/3). He is usually depicted in the company of the Mitra God, and as such the duo is called as 'Mitra-Varun', with Mitra being regarded as the senior amongst the two. While Mitra is the patron deity of the day, Varun is the patron deity of the night. He is the lord of all the Bhuvans or abodes, and as such is regarded as the king of creation (Rig Veda, 5/85/3). He has thousands of eyes, and his knowledge and powers are unlimited. He is regarded as the keeper of moral law like the Yam God. In association with the Wind God known as Vayu, he sustains life by giving rain and protecting crops.

He is the presiding deity of the western direction and of water in all its forms including all aquatic life forms.

Iconographically, he is shown as riding on a crocodile. He has four arms—one holds a serpent, the other holds a snare or noose. Sometimes he is depicted as riding a chariot of Swans, and holds a lotus in his right front hand, a noose or snare in the front back arm, a vessel of gems in the left front arm, and a conch in the left back arm. There is a ceremonial umbrella over his head.

This Varun God is offered prayers and honoured in the Vedas in numerous places, such as the following—Rig Veda—1/25; 2/28; 5/85; 7/86-89; 8/41; 10/124/5, 7, 8; Sam Veda—589; Yajur Veda—4/31; 10/7; Atharva Veda—5/1-2; 20/92.

³*Arayama God* is the patron God of the faculty of sight and of the sun which provides light to the world so that the eyes can see everything in it.

⁴*Indra* is the king of Gods who symbolises strength and valour. He is the chief God who exercises control over the various organs of the body. *Indra* is the king of Gods who can fulfill all the desires of the aspirant like any king when he is pleased by the person who prays to him for his gracious intervention. Indra represents the chief forces of life that controls the functioning of Nature. He derives his name from 'Indri' meaning the sense organs of the body—five organs of perception and five organs of action. The vital functions and the virtues of each of these organs are personified as a God, and the authority who controls them is their Lord called Indra. Indra is a metaphor for, or a personification of the combined virtues and characteristics that define all these organs and their functioning. Being at the helm of affairs, Indra is like the King or Emperor of all the other personified forces and powers of creation.

At the macro level of creation he is like the supreme Brahman who is the Lord of all that exists, while at the micro level of the individual creature he is like the Atma (pure consciousness) and the Pran (the vital winds that sustain life inside the body).

The various functions that the organs perform inside the body of the creature are represented by their own set of patron Gods who personify these functions and the various qualities of these individual organs. Since *Pran*, the vital winds present in the body that govern its functioning, is at the core of life in a creature's body, it is like Indra at the micro level.

Since the heart is at the core of life of a man, the central authority that regulates all these Gods is also said to have its seat in the heart. That authority is the emperor of the body and its organs, and it is known as the Atma. Therefore, this *Atma* is also like Indra as far as the individual creature is concerned.

According to Brihad Aranyak Upanishad of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, canto 2, Brahmin 1, verse no. 6, this Indra is a synonym for *Brahman* both at the macro level because Brahman is the supreme Lord of the entire creation represented by the innumerable forces of Nature called the various Gods at the macro level (and that is why we have so many Gods), as well as at the micro level of the individual creature because the Pran is the vital life supporting entity present in the body without which

none of the organs would have their relevance, as well as the Atma or pure consciousness without which even this Pran would lose its relevance.

The king is offered the best of foods and drinks that are available in his kingdom. So this Indra God is also offered the best food and drink in the form of the ambrosia called 'Som'. It is an invigorating drink that is extracted from a creeper by the same name. It is used during sacrificial rituals, and it is offered to Gods that is supposed to bestow them with an eternal life of bliss. It is said to be stored in the heavenly pitcher of the moon. From the metaphysical point of view, since Indra represents the superior authority that controls all the other Gods representing the various sense organs, it follows that whatever the organs acquire are first offered to Indra before the other Gods representing these organs partake of it. Amongst the organs, it is the hand that helps the body to acquire things from the outside world. Since the organs have an intrinsic tendency to move towards pleasing things in this world and move away from unpleasant things, it is deemed that their messenger, the hand, brings to them only selected and best of things available, which is like bringing Amrit or Som for them so that they can offer it to their king Indra.

Indra is both the 'Atma' of the living being because the latter is the undisputed emperor of the body as its consciousness, as well as the 'Pran' or the various vital winds present in the body that control all its vital functions and sustain life.

Indra is also the Lord of rains and clouds, and since rain is a metaphor for life and fertility, and the clouds are the carriers of such life-bearing seeds, Indra too is regarded as the Lord of life and its protector, sustainer and developer.

According to the Rig Veda, 1/ 4-5; 51-57, Indra represents the combined forces of Nature represented by the different Gods. He loves to drink Som, the elixir of bliss and eternity (Rig Veda, 3/ 36/ 8). He has the Wind God called Marut as his chief assistant.

Indra appears in the Vedas as follows-- Rig Veda—1/4-5, 51-57; 5/29; 7/19-32; 8/15-17; 10/111-113; Sam Veda—52/115-148 etc.; Yajur Veda—3/34; 7/5; 7/39; Atharva Veda—8/8; 20/1.

⁵*Brihaspati* is the patron God of wisdom and intelligence as well as of knowledge and erudition; the moral preceptor of the Gods and represented by the planet Jupiter. He is the preceptor of the Gods; regarded as the wisest God. He is the patron God of wisdom, sagacity and erudition as well as of speech (Shathpath Brahmin, 14/4/1/22). He is first mentioned in the Rig Veda, 1/139/10; 1/190.

⁶*Vishnu* is also known as the Viraat Purush who is the all-pervading and all-encompassing macrocosmic form of the supreme Brahm and the Lord of creation. He had measured the entire world in his three steps during his incarnation as Vaaman, the dwarf mendicant. Vishnu is regarded as the sustainer, protector and nourisher of creation.

⁷*Vayu God* appears in the Vedas as follows—Rig Veda—1/2/1-3; 1/134; 4/46/1; 7/90/1-4; 8/26/20-25; Sam Veda—600; Yajur Veda—7/7; 14/12; Atharva Veda—6/10/2. He is the vital wind forces of Nature personified and exhibits the dynamism and powers that the wind possesses. All the work that a man does by his body, all the functions of the body, and all that he is able to say through his faculty of speech are made possible because of the presence of the various *vital winds* in his body. When a man does anything himself, and what he speaks himself about anything, he is sure about them and needs no other proof of their authenticity and veracity. For him at least, the things that he does and the things about which he speaks are true and real in this world. He is convinced about their existence and substance. Since he is a personal witness of what he does and experiences the pleasure or pain of what he does, he needs no other proof of their truthfulness. Similarly, when he speaks about anything, he is certain of that thing. There is nothing more convincing and truthful for him than what he does himself with his body and speaks himself about.

⁸There are three types of torments that a creature faces in this world. They are (a) Adhi Bhautik—i.e. those problems that pertain to this world, such as enemies,

animals, thieves, fear from cruel kings, etc., (b) Adhi Daivik—i.e. problems pertaining to malignant stars and Gods etc., and (c) Adhyatmik—i.e. problems pertaining to spiritual progress and welfare.]

Valli 1, Anuvak 2

1. OM salutations! We shall now describe the basic steps that form the basis for education. [In ancient times, learning and studying of the scriptures in a comprehensive manner was regarded as education because they contained all information that one needed to lead a fruitful and productive life. These scriptures also helped a person to gain access to great truths of creation which were not available to those who had no access to them. Even in today's modern world, the importance of education in general empowerment and wellbeing can never be denied.]

The entire process of formal education (in the scriptures) consists of some fundamental steps or units. One must be fully conversant with each of them in order to be called an educated man. These units or branches of formal education are the following—Varna (a letter of the Sanskrit language; a class of such letters), Swar (the vowels; the tone, note, sound and tune of voice and speech), Matra (the signs of the vowels that are added to the consonants to form sounds from them and which determine the length of time needed to pronounce them; the time required to pronounce the short vowel), Bal (the strength, vitality, stamina and energy needed to say the word, for incantation and chanting the sacred hymns of the Vedas), Sam (the proper and sweet way of speaking and a melodious chanting of the hymns which require proper training, acquisition of skills and gaining expertise), and Santaan (literally meaning an 'offspring' but here referring to the aim or object of reading the scriptures as well as the rewards derived from them)

These are the fundamental requirements for studying the scriptures and becoming educated in them¹ (1).

[Note—¹In order to study any scripture one has to be well versed in the grammar and intricacies of the language. In earlier times, the main use of the Vedas and other ancient scriptural texts was during fire sacrifices, so proper education meant being experts in performing such elaborate exercises and chanting of relevant Mantras by heart. This Anuvak also emphasizes the importance of being formally educated in order to gain respect in society and its attendant material benefits. Obviously an educated man is always highly respected no matter where he goes and whatever class in which he is born. The last step of education is 'Santaan' literally meaning a son or an offspring, but this is a metaphoric way of saying that education is considered fruitful and complete only when it gives the learner some benefit or reward that he desires. After all, if one does not gain anything from his education then the entire effort expended on gaining such education goes in vain. From the metaphysical perspective, the real benefit of education is not only gaining material benefits and fame but also gaining insight into the reality of the world and understanding the true nature of one's 'self'. One should utilise the privilege of having access to knowledge and information to break free from one's bondage which in the present case would be spiritual bondage that ties a creature to ignorance and delusions. The true gain of scriptural knowledge is to obtain liberation and deliverance from the fetters that shackle a creature to this artificial world of birth and death and find the ultimate emancipation and salvation for the soul. Access to truth and knowledge, empowerment and improvement of stature, a sense of fulfillment and achievement,

and gaining freedom from bondage of ignorance are some of the main rewards and fruits of education, scriptural or otherwise.]

Valli 1, Anuvak 3

[In this Anuvak, the entire body of scriptural knowledge has been classified into five sections or divisions, each called a ‘Sanhita’—literally a collection of hymns which describe the characteristics of a particular division in a very succinct but abstract manner. These five main divisions are called Adhi Loka, Adhi Jyotish, Adhi Vidya, Adhi Praj and Adhyatma. Each of them is further sub-divided into four parts or sections called Purva, Uttar, Sandhi and Sandhaan. These four act as milestones to mark the four cardinal points of each body of knowledge.]

1. The disciple prays, ‘Let both of us, myself and my learned teacher¹, be blessed with fame, auspiciousness and good name; let us be renowned for our knowledge, skill, erudition and wisdom. Let both of us be enlightened and self-realised. Let us come to know about the eclectic and divine Brahm who is supreme and transcendental, and thereby be infused and become radiant with the divine energy and holiness that comes automatically with such knowledge’.

Now we shall describe the Upanishad (the fundamental knowledge and essence) which deals with the eclectic and esoteric knowledge pertaining to Brahm in five Adhikarans or supportive units which help in gaining this wholesome knowledge².

The five Adhikarans are—Adhi-Loka, Adhi-Jyotish, Adhi-Vidya, Adhi-Praj, and Adhyatma. Those who are experts in this field call them ‘Maha Sanhita³’ because they encapsulate a vast body of knowledge in existence.

To start with, the knowledge and philosophy pertaining to Adhi-Loka (that which pertains to this lower world of mortal creatures who take a birth and die only to take birth again) is being described first. The first aspect or the front part of this Sanhita which precedes others is the Earth. This is called its ‘Purva Roop⁴’.

Its other extreme end or the top of this Sanhita (called Adhi Loka) is the Duloka (the heaven). This other or upper end is called the ‘Uttar Roop⁵’.

The area in the middle of these two extremes is called the ‘Sandhi’—literally the area or part which lies between the two ends. [The two ends here are the earth and the heavens.] This Sandhi in the present case is the Akash—i.e. the sky that lies between the earth and the heaven (because obviously it bridges the gap between them, creating a seamless link between the earth and the heaven) (1).

[Note—¹This is because even those who are deemed to be learned and expert in the scriptures, such as the teacher in this case, are sometimes not able to interpret correctly and fathom the greatness of the meaning of the scriptures unless they are blessed with special wisdom, erudition and enlightenment that comes with divine inspiration and holy insight into metaphysical and spiritual concepts enshrined in the tenets of the scriptures. Even great scholars might not be able to decipher the esoteric and subtle essence of the words of the scriptures, because had it been so there would not have been so much debate on them as all the scriptures speak about the same Truth, and truth is always one and not two thereby precluding any chance of having any debate or doubt whatsoever as to their meaning and interpretation. That is why the disciple prays that the teacher should also be clear in his mind about what he teaches to him, for if the teacher is not clear about any idea or concept or philosophy

or school of thought, then this distorted view would gain hold in the mind of the disciple. This would have a cascading negative effect for future generations.

² The *Adhikarans* help the student of the scriptures to mentally prepare an outline of what he is expected to study under the guidance of his learned teacher. It is crucial to be acquainted with the basics in any field of knowledge because this helps the student to be prepared to face the uphill task of going deeper and comprehending the intricacies of that particular body of knowledge which he has selected to follow. It helps him to tackle the details more easily as well as judge for himself whether or not he is competent and able to enter that field of study. It also helps him to hone his skills and sharpen his knowledge of the subject under the guidance of a wise and prudent teacher.

³ The word *Sanhita* literally refers to a compilation or collection of a class of scriptural hymns which describe a set of codes dealing with a given subject. The word *Maha* means great. Hence, the composite phrase *Maha Sanhita* refers to the great compendium of hymns which describe the entire edifice of knowledge and what a student should strive to know once he has decided to read the scriptures. It is the great compilation of knowledge by collating all information on a given subject and encapsulating their fundamental principles in the form of a collection of hymns. It is like a modern day reference guide of education or a prospectus of a college outlining the subjects and stream of education one can select from. It also resembles an education councilor advising a student what he is expected to study and what options are open to him.

Technically, the word *Sanhita* means to bring about closeness between scattered units. For example, the letters of the alphabet are independent units in themselves, and taken independently mean nothing. When they are systematically collated together, they form meaningful words. Similarly, the vast body of knowledge lie scattered around and the main function of a *Sanhita* is to bring them together and make them intelligible and accessible. A *Sanhita* is like an encyclopedia of knowledge, albeit in the field of metaphysics.

In the present context, the *Maha Sanhita* refer to the hymns that narrate the esoteric knowledge of the divine and sublime aspects of creation which, when properly deciphered and understood, helps the spiritual aspirant to establish a union between his 'self' and the cosmic 'Self' or Brahman.

⁴ The word *Purva* implies something that comes first or the one which precedes others. It's like a prefix to a word or a prologue of a play. And the word *Roop* means a form or shape. Therefore, the combined phrase '*Purva Roop*' refers to that unit of knowledge pertaining to the mortal world which is its lower end or basic unit. This is because all life forms have their habitat and base on this earth. No knowledge would be relevant if there was no life on earth. All mortal creatures live on earth, and all religious deeds and fire sacrifices are done on earth. Therefore, it is like the base of all relevant knowledge that deals with life in all its myriad forms that are vibrant, exuberant and lively.

⁵ The word *Uttar* means north, higher, upper, top end etc. while *Roop* means a form or shape. The combined phrase '*Uttar Roop*' in the context of the *Adhi Loka* refers to the upper limit of the world where mortal creatures live. That is, it refers to the heaven which forms the upper limit of this visible creation where the Gods live. When one studies the sciences that deal with living creatures, he studies about life forms in this mortal world and where the creature goes after death. This world where it goes after death is the heaven. The living being's existence is limited between these two worlds—the earth and the heaven. He keeps on virtually oscillating between these two worlds as clearly laid out in *Chandogya Upanishad*, 5/3-5/10, and *Brhihad Aranyaka Upanishad*, 4/4, 5/10 and 6/2.]

2. The Vayu (wind or air element) is known as the ‘Sandhaan’¹ (because it establishes a union or helps to firmly join together the earth and the heaven by the medium of the sky). This is the basic knowledge and philosophy pertaining to the Adhi-Loka.

The next (i.e. the second unit of) knowledge and philosophy pertains to the Adhi-Jyotish².

The Purva Roop (component or part or aspect) of this knowledge is Agni (the terrestrial fire)³.

The Uttar Roop (the higher from) of light is Aditya or the Sun⁴. [The Sun is like the fire of the heavens.]

The middle part of this setup is Apaha (the water element). Therefore, water is called the Sandhi or joint⁵. [This water sort of marks the end of both the symbolic forms of fire—the terrestrial fire is doused by pouring water on it, and the celestial sun appears to set in the water of the ocean at the end of the day. This is because as far as the land mass of India is concerned, the western direction where the sun sets is marked by the Arabian Ocean.]

The electric called Vidyut present in the sky (as represented by the streak of lightening in the rain-bearing clouds) is called the Sandhan⁶. [The arrow is shot off from the bow at the target. Similarly, the lightening of the cloud is shot to strike at the target on the ground. When it does so, it reduces the target to ashes, showing the stupendous dynamic potentials of the fire element. Since lightening is always present in the clouds that have rain, it shows that it has established a union between the water and fire elements in a symbolic manner.]

This is called the eclectic and glorious knowledge and philosophy related to the Adhi-Jyotish. [That is, it pertains to the knowledge that throws light on the metaphysical philosophy of the light factor of creation.]

The next (i.e. the third unit of) knowledge and philosophy pertains to the Adhi-Vidya. [This refers to the various components or units that play an all-important role in the entire process of acquiring and dissemination of knowledge pertaining to this world.]

The Purva Roop (i.e. the first component or part) of the entire process of acquisition and dissemination of this knowledge and metaphysical philosophy is the Acharya (a learned and wise teacher)⁷. [This is obvious because no knowledge can be accessed without the help of a teacher. Had there been no one to explain the doctrines of the scriptures, they would have remained buried in their pages, rendering them useless and fruitless.] (2).

[Note—¹The word *Sandhan* literally refers to something that is employed to aim at an object—such as an arrow that is aimed at a distant object. It also refers to something used as a tool in search, enquiry and investigation. It also refers to an entity which establishes a union between these seemingly remote and independent components of this world. The Sandhan is to join or solder or bring together two ends to create a single uniform whole. It sort of glues loose ends and establishes a firm link between two independent entities. This purpose is served by the air or wind element because air touches the surface of the earth, pervades uniformly in the sky, and extends up to the farther reaches of the world in the form of ether.

²The word *Jyotish* refers to light and illumination. Therefore this knowledge deals with light and illumination both in its physical gross form as the light that illuminates the world, as well as in its glorious subtle and sublime metaphysical form as the light of knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment that illuminates the inner self of the enlightened creature.

³The terrestrial fire is the *Purva Roop* because this fire gives light, energy and heat to the living world. The fact that the fire provides light is most evident when one lights up a bonfire or a lamp during the night. This light removes darkness both in the physical plane as well as in the subtle plane by removing ignorance and delusions by

spreading the light of knowledge. This terrestrial fire harbours light in its bosom at the micro level of creation.]

⁴The Aditya or the Sun is called the *Uttar Roop* of the fire because the Sun lights up the entire world at the macro level of creation. The Sun is an embodiment of light at the cosmic level because it is like a huge ball of fire dangling in the heavens just like the terrestrial fire is at the local level when a lamp or firewood burns to give light to a limited area on the surface of the earth. The Sun is also regarded as the visible manifestation of the glorious Brahm, the Supreme Being. This means that the Sun not only spreads physical light in the realm of creation but also personifies the eternal source of spiritual light that emanates from the acquisition of knowledge and wisdom pertaining to the absolute Truth in creation. The Sun stands for the light of wisdom, erudition, sagacity, knowledge and enlightenment par-excellence.

⁵The Apaha or water is called the *Sandhi* because it is a virtual 'end or culmination' of fire. When fire needs to be doused, we pour water on it. When the sun sets, it appears to set in the vast reaches of the ocean in the western direction.

There are other interpretations of this notion of water being the Sandhi of fire element. The water unites the two types of fires—that is, the terrestrial fire and the celestial fire. This is evident when we consider how rain-bearing clouds are formed. The water of the ocean is evaporated by a combined effect of the warmth caused by the heat present in the deep bowls of the earth as well as the heat generated by the sun. This evaporated water vapour is sucked inland and made to move up into the sky and reach higher altitudes by sliding up mountain ranges due to air currents caused by differential heat factors on the surface of the earth. Higher up in the atmosphere the water vapour condenses to form clouds which pour down their contents in the form of rain which not only irrigates the land below but also offsets the affect of heat that would have otherwise scorched the earth to cinders.

Water is offered as oblation to the Sun God during the process of offering prayers to him at dawn and dusk. The Mantra used during this offering is the Gayatri Mantra. This also shows how the water links the terrestrial creature to the supreme Brahm who the Sun represents.

Water is said to a harbinger of life—and this is possible only if water has inherent warmth in it, thereby implying the presence of heat in it in a latent and imperceptible form. This is because no life is sustainable without heat and energy. Nowhere is this fact more evident than in the frigid climate of the arctic where no forests or other forms of vibrant life can be found. Even the water in the lakes whose surface have frozen under extreme cold conditions harbour aquatic life-forms just because this water is warm as compared to the frigid temperature that prevails on the surface of the lake. That is why scientists search for water, and not fire, whenever they look for any form of life anywhere.

Another instance where water and fire co-exist is observed in the bottom of the oceans where there are sub-oceanic volcanoes that often spout immense amount of heat that boils over as steam that hover over the surface of the ocean as mist and cloud. Then even on the land we have hot water springs where natural sources of water are visibly seen to boil as if put on an oven.

⁶Vidyut is the *Sandhan* or the aim of bringing together these two great forces of Nature —viz. the fire element and the water element. The aim is to forge a union between these two apparently opposing forces to create an environment conducive to creation and sustenance of life in all its vibrancy and vigorous form. This can be understood if we know how rain-bearing clouds are formed as describe above. The electric or Vidyut is formed only in clouds that have rain in them and not in fluffy white clouds that float idly across the sky. This is a clear proof of the fact that Vidyut representing the fire element in its most powerful and dynamic form is present where there is water. They virtually cohabit. In other words, the lightening seen in the sky helps to unite the two great forces of creation, viz. the water and fire.

Vidyut or the celestial fire represented by the lightening is a Sandhan also because it symbolically links the stupendous source of cosmic energy at the macrocosmic level of creation with its counterpart on the earth at the microcosmic level when the bolt of lightening strikes the earth. The dynamic force of the latent fire present in the electric is proved by the fact that this strike by lightening reduces to ashes anything upon which it lands on earth.

Since the entire area between the earth and the heaven is deemed to be the realm of this visible creation, it is also blessed with the 'fundamental spark of life' represented metaphorically by the fire element. The presence of this vital component of life even in the sky besides its presence in the earth is made evident when the lightening streaks through the dark clouds high up in the sky.

That this fire element has the inherent ability to give 'light and illumination' is proved by the fact that whenever the lightening streaks across the sky, the whole dark night is momentarily bathed in dazzling light.

The terrestrial fire needs a 'spark' to get ignited, and this spark represents the electric mentioned in this verse. That is why we use such phrases as 'the electric spark caused a huge fire that gutted the entire building'.

Further, the living world has its base or foundation upon the earth. That is why both the fire and water are an integral part of this earth. The Sun in the heaven gives heat, light and energy to the life on earth besides being responsible for creation of rain-bearing clouds as outlined above. The air element is responsible for infusing life by providing the water element with mobility as is evident in the movement of water vapour from the surface of the ocean to complete its cycle to come down on the earth as rain. It is the air that moves the clouds from one part of the earth to the other. Again, it is the air that keeps the fire burning and giving out light and heat. This is proved by the fact that without air no fire can be lit and sustained.

So we come to the conclusion that in order to have a comprehensive knowledge of the scriptures, it is imperative to have a wider world view and a broad perspective. Knowledge is not to be sequestered in water-tight compartments if it is to be made useful and constructive for the larger welfare of the aspirant.

⁷The *teacher* is the primary requirement for learning, because there must be someone to teach even the fundamental aspects of anything. The entire learning process is teacher-centric; he is the base upon which the entire edifice of education is founded. If the teacher is incompetent, un-attentive, unqualified, insincere or unwilling, the exercise of learning fails. The scriptures, or for that matter any body of knowledge, requires someone to explain them to the students. No one is born with knowledge—it has to be painstakingly acquired, and the teacher plays a pivotal role in the entire setup.]

3. The disciple or student is like the Uttar Roop or the last post or component of the process of education¹.

Vidya or the knowledge that is being imparted and for which the teacher and the disciple or student have come together is called the Sandhi².

The medium of this transfer of knowledge and information, the process of teaching or disseminating information in the form of lectures, discourses or discussions, is called Sandhan³.

This is called the basic philosophy pertaining to Adhi-Vidya.

The next (i.e. the fourth unit of) knowledge and philosophy pertains to the Adhi-Praj⁴ (knowledge that deals with reproduction and progeny).

The mother is the Purva Roop and the father is the Uttar Roop⁵ of this knowledge pertaining to creation.

The offspring or the child is called the Sandhi⁶ and the actual process of procreation or reproduction is called Sandhan⁷.

These are the basic units concerned with the knowledge of procreation, or the science of Adhi-Praj (3).

[Note—¹The student is the *Uttar Roop* because if the teacher is the base or foundation of the process of learning, the other point of this endeavour is the disciple or student. The edifice of education and dissemination of information and knowledge has two symbolic pegs—one is the teacher from where the line of education starts, and the other is the student where it ends. The process is incomplete without the presence of any one of them. Learning is complete only when the teacher is able to disseminate knowledge to willing and attentive students who must be equally competent and intelligent like the teacher in order to imbibe what is being taught.

²The word *Sandhi* means a joint, to unite, to bring together, the end of anything. The element that brings together and binds the teacher and the disciple to each other is Vidya or knowledge because it is for knowledge that the disciple comes to the teacher, it is the knowledge that the teacher has that attracts students to him from far and wide, and the teacher keeps students near him to teach them whatever he knows. It's a sort of symbiotic relationship. It is knowledge and education that binds the two together and keeps the student or disciple near the teacher and vice versa. The student needs education, cultivate special skills and acquire knowledge, and he comes near the teacher towards this 'end'. The teacher wishes that his knowledge, erudition and expertise be transmitted to the next generation and towards this 'end' he accepts the student. They are both 'united' with the same bond of education, albeit one is the giver and the other is the receiver.

³The word *Sandhaan* means to aim, like aiming an arrow at an object. The method used to transfer knowledge and educate the disciple, such as lectures, discourses, discussions and debates etc. are like the shooting of an arrow of knowledge targeted towards the education of the student and removing all his ignorance. If this does not happen for any reason whatsoever, such as an inattentive or incompetent disciple, or even non-clarity, inarticulacy or incompetence on the part of the teacher, then it is like the arrow missing the target. But if the student is bright and has the right aptitude while the teacher is competent and expert in his field and can articulately and comprehensively teach the student, then the arrow of knowledge would have hit the bull's eye and the entire exercise of education would bear fruits.

⁴The word 'Praj' refers to the subjects of a kingdom, but it is a metaphoric word referring to all the off springs that a father creates, the livestock that a householder keeps, and other members of the animal kingdom. Here it implies the entire process of creation, right from its macrocosmic connotation related to the cosmic creator Brahma to its individual application related to the individual father, mother and offspring. This offspring is the symbolic 'Praj' or subject of the parent. Therefore, the knowledge that deals with reproduction and progeny is collectively called *Adhi Praj*.

⁵The mother is the *Purva Roop* because she represents the earth element where the father plants his seed or sperm in order to bring forth the next generation. Earlier in verse no. 1 it has already been said that the earth is the *Purva Roop*, hence it is appropriate to link the mother to earth. It is also the reason why 'earth' is referred to as 'mother earth' instead of as father earth. On the other hand, the father is called the *Uttar Roop* because he is like the cosmic creator who implanted his seed in the womb of Mother Nature at the beginning of creation to initiate the process. The man is an image of this cosmic father inasmuch as that he can create an offspring in his own likeness just like the case of the supreme Lord creating the inhabitants of the world in his own likeness. This supreme Father lives high up in the symbolic heaven as indicated by the *Duloka* of verse no. 1 and the Sun of verse no. 2.

⁶The child is called the *Sandhi* because it is the desire to have a child that brings the two parents together and keeps them bound in an emotional bond. Once the child comes into being it binds them together for life. The offspring is the end or

culmination of the process of procreation. It is often observed that if the couple cannot have an offspring, their relationship sours and cools off. Therefore, the factor which brings them together or unites them or creates a union between two opposite sexes is the Praja (offspring).

⁷The sexual union of the two parents is called a *Sandhan* because it is aimed at producing the offspring who would carry forward the father's line forward. If this sexual union or process cannot create the child, then it is like an arrow missing its target.]

4. Finally, the knowledge called *Adhyatma*¹, i.e. the knowledge that is related to the Atma, the pure consciousness and the true 'self' of the spiritual aspirant, that resides in his body is being narrated now.

The lower jaw (Hanu) is called the *Purva Roop* while the upper jaw is called the *Uttar Roop* of this unit or field of knowledge².

The Vaani or the spoken words representing the stupendous and mystical ability of the Atma to speak and express itself is called the *Sandhi*³.

The tongue is the *Sandhan* in this setup⁴.

These are called the basic units of *Adhyatma*—i.e. the knowledge that pertains to the Atma and which is the subject matter that is being taught by a wise teacher of the scriptures⁵.

These five are called the 'Maha Sanhitas' or the great bodies of knowledge. A person who is learned in these five great Sanhitas is indeed a learned and wise man. Such a man is liberally blessed with an abundance of Praja (subjects in the form of wise and obedient disciples, children and followers), Pashu (livestock), Brahma Tej (divine energy of knowledge and self confidence that effuses out of a self-realised, wise and enlightened man), and Anna (food and other nourishments). Such an acclaimed man is sure to have an easy access to Swarga (heaven)⁶ (4).

[Note—¹The word *Adhyatma* relates to spiritualism. The knowledge contained in the Upanishads pertains to *Adhyatma* because they preach about the Atma and its pristine nature.

²The area between the lower lip and the chin, i.e. the lower jaw, is called the *Purva Roop*, while the area between the upper lip and the nostrils, i.e. the upper jaw, is called the *Uttar Roop* because they demarcate the area of the body from where the man speaks and preaches. All the Mantras, especially the grand Mantra OM, are pronounced through the opening of the mouth which falls between these two jaws. All teaching and discourses are done by speaking through the mouth as no other organ of the body had the power to speak. Knowledge of the scriptures is gained by reading them and thoroughly discussing them. This also necessitates the involvement of the mouth. Therefore, the mouth is both the initiator and the culmination of spiritual knowledge. Teaching and enquiry in this particular field of knowledge entails the necessary use of the faculty of speech, and hence the importance and significance of the mouth where both the jaws are located and the instrument of speech, i.e. the tongue, is also present.

³The word *Sandhi* refers to the joint which brings two elements together. Here, the spoken words are the link between the Atma or the pure 'self' of the creature and the outside world because it is through the faculty of speech that the Atma is able to express itself and make the external world aware of its presence and its wishes. The wisdom and erudition that are the hallmarks of the Atma are known when a wise and an enlightened man speaks. In the present case, the faculty of speech and the words spoken by the teacher is the link or the jointing factor between the teacher and the disciple. It sort of establishes a link between the vast treasury of knowledge that is possessed by the teacher and the empty pitcher that is sought to be filled by the disciple or student. Hence, it is called the *Sandhi*.

⁴The tongue is called the *Sandhan* because it is astride this instrument of speech that the words spoken by the teacher are aimed and shot at the target audience, which is the disciple or student in this case, much like the arrow which is shot with the help of the string pulled back to the correct tautness so that the arrow shot from the bow can reach and hit the desired target at the given distance. The spoken words of the teacher should be acceptable, sweet, articulate, clear, understandable and loud enough to be heard by all the disciples who have gathered around the teacher to hear him speak and teach them. If the purpose of dissemination of knowledge is not served, if the students cannot hear what he is teaching or cannot understand what he speaks, the tongue would have failed to serve its purpose. This would be tantamount to the arrow missing its target.

⁵The word *Adhyatma* technically means something related with the Spirit or the Atma which is the pure conscious soul of creation—both at the micro level as well as the macro level. Since the teacher of the scriptures is not teaching material sciences or other things which come within the ambit of education nowadays, but about the tenets and doctrines of the scriptures where the principles of metaphysics, theology and spiritualism are the focal points, the entire sphere of such teaching and discourse is called *Adhyatma*.

⁶A wise man is much sought after, and therefore all worldly material comforts come to him on their own symbolised by an abundant stock of *livestock* and *food* which are given to him as gifts or donation. Besides this, *students* from far and wide come to him seeking his discipleship. It is obvious that a man who has understood the essence of the scriptures would not be indulgent in these worldly things, and instead remain contented in his self and the bliss obtained by meditation and contemplation. This is akin to having the benefit of *heaven* even while living in this world, and after death such a self-realised, Brahm-realised and enlightened man attains emancipation and salvation for his soul. A divine halo exudes from the face of such holy and pious men; their mere presence is like the physical presence of Divinity on earth. This is the symbolic *Brahm Tej* that radiates out of them.]

Valli 1, Anuvak 4

[This Anuvak describes the prayers ought to be offered by those doing a fire sacrifice for obtaining success in acquiring eclectic qualities, glorious virtues and high degree of wisdom as well as material wellbeing and worldly fame.]

1. The supreme transcendental Brahm—who is the chief Lord of creation—is like the Vedas which are regarded as the best and supreme amongst all the scriptures that are deemed to be the highest citadel of knowledge and wisdom ever composed in the form of Chandas (a poetical style of composition). This Supreme Being embodies in himself the entire creation. [In other words, the entire revealed world is a manifestation of Brahm in one way or the other. Nothing exists that does not reflect Brahm in some form.]

This Chief Lord (Brahm) has emerged as the Principal Divinity that is being proclaimed and adored by these Vedas as an embodiment of the Amrit or elixir of eternal life marked by the ecstasy and exultation that attends spiritual bliss and happiness that is obtained by studying and understanding the fundamental teaching of the Vedas and their principal tenets, doctrines and philosophy.

Let that Chief Lord of the visible creation known as Indra¹ bless me with the virtue of ‘Medhaa’ (i.e. with the virtues of intelligence, wisdom, prudence, wit, understanding and comprehension).

Let me be blessed enough to be Brahm-realised and self-realised. In other words, let me be the torch bearer of the eclectic and divine knowledge that pertains to the supreme Truth about Brahm (the Supreme Being) and the Atma (the pure conscious self).

Let my body be able, agile, healthy, strong and competent for this purpose. [In other words, let me not be indulgent and lazy in my pursuit of knowledge; let me successfully complete my education and become wise and well read.]

Let my tongue speak in an endearing, sweet and pleasant manner. [In other words, let me be able to chant the hymns melodiously and in an attractive manner. Let me speak only auspicious things and the truth, that too in a wise way so that I do not cause any offense to anyone. Let me speak only words of wisdom, sagacity and learning so that they act as guide for others.]

Let me hear all that is worthy to be heard with my ears. [That is, let me be attentive and receptive to all information that comes my way. Let my ears hear only auspicious and noble things. Let my ears be a receptacle of good, noble and auspicious words just like an ocean which receives rivers from all the directions and still never overflows.]

Oh Lord (of my ears)! You are like a treasury of wisdom and enlightenment (because it is through the ears that I hear everything), but you seem to be shrouded in a veil of worldly delusions². [In other words, Brahm is not realised due to ignorance and delusions that mire the creature that lives in this world and gets confused by hearing so many different philosophies and ideas and interpretations of the scriptures. So the aspirant here prays to Indra to protect him in this regard and enable him to separate the grain from the chaff.]

Let me have a sharp memory so that what I hear remains with me. [In other words, let me be able to retain the knowledge that I gather from my teacher or by self study of the scriptures or by hearing wise advice from those who are themselves wise, erudite and learned.]' (1).

[Note—¹Indra is the king of Gods who can fulfill all the desires of the aspirant like any king when he is pleased by the person who prays to him for his gracious intervention. Indra represents the chief forces of life that controls the functioning of Nature. He derives his name from 'Indri' meaning the sense organs of the body—five organs of perception and five organs of action. The vital functions and the virtues of each of these organs are personified as a God, and the authority who controls them is their Lord called Indra. Indra is a metaphor for, or a personification of the combined virtues and characteristics that define all these organs and their functioning. Being at the helm of affairs, Indra is like the King or Emperor of all the other personified forces and powers of creation.

At the macro level of creation he is like the supreme Brahm who is the Lord of all that exists, while at the micro level of the individual creature he is like the Atma (pure consciousness) and the Pran (the vital winds that sustain life inside the body).

The various functions that the organs perform inside the body of the creature are represented by their own set of patron Gods who personify these functions and the various qualities of these individual organs. Since Pran, the vital winds present in the body that govern its functioning, is at the core of life in a creature's body, it is like Indra at the micro level.

Since the heart is at the core of life of a man, the central authority that regulates all these Gods is also said to have its seat in the heart. That authority is the emperor of the body and its organs, and it is known as the Atma. Therefore, this Atma is also like Indra as far as the individual creature is concerned.

According to Brihad Aranyak Upanishad of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, canto 2, Brahmin 1, verse no. 6, this Indra is a synonym for Brahm both at the macro

level because Brahm is the supreme Lord of the entire creation represented by the innumerable forces of Nature called the various Gods at the macro level (and that is why we have so many Gods), as well as at the micro level of the individual creature because the Pran is the vital life supporting entity present in the body without which none of the organs would have their relevance, as well as the Atma or pure consciousness without which even this Pran would lose its relevance.

The king is offered the best of foods and drinks that are available in his kingdom. So this Indra God is also offered the best food and drink in the form of the ambrosia called 'Som'. It is an invigorating drink that is extracted from a creeper by the same name. It is used during sacrificial rituals, and it is offered to Gods that is supposed to bestow them with an eternal life of bliss. It is said to be stored in the heavenly pitcher of the moon. From the metaphysical point of view, since Indra represents the superior authority that controls all the other Gods representing the various sense organs, it follows that whatever the organs acquire are first offered to Indra before the other Gods representing these organs partake of it. Amongst the organs, it is the hand that helps the body to acquire things from the outside world. Since the organs have an intrinsic tendency to move towards pleasing things in this world and move away from unpleasant things, it is deemed that their messenger, the hand, brings to them only selected and best of things available, which is like bringing Amrit or Som for them so that they can offer it to their king Indra.

Indra is both the 'Atma' of the living being because the latter is the undisputed emperor of the body as its consciousness, as well as the 'Pran' or the various vital winds present in the body that control all its vital functions and sustain life.

Indra is also the Lord of rains and clouds, and since rain is a metaphor for life and fertility, and the clouds are the carriers of such life-bearing seeds, Indra too is regarded as the Lord of life and its protector, sustainer and developer.

According to the Rig Veda, 1/ 4-5; 51-57, Indra represents the combined forces of Nature represented by the different Gods. He loves to drink Som, the elixir of bliss and eternity (Rig Veda, 3/ 36/ 8). He has the Wind God called Marut as his chief assistant.

Indra appears in the Vedas as follows-- Rig Veda—1/4-5, 51-57; 5/29; 7/19-32; 8/15-17; 10/111-113; Sam Veda—52/115-148 etc.; Yajur Veda—3/34; 7/5; 7/39; Atharva Veda—8/8; 20/1.

²Indra is the chief God of all the organs, including the ears. Since a man who lives in this material world is influenced by the various delusions related with it, he is bound to hear unrighteous and inauspicious things along with the righteous and auspicious ones. But the ears have a natural affinity towards things that are worldly and pleasing for the senses instead that which is spiritually uplifting. For example, rock music would appeal more to people who have a propensity for worldly attractions instead of hearing the chanting of hymns which would make them bored. Thus, the aspirant prays to Indra, the chief God of organs, to graciously protect him from such pitfalls.

When one pays attention to only good things from out of all that he hears, it is natural that his mind would be subjected to good inputs only, and consequentially the output of the mind would also be equivalently good.]

2. [This verse describes how the teacher hopes that the good seekers of knowledge (i.e. students) would come to him from far and wide to become his disciples. He prays to the Lord that only cultured, disciplined, sincere, serious and desirable students come to live with him in his hermitage so that the discipline and sanctity of the place and the environment that is conducive to foster education and dissemination of knowledge is not vitiated by wickedness and evil behaviour. If the student is sincere, disciplined, serious and diligent besides possessing intelligence and natural aptitude for imbibing knowledge being taught, the efforts made by the teacher are not wasted.

Otherwise, even one bad, wild or mischievous student can ruin the whole flock. This would have a cascading effect as the reputation of the teacher would be adversely affected. A ruined and wayward disciple who is pervert, rebellious, errant, unruly, disobedient and misbehaved would heap ignominy upon the teacher as much as a similar son can ruin the good name of the family so assiduously, painstakingly been built over a long time by his ancestors.

The first stanza itself sets the agenda—if the disciple or student is good, the teacher gets honour and acclaim, he is rewarded with good reputation and name.]

‘Let me be blessed with the necessary skills, knowledge and wisdom as well as the accompanying fame and reputation that would enable me to acquire and increase worldly prosperity, material wellbeing and their attendant honours, acclaim, respects and comforts. Such as for instance, let me have easy access to an abundant supply of clothes and other personal accessories, cows and other livestock, food and drink, animals which have hairy skins (a reference to sheep that produce wool) etc.’ With this prayer, the aspirant should offer his first oblation to the sacred fire by pronouncing ‘Swaha’ (which is always done prior to any offering to the consecrated fire because it is considered the mouth of the Fire God by which the offering is accepted by him).

‘Let Brahmacharis¹ come to me (as my disciples) from all directions²’. With this prayer, the aspirant should offer his second oblation to the sacred fire by pronouncing ‘Swaha’.

‘Let the Brahmacharis who come to me (to become my disciples) be free from all deceit and conceit. [That is, let them be simple-hearted, straight-forward, disciplined and orderly. Let them be selfless in serving me.]³’. With this prayer, the aspirant should offer his third oblation to the sacred fire by pronouncing ‘Swaha’.

‘Let the Brahmacharis who come to me (to become my disciples) be competent, able, efficient, disciplined and intelligent enough to acquire correct knowledge (and not distorted connotations of what I teach)⁴’. With this prayer, the aspirant should offer his fourth oblation to the sacred fire by pronouncing ‘Swaha’.

‘Let the Brahmacharis who come to me (to become my disciples) observe the virtues of Dam (restraint of the sense organs)⁵’. With this prayer, the aspirant should offer his fifth oblation to the sacred fire by pronouncing ‘Swaha’.

‘Let the Brahmacharis who come to me (to become my disciples) observe the virtues of Sham (restraint of the mind and intellect)⁶’. With this prayer, the aspirant should offer his sixth oblation to the sacred fire by pronouncing ‘Swaha’ (2).

[Note—¹The word *Brahmachari* refers to one who has restraint over his sense organs and who practices continence and abstinence in a holistic manner. A student is expected to focus his entire energy to his studies, and this necessitates exemplary self control of the body and the mind.

²In other words, ‘let my fame as an excellent and wise teacher spread in all the directions so that students come to me from all the corners of the world. This would also entail that they would bring in liberal gifts and donations to me’. This is in line with the desire of a teacher who wishes to gain prosperity and material wellbeing. This in its wake brings to him honour and good name and fame which helps to establish him amongst his peers in society. When the teacher’s name and fame spreads, even rich people such as kings would send their sons to their hermitage for formal education, and such patronage ensure all the material abundance and clout that the teacher would ever hope for.

³This is to ensure that discipline and order is maintained in the hermitage. In earlier times, the students used to stay in the place of their teacher and perform all the

daily chores of the hermitage. That was only possible if the students were disciplined and orderly, and did not indulge in petty crimes and mischievous acts while in the hermitage. Even as the saying goes that one rotten egg would spoil the entire basket full of eggs, one unruly and scoundrel of a student would ruin the positive educational and spiritual atmosphere of the teacher's hermitage. He would be like a thorn in the side of the teacher and could rattle his peace of mind.

⁴If the student is in-attentive, stupid or incompetent in anyway whatsoever then he would fail to acquire the necessary level of knowledge and skills that one expects from a student who has joined a hermitage of a wise and reputed teacher. If a bad student uses the teacher's name as his credentials in later life and if he fails to deliver in life and live up to the high standards expected from a educated man who has been groomed by a wise and acclaimed teacher, it is sure to denigrate the teacher's honourable stature in the society and give him unexpected ignominy and infamy. The failure of the disciple reflects badly on the teacher because the responsibility to inculcate good values in the former is the moral duty of the teacher, and if it does not happen the teacher is to be blamed for it just like the father of a son cannot be absolved of the proper upbringing of his son.

This is also evident in the fact that any school that has a persistent good academic record is much sought after and held in high esteem, and that is also why certain high-end schools and colleges have a strict entrance requirement to ensure that only the best of students enter their portals and safeguard their reputation.

⁵Self restraint of the sense organs known as *Dam* is necessary to divert the energy of the body to the main goal for which the disciple has come to the teacher—which is education. He should conserve his energy and not be indulgent in gratification of the sense organs and the body. It would be frittering away his precious energy.

⁶Similarly, the control of the mind known as *Sham* is absolutely essential in the process of education. A wayward, fidgety, restless, unsettled and distracted mind is not conducive to learning.

These two conditions of *Dam* and *Sham* are essential to ensure that the students are able, efficient, disciplined, responsible, soft spoken, alert, attentive and diligent in their studies, and mentally and emotionally prepared to lead a rigorous life in a hermitage. This regimental life of a hermitage prepares them to lead a similar life which is equally disciplined and efficiently led when they enter the world to face its tumultuous challenges.]

3. 'Let me be renowned; let me have fame and good name'. With this prayer, the aspirant should offer his seventh oblation to the sacred fire by pronouncing 'Swaha'.

'Let me be honoured and praised a lot; let me be rich and prosperous'. With this prayer, the aspirant should offer his eighth oblation to the sacred fire by pronouncing 'Swaha'.

'Oh Lord! Let me merge myself with you to become one and inseparable from you who are an embodiment of the entire creation and its supreme Lord¹'. With this prayer, the aspirant should offer his ninth oblation to the sacred fire by pronouncing 'Swaha'.

'Oh Lord! I request you likewise to subtly enter my being and become one with me who am an image of you²'. With this prayer, the aspirant should offer his tenth oblation to the sacred fire by pronouncing 'Swaha'.

'Oh Lord with numerous forms and names! You are vast and macrocosmic in nature (much like a huge ocean or a great river that supports a civilisation). I wash my sins and misdeeds in you; I clean myself and purge all my impurities by coming in contact with you (much like people who wash themselves in the water of a holy river and its branches or tributaries to clean themselves)'. With this prayer, the aspirant should offer his eleventh oblation to the sacred fire by pronouncing 'Swaha'.

‘Oh Lord! Even as water collects from various places and go to the ocean, and days and months collect themselves to form a year, let Brahmacharis (disciples and students) come to me from all directions³’. With this prayer, the aspirant should offer his twelfth oblation to the sacred fire by pronouncing ‘Swaha’.

‘You are the one who gives refuge and protection to those who sincerely seek you and pray to you for refuge and protection. Hence, live up to your glorious reputation and make yourself available to me; make yourself benevolent and benign upon me. Let me have access to you along with your divine glories and virtues. [That is, let me be able to inculcate such noble and auspicious virtues in me.] (3).

[Note—¹This is the prayer for emancipation and salvation of the soul of the aspirant.

²This prayer requests the supreme Lord to symbolically take up residence within the heart of the aspirant and give him the privilege of being an abode of Brahm. The aspirant prays that that he becomes one with the supreme Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness that lives inside his own self as his Atma or soul. In other words, the aspirant aspires to be self-realised and enlightened about Brahm. He wishes to cultivate the erudition and wisdom which would give him the deep insight into the fundamental nature of creation and the ability to see the transcendental Divinity everywhere. He prays that his vision transcends the limited scope of ‘this and that’, and grows to become all-encompassing and all-inclusive so that he rises above the mundane and develops the eclectic philosophy of non-duality or Advaitya nature of existence.

³This stanza indicates that the teacher prays to the Lord to bless him with a good reputation and name as an excellent teacher so that his fame spreads far and wide, and students come to him from all corners of the world. Refer verse no. 2, stanza 2, and note to that verse.]

Valli 1, Anuvak 5

1. [In this verse, the different ‘Vyahritis’, which were the primary words pronounced by the creator Brahma at the time of the beginning of creation and from which the rest of the creation was revealed, are being worshipped as manifestations of the supreme transcendental Brahm and its stupendous dynamic powers encapsulated in these Vyahritis.]

Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha—these are the three Vyahritis¹. Besides these three, there is a fourth one known as Maha. It was first known to Mahaa-chamasya, the son of sage Mahaa-chamas. That fourth Vyahriti known as Maha² is symbolic of Brahm; it personifies the eclectic and grand qualities and virtues that are so unique and typical of the supreme transcendental Divinity known as Brahm³.

Indeed, that Brahm is the pure conscious Atma or soul of creation. All the rest of the Gods are parts or fractions of that Brahm; they are individual units of the wholesome Brahm.

The first Vyahriti ‘Bhu’ is this earth; the second Vyahriti ‘Bhuvaha’ is the sky or space above the earth; and the third Vyahriti ‘Swaha’ is the heaven⁴ (1).

[Note—¹The *Vyahritis* are the primary root words pronounced by the creator Brahma at the time of the beginning of creation, and which formed the nucleus around which the seven worlds formed. In other words, the rest of the creation was revealed from these primary sounds created by Brahma.

Initially there was nothing, there was no activity whatsoever. Everything was in eternal state of inactivity marked by calmness and quietude. This condition was symbolised by the term ‘death’ that took over after life came to an end. Then in this

cosmic state of inactivity, the first signs of next series ‘activity and life’ appeared in the form of ripple in the all-enveloping ocean of ether. This was primarily because the energy of the previous life lay in a latent form only to assert its presence when the circumstances were favourable. Thus, there was some primary cosmic nuclear explosion under the surface of ether and its energy sent shock waves causing the ripple on the surface. It was not a single wave but a series of waves having their epicenter in the so-called core of creation—which we call ‘Brahm’. There were seven such successive explosions—which we would call the seven ‘Vyahritis’. The waves of these ripples overlapped and coalesced with each other to have a multiplying and compounding effect. The latent dynamic energy present inside them thus activated heated the cosmic ether and churned it. This heating, churning and cooling that followed resulted in separation of the various fundamental elements called the Bhuts because of a number of physical factors such as their density and grossness. The earth was the heaviest and so it settled at the bottom; the sky was the lightest and the subtlest so it rose to the top and covered the upper part of the creation. The rest of the elements occupied the space in between—the water being lighter than earth but heavier than the fire settled above the earth; the fire was lighter than the water but heavier than the air so it settled above water and blow the air; while the air element occupied all the space because it was next in subtlety to the sky. These five elements thus formed the nucleus of the forthcoming creation.

The seven ‘Vyahritis’ are the words—(1) Bhu, (2) Bhuvaha, (3) Swaha, (4) Maha, (5) Janaha, (6) Tapaha, and (7) Satyam. ‘Bhu’ was the nucleus for earth, ‘Bhuvaha’ for the sky above the earth, ‘Swaha’ for the space beyond the earth’s atmosphere and is generally meant for the heavens, ‘Maha’ stands for the greater heavens beyond the solar system, called the Maha-Loka where enlightened sages and seers are supposed to dwell (as opposed to earth where ordinary creatures including subterranean creatures would finally take up residence), ‘Tapaha’ was the place where exalted ascetics would do penances and austerities, and ‘Satyam’ was the truthful and ultimate abode where the ultimate and irrefutable supreme truthful entity which is the only Authority in creation resides.

According to Sankhya Shastra and the Purans, Brahma, who is known as ‘Swayambhu’ (self created in the sense that he had no father or ancestor) created seven elements called ‘Vyahriti’, viz. Bhuh, Bhuvaha, Swaha, Mahaha, Janaha, Tapaha and Satyam respectively (भूः, भुवः, स्वः, महः, जनः, तपः, सत्यमः) which constitute the fundamental elements which formed the gross body of the creation as its core building blocks at the macro level. Encircling this core is the rounded globe called ‘earth’ which is surrounded by concentric circles constituting of ‘water’ or Apaha, ‘energy’ called ‘Tej’, ‘wind or air’ called Vayu, ‘sky or space’ called Akash, the notions that are described as ‘pride, ego, arrogance, haughtiness and vanity’ collectively called ‘Ahankar’, and the notions of ‘importance, majesty, grandeur, magnificence and lordliness’ called collectively as ‘Mahattatva’. Each of them was ten times larger than its preceding layer or circle.

²The word *Maha* literally means that which is grand, huge, vast, infinite, measureless, majestic, magnificent, stupendous, astounding, great, most excellent and illustrious. That is, that entity which was much grander than what was visible as the animate or inanimate world, that was beyond the purview of the three units of the creation where the creature and its dead ancestors live, i.e. the earth, the sky and the heavens. This unit was beyond the visible and mental spectrum of ordinary human beings, but could be known by deep meditation and insight even as the great secrets of Nature are accessible to expert scientists but not to ordinary humans.

That is why only one of the numerous sages and seers of that time could envision the existence of that divine and superior world where the supreme Authority dwelled. This ‘seer’ was one Mahachamasya, and it was to honour his discovery of this divine unit of creation that it was named ‘Maha’ after him.

³Maha stands for the supreme transcendental Authority in creation which goes beyond the three limits of creation represented by the first three Vyahritis. Maha therefore represented Brahm which was supreme and transcendental, and who incorporated everything within himself as that Brahm is all-encompassing and all-pervading.

⁴The *four Vyahritis* and the worlds they represent are the following—(a) ‘Bhu’ represents this world (earth), fire, Rig Veda and Pran (life giving breath); (b) ‘Bhuvaha’ represents the sky called Antariksha, wind or air, Sam Vedas and Apaana wind (i.e. the wind which passes down the intestines and helps its digestion and excretion); (c) ‘Swaha’ represents Dukoka (the heavens), Aditya (the celestial sun), Yajur Veda and Vyan (the wind that prevails throughout the body); and (d) ‘Maha’ represents Aditya (the Sun God), Chandrama (the Moon God), Brahm (the supreme transcendental Being who has no specific attributes) and Anna (food which sustains life in this creation).]

2. ‘Maha’ represents Aditya (the Sun God). It is by the courtesy of Aditya that the creation acquires its majestic magnificence and life, complete with its astounding glory, vitality, energy, heat, light and glory. It is due to Aditya that the world gets to develop and grow¹.

‘Bhu’ represents the fire element². ‘Bhuvaha’ represents wind or air element³. ‘Swaha’ represents the Sun⁴. And ‘Maha’ represents Chandrama or the Moon⁵. This Moon is the patron God who presides over light and illumination in a world engulfed and submerged in pitch darkness⁶.

[Now these Vyahritis are compared to the Vedas.] The ‘Bhu’ is the Rig Veda, ‘Bhuvaha’ is the Sam Veda, ‘Swaha’ is the Yajur Veda⁷ (2).

[Note—¹The *Aditya* or Sun has a great significance and importance in this creation because it is the sun that provides the world with energy, light and heat which aids in its sustenance, development and growth; it is the sun which gives the world its light by which everything is seen and known; it is the sun that helps plants to carry on with the process of ‘photosynthesis’ by which they produce food which in turn sustains the rest of the creatures in this world; it is the heat of the sun which keeps the world warm; it is the energy of the sun that is harnessed in one way or the other by the rest of the creation to enable the latter to survive, a fact borne out when we consider what would happen if there was no sunlight for a prolonged period of time—life would certainly be extinguished.

Therefore, the magnificence, grandeur and majesty of the fascinating and charming world which is witnessed all around by us owe their existence to the Sun God.

The Sun itself is a most magnificent, grand and majestic entity which is most prominent in the whole sky. It is compared to a pitcher of honey, and meditation upon the Sun done with this view is called the ‘Madhu Vidya’ which has been elaborately described in Chandogya Upanishad. The Sun is a visible symbol or manifestation of the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic gross body and all-inclusive form of the supreme Brahm, because it personifies all the glorious virtues and qualities that characterise the Supreme Being.

Besides this, Brahm is the primary force that sustains and nourishes life in this creation, giving it its energy, vitality and strength as well as being the progenitor, sustainer and annihilator of the creation. The Sun also has these characteristics—it creates and sustains life by providing the most essential factors for life such as energy, heat and light, and it can even annihilate life when it shines ruthlessly and heats up the world to exceedingly high temperatures. Thus it is apt to say that Aditya or the Sun God personifies Maha, because the latter Vyahriti is a metaphor for all that is grand, magnificent and majestic, and these virtues characterise Brahm.

²*Bhu* represents the earth and the latter harbours fire element in its bosom. It is because of this fire element intrinsically present in a hidden form in the bowls of the earth, and that is why the latter is warm and habitable, being able to conceive and sustain life of all imaginable forms. The presence of fire in the earth is evident in the presence of molten lava which is spouted out through the crater of volcanoes. The earth is protected by a shield of magnetic field which is said to be generated by the earth's core consisting of molten iron.

³*Bhuvaha* represents the wind or air element because the entire sky is full of air or wind.

⁴*Swaha* represents the Sun because the latter is present in the heavens much above the atmosphere of the earth which is usually called the heaven in relation to the earth. The Sun is considered as a visible manifestation of the supreme Lord of the heavens known as the Viraat Purush who himself is a macrocosmic form of the supreme transcendental authority in creation known as Brahm.

⁵*Maha* represents the Moon because the latter symbolises that aspect of the supreme Brahm which prevails even after life has become extinct in this world as metaphorically depicted by the setting of the sun at dusk and the darkness of the night which descends upon the earth after that.

⁶The darkness here represents ignorance and delusions that surround the creature and prevents the light of wisdom and enlightenment from shining through. This is metaphorically depicted by saying that after the setting of the sun the entire world is enveloped in a shroud of pitch darkness, and the only source which gives light to it in the absence of the sun is the moon. The moon is the only source of light that illuminates the world in the otherwise awe-inspiring and foreboding gloom of the night. This also implies that the moon is symbolically like that source of light representing knowledge, erudition and wisdom that helps the world overcome the hurdle caused by darkness of ignorance and delusions which shrouds it like a veil.

⁷The sequence in which these primary words were pronounced and the origin of the Vedas which are repositories of all knowledge that exists in creation has been elaborately described in Chaturvedo-panishad published in this series as part of the anthology of Rig Veda Upanishads prepared by this humble author.]

3. The Vyahriti known as 'Maha' is indeed Brahm (see verse no. 1). It is because of Brahm that all the Vedas get their fame and honour (because they worship Brahm, teach about Brahm, and are the manifestation of Brahm in the form of divine and eclectic knowledge about the Absolute Truth that they contain).

'Bhu' represents Pran (which is the vital wind called breath because the latter is a metaphor for life on this earth).

'Bhuvaha' represents Apaana (which is the vital wind moving down the intestines and escaping as the flatus, indicating the exit of air from the body of the living creature into the atmosphere around the earth).

'Swaha' represents Vyan (which is the vital wind pervading in the body and maintains equilibrium)¹.

And 'Maha' represents Anna or food (because like the supreme Brahm, the food is responsible for sustaining and nourishing life in this creation). It is the Anna (food) that provides energy, strength, vitality, vigour, stamina, potentials and powers to all forms of vital winds are collectively called the various forms of Prans².

Thus there are four Vyahritis. Each of them has four sub-divisions or types or classes, bringing the total number of Vyahritis to sixteen ($4 \times 4 = 16$). Those who are wise enough to know about them are also wise enough to know about Brahm³.

All the Gods offer their tributes and pay their obeisance to that supreme transcendental Brahm⁴ (3).

[Note—¹The word Swaha refers to the heavens which in practical terms is the cosmic space that surrounds all the celestial bodies floating in the vast and fathomless bowls of the sky. This space is filled with ether which is the cosmic medium that helps to maintain the requisite pressure and balance in the cosmos and prevents the heavenly bodies from colliding with each other besides helping them to maintain their respective location, size, shape and movement across the sky.

²The importance of *food* is highlighted in Sam Veda's Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 5, Section 2, verse no. 1, and Canto 6, Section 5-7. It is obvious that without food and the nourishment that it provides to the creature, the Pran alone would not be able to sustain life. This is proved when one has not eaten for a prolonged period of time—all his vital signs begin to ebb and he becomes weak and fragile, both mentally and physically.

³This is because these Vyahritis symbolise all 'life' forms and all the glorious qualities, stupendous potentials and magnificent virtues that they represent in this creation. Brahm encompasses everything coming under the definition of life and creation. Nothing exists that is not Brahm or is beyond the purview of Brahm. Hence, these Vyahritis represent Brahm.

⁴This is because these Gods have their existence because of Brahm, they derive their importance and significance because of Brahm, they are empowered by Brahm to carry on with their respective duties like the subordinates of an Emperor are delegated specific authority by him for the smooth governance of the realm. They represent one or the other specific powers that the supreme Brahm uses to maintain law and order in his realm, and therefore these Gods are very junior and subordinate to Brahm who is their boss. These Gods represent only a fraction of the glory of Brahm as is clearly asserted in verse no. 1.]

Valli 1, Anuvak 6

[This Anuvak postulates that the subtle sky of the heart, called the 'Hridaya Akash', is the place where that supreme Brahm, who has the different worlds represented by the various Vyahritis mentioned in Anuvak 5 above as the parts of his vast, all-encompassing macrocosmic body, resides. Hence, if one wishes to worship and honour Brahm, if one wishes to witness and realise him, then it is to be done by meditating and contemplating upon that Supreme Being in the heart itself and not anywhere outside.]

1. There is a subtle sky present in the heart of the creature. That self-illuminated, radiant and glorious Supreme Being (Brahm; Viraat Purush)—who is like a fount of Amrit (the elixir of eternal beatitude and felicity) and manifested in the subtle form as the Mana (emotional heart and intellectual mind)—has his exalted and revered presence there.

The duct (called the Sushumna Naadi) by which an ascetic is able to divert his vital wind called Pran upwards to achieve the bliss of Brahm realisation, passes through the area in the throat where a lump of flesh hangs in its center (which is a reference to the Adam's apple), and then crosses the area of the head where the tuft of hairs is present (i.e. behind the cranium) to finally reach the top of the skull and pierce

through it. This is called 'Indra Yoni' or the symbolic path by which the supreme Brahm can be realised¹.

At the time of final redemption, the ascetic who is wisened to these facts and who worships and honours Brahm with this wisdom makes his exit from the body through this path and establishes himself in the Vyahriti known as 'Bhu' and its basic element the 'fire'².

Similarly, since he has been worshipping Brahm as the different Vyahritis, he establishes himself in 'Bhuvaha' (the second Vyahriti) and its basic element the 'wind or air' which prevails uniformly throughout the sky³ (1).

[Note—¹This spot is also called *Brahm Randhra* or the hair-like slit through the supreme Brahm had entered the body of the creature to take up his residence in his mind. That is why this verse describes one of the defining attributes of Brahm as Mana or mind and heart. The intelligence and emotions that any living being has are vivid evidences of the presence of Brahm in its body. This area is called *Indra Yoni* because the stage when an ascetic's Pran has reached the top of the head and then pierces it to escape from the confines of the gross body to merge with the cosmic wind air element present outside the body in the sky is possible only when the ascetic has successfully done Yoga, and the success of the latter depends primarily on the control or restraint of the sense organs. Indra represents the functioning of all the sense organs collectively because he is the king of Gods, and these Gods are nothing but the dynamic forces of creation that operate through the organs of the creature's body. This is because the individual creature represents the creation at the microcosmic level. It is only when the sense organs are fully restrained that the spiritual aspirant is able to reach the higher echelons of spiritualism. Earlier in Valli 1, Anuvak 4 Brahm and Indra are treated as being synonymous with each other. They are the same Lord representing the supreme Authority of creation.

Hence, the point where the spiritual aspirant experiences a sense of extreme bliss and ecstasy is called Indra Yoni to indicate that it is a crucible where the eclectic state of extreme bliss is nurtured and where it flourishes.

²A wise aspirant regards Brahm as *Bhu*, or thinks that the entire living world is nothing but Brahm personified. He further treats the 'fire element' inherently and inseparably present in the earth as a manifestation of the dynamic powers, the stupendous energy, the glorious potentials and the magnificent virtues of Brahm. So at the time of death, he attains oneness with Brahm whom he has been worshipping as 'Bhu' and its magnificent dynamic energy as the fire element. In other words, he lives in this world as the 'fire' personified. His presence is always felt in a subtle form as the terrestrial fire even after he has left his mortal body. Earth and fire represent the life creating and sustaining virtues of Brahm. Since the fire element has the unique ability to purify anything put in it, the spiritual aspirant is also deemed to be purged of all worldly impurities and become holy and pure like the fire itself. Besides this, like the fire element, his Spirit form has become equally dynamic, potent and powerful.

³The second Vyahriti is *Bhuvaha*, or the sky above the earth where the wind or air is the chief element. This wind or air element is called 'Pran' or the life of this creation, and the fact that it pervades throughout the length and breadth of the sky shows that Brahm, who is also synonymous with life and Pran, also pervades uniformly throughout the entire creation as its vital life giving and life sustaining entity called Pran in the form of the wind or air element. Besides this, it establishes that the dimension of Brahm is like that of the sky—measureless, vast, infinite and fathomless.]

2. Likewise, by worshipping Brahm as the Vyahriti known as 'Swaha', he becomes established in the heavens¹, and by worshipping Brahm as the Vyahriti known as 'Maha' he becomes established in the magnificence and glory of Brahm himself².

In this eclectic and holistic way, such an aspirant is able to attain freedom for himself from the fetters of this body and the world, and consequently reach that exalted and divine abode of Brahm to which his 'true self' truthfully belongs³. Indeed, he is able to reach the Lord of his Mana (the mind as well as the heart).

By being one with Brahm (i.e. by being self-realised and wise and enlightened), he indeed himself becomes the Lord of the speech, the Lord of the eyes, the Lord of the ears, and the Lord of all knowledge⁴. Not only this, he surpasses all imaginable definitions of divinity and holiness, and becomes most exalted and revered.

Like Brahm he represents the sky (i.e. he becomes as vast and fathomless and as pure and eternal as the sky); like Brahm he becomes an embodiment of Truth (as he becomes Brahm personified as the pure conscious Atma); like Brahm he symbolises the fount of and the final resting place for Pran (i.e. he becomes the source from which the rest of the creatures get their inspiration and guidance, he provides solace and succour to all the creatures in this creation, and his benevolence and kindness act as the much needed balm for the tormented world; he acquires the same glorious virtues as possessed by the vital wind that injects and supports life in creation); like Brahm he becomes an embodiment of extreme bliss and happiness, of peace, tranquility and serenity; and like Brahm he becomes a wellspring of Amrit which is the elixir of eternity and bliss as well as of beatitude and felicity.

'Oh disciple! Note that this is a comprehensive and holistic way to honour and worship that most ancient and primary Lord of creation who is worthy of such praise, adoration, honour and worship'⁵ (2).

[Note—¹By worshipping Brahm as *Swaha* he becomes as honoured, reverend and exalted as the great Gods residing in the heavens. People offer tributes to him and pay their obeisance to him as they would to the honourable Gods. He also acquires the same eclectic and divine powers and authority as possessed by the Gods.

² By worshipping Brahm as *Maha* he becomes as great and exalted as the supreme Brahm himself because this Maha refers to Brahm himself—see Valli 1, Anuvak no. 5, verse no. 1.]

³Such an aspirant is able to obtain emancipation and salvation for his soul which is his true self. This 'true self' is his pure conscious Atma which is however a manifestation of Brahm in the first place. In other words, the aspirant has truthfully achieved 'Brahm realisation' in the form of 'self-realisation'.

⁴A self-realised ascetic has gained a spiritual stature which makes him enlightened and possessed of divine eclectic powers and potentials. He is no ordinary mortal, but as glorious and divine as Brahm himself. Once this happens, all the sense organs automatically become subservient to him. In other words, such a man is able to have the glorious virtues of *Dam* and *Sham* described in Valli 1, Anuvak 4, verse no. 2 above.

⁵Brahm is not a specific God with limited powers and authority. Brahm encompasses everything in existence—both movable as well as immovable such as the animals and the plants respectively. So when Brahm is worshipped with this wisdom and in this holistic way as an all-inclusive cosmic Divine Being, as the Absolute Authority beyond which there is no authority, and the Absolute Truth beyond which there is no truth, it is then that Brahm is actually being properly worshipped and honoured. It is like honouring the combined dynamic forces of Nature in one embodiment of Brahm.]

Valli 1, Anuvak 7

[There are ‘five’ principle elements in creation, and this fundamental aspect is reflected in the appearance of five consecutive layers or rows in which all the units of creation, both at the micro level as well as the macro level, have arranged themselves. They form a series in such a way that one layer or row depends upon the other; they compliment and supplement each other. These rows or layers are called ‘Panch Pankta’—the consecutive layers or rows or strata or tier of creation each having five units in it. They together form a grid that constitutes this enigmatically mysterious but astoundingly magnificent creation. This verse endeavours to list the various units of creation and classify them into distinct layers or rows or sequences or tiers or groups to establish that there is an underlying force which unites them together into one composite mass called the ‘living world’. It is like a colourful picture made up of a mosaic of multi-coloured units put together by the supreme creator.]

1. The five units that constitute the first layer or tier or row or sequence of the visible creation consists of the Earth, the Sky, the Heavens, the Directions (north, east, south, west, zenith and nadir), and the Corners (north-east, north-west, south-east and south-west)¹. [This is the Lok Pankti—the layer or row of units that give physical shape and dimension to the known creation.]

The second layer or row or sequence of the creation consists of the following five units—Fire, Wind or Air, the Sun, the Moon and the Stars². [This is the Jyoti Pankti—the layer that constitutes the units of creation that give light and illumination.]

The third layer or row or sequence of five units of this creation consists of Water, Medicinal herbs (special plants), Vegetation (plants in general), the vast Sky (the space in which everything created finds place to exist), and the Atma (i.e. the pure consciousness that lives in this world constituting of these fundamental units)³. [This is the Adhibhautik Pankti—the layer that constitutes the units of creation that forms the gross aspects of the physical world.]

Now that aspect of the creation that enables the Atma, the pure consciousness to physically live and get the feel of the world at the personal level is being outlined. This aspect of creation is called ‘Adhyatma’—because it relates to the Atma and how it interacts with the physical world where the consciousness lives in the gross body of the creature.

The fourth layer or row or sequence of five units in this series of creation at the individual level of the creature where his Atma lives in the gross body are the different forms of the vital winds or airs. These five winds or airs are known as Pran, Vyan, Apaana, Udaana and Samana present in the body of the individual creature⁴. [This is called the Panch Pran Pankti—the row or sequence of five vital winds that sustain life in the creature’s body.]

The fifth layer or row or sequence of five fundamental units in this world constitute of the eye (which help the Atma to see), the ear (which help the Atma to hear), Mana (mind—which help the Atma to perceive this world and get attracted to it), Vak (literally meaning speech or the spoken word or voice—but here referring to the tongue through which the creature speaks) and skin (which helps the creature to feel and touch anything). [This is the Indriya Pankti—the layer that constitutes the organs of the body—called the Indriya—that helps the individual creature to conceive

and then perceive the world. This is because the world is a conception of the Mana or mind which plays an important role in the creation of the world as it is the mind which imagines the presence of the gross physical world first and then impels the creature to believe in its existence. The other sense organs listed here—viz. the eye, the ear, the tongue and the skin then play their individual role to make this imaginary world appear to be for real and concrete. Should the mind decide that it has nothing to do with the world, the latter loses all its relevance and significance.]⁵

The sixth layer or row or sequence of five units that are used in the structuring of the physical world where the Atma lives constitutes of the five gross parts that form the physical body of the creature—viz. the skin, the flesh, the veins/nerves, the bones and the marrow⁶. [This is the Dhatu Pankti—the layer of basic elements or units that constitutes the gross body of the creature where his Atma, his pure consciousness and the true ‘self’ lives. For the Atma, the body is the world inasmuch as the fact that without the body the Atma would have no place to live in this creation. The individual’s body has the same relevance to the Atma as the vast sky or the space of the cosmos has for the huge array of cosmic bodies such as the sun, the moon, the stars and other heavenly bodies that inhabit this vast, infinite and measureless creation at the macrocosmic level.]

Having enumerated these vital statistics, the sage said, ‘All these are like the consecutive rings or lines that are linked together in a grid to form a composite picture of the creation’⁷. [They are like the steps of the ladder without which the structure known as the ‘ladder’ will have no meaning. Without the ladder it is impossible to reach the top of a shelf or the high point of structure. This is a metaphoric way to enlighten the budding student to become aware of the highly structured manner in which this creation exists. This is a scientific method to explain to him the vast map or plan of things that the supreme the cosmic creator had as his master-plan when he set about on the venture of creation. On the metaphysical plane, this scheme is intended to make a wise aspirant understand that proper knowledge of all the individual units of creation are needed to complete the journey to Brahm realisation⁸.] (1).

[Note--¹This is known as the *Loka Pankti* which means the five layers of the known world where all forms of mortal beings live. The word *Pankti* literally means a line or row or sequence. The earth and the sky and their various directions are the natural habitat of all life forms in this creation, because nothing living exists beyond this periphery. The heaven is also included in it because even after reaching the heaven, the creature has to come back to the earth once the good effects of the past deeds done by it are exhausted. Going to heaven is not the final emancipation and salvation of the soul as this is only a temporary habitat to enjoy the excellent rewards of an exemplary life led by the creature in its previous life. This oscillating path has been described in Chandogya Upanishad, 5/3-5/10, and Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, 4/4, 5/10, 6/2.]

²This is known as the *Deva Pankti* or *Jyoti Panti* series of individual units in creation. It consists of the five strata in which divine cosmic bodies representing the different forces of Nature exist. These forces are called ‘Gods’ to emphasis their divinity and the fact that they exercise control over the rest of the units or layers of creation. Since the cosmic bodies such as the sun, the moon and the stars shine and emanate light, they are referred to as ‘Jyoti’ which means light and illumination. Such entities provide light and energy to this creation. Therefore, they are categorised as belonging to the light and energy facet of creation. The Gods belong to this category because they are more spiritually empowered than ordinary creatures and a halo of divinity exudes from their being.

³This is known as the *Adhi Bhut* or *Adhi Bhautik* facet of existence. It pertains to the physical world and the body of the creature, and matters related to them. Water is the chief constituent of the body of all creatures; medicines and plants are equally necessary and vital for the existence of all the creatures that have a body. Space is an essential requirement for the development and growth of all the living creatures because they would be stifled to death if adequate space is not available for them to go grow both physically and mentally. Nothing can grow and achieve enhancement in the absence of sufficient space for this purpose. This is evident from the fact that plants, for example, that grow out in the open space of the forest or garden achieve greater degree of development as compared to those which are placed indoors. Since consciousness or Atma is the vital factor in the body of any organism, it is as integral to the living body of any creature as is water. This aspect of creation is related to the physical body of the creature that bears the Atma in it.

⁴These *vital winds or airs* enable the otherwise inane, lifeless, worthless and gross body to become alive, active and worthy to become the habitat of the immaculate and pure conscious Atma or soul, which is in turn a microcosmic form of the macrocosmic supreme transcendental Brahm who is the ultimate Lord of creation. Had there been no vital wind in the body, the latter would have shown no signs of life, and therefore Brahm could not possibly live in it, as Brahm and its microcosmic counterpart the Atma are synonymous with 'life' and 'consciousness' and not of death and gloom which a body without any movement and signs of life resembles.

This series of vital winds or airs is called the *Vayu Pankti* or the row of various winds or airs that form one of the different aspects or pillars of creation.

Now let us see what these five 'vital winds or air' are. The *Vital Winds/Pran*— Dictionary defines *Pran* as breath, inhaled and exhaled wind, the breath of life, life itself, one of the five vital winds or airs that sustain life, strength, valour, courage, energy, vitality, vigour. It is also synonymous with the fire element as well as with the supreme soul or Atma. It is the 'fire element' because both the fire as well as the Pran inject and infuse life into the otherwise lifeless and inane gross body of a creature, enabling it to get up and perform its functions and carry on with its activities. A dead body from which 'life' has exited becomes cold and lifeless, thereby indicating that the fire element that is inherently present in it has been extinguished—we then declare that the man is dead.

Though technically Atma or soul is pure consciousness while Pran is a vital wind or air element, practically they are synonymous with each other. An illustration will clear this point. Suppose a man has lost senses in his limbs—they have been paralysed, or he is lying unconsciousness due to some serious disease. We regard such a man as alive and not as dead as long as he continues to breathe, and as long as he breathes, or as long as he is technically 'alive' his Atma is deemed to be inside his body, because the true identity or the true self of a man is not his physical body but his Atma. Therefore we do not regard the 'unconscious' body as dead. But when he actually dies, that is, when he stops to breathe, we say that 'his Pran' has left the body, and that 'he' has died. Now, who has died? It is the person whose Pran has left the body; and the person is the 'self' or the Atma which has left the body when the Pran made its exit from it at the time of death. This is because Pran and Atma depend on each other so much so that as soon as the Pran leaves the body, the Atma also leaves the body and we say that the person is no more. Why do we say that the 'person is no more' when the body is actually lying in front of us? It is because the 'person' is the Atma and not the body, and this Atma has left the body with the Pran at the time of death. When the proper time comes, the Atma leaves the body astride the Pran, riding piggy back on it.

Besides the chief meaning of Pran as breath which injects the vital spark of life in a body to keep it alive and active, thereby providing it with the necessary impetus, the energy, vitality and strength to perform its designated functions and duties as a living entity, there are other vital winds or airs that are also categorised as Pran because they

work in tandem with each other to enable the main Pran, the breath, to actually carry out its function. These vital winds do not exist in separate so-called water tight compartments, as this is an incredulous proposition because air is an element that cannot be compartmentalized into separate entities having distinct existences, but they are named as separate winds just for the academic purpose of studying the way the vital wind or air functions differently in the body to enable it to carry on with its functions. So these other 'Prans' or vital winds besides the breath, both inhaled and exhaled, are the following—Apaan, Vyan, Udaan and Samaan.

However, the term 'Pran' is usually applied to breath because it is the vital wind force that injects and sustains life and vitality in a creature. It is synonymous with life, Atma and soul of a living creature. The presence of Pran determines whether a creature is dead or alive; it is a distinguishing factor between the animate and inanimate world. Pran is the essential vibrations of life; it is the rhythm of life; it is the essential characteristic that defines life.

The inherent tendency of the Pran, which is the vital wind residing in the upper part of the body between the heart-lungs and the nose, is to lift the creature to a higher state of noble, righteous, virtuous, auspicious and spiritual existence, to become wise and enlightened. On the contrary, the Apaana winds live in the intestine and pass down through the anus. It symbolises the downward drag on the creature's spiritual upliftment, pulling it down towards the grosser aspects of creation and the materialistic world which is not only gross but also filthy and worthless like the excretory matters present in the intestine. It also symbolises passions, evils, vices, perversion and attachments to the worldly things at large, and their accompanying perplexities, bewilderments and hassles leading to restlessness and moral turpitude and degradation. This oscillation between the spiritual upliftment and moving upwards towards goodness, and spiritual degradation, moving downwards towards the gross world of sensual pleasures, leads a creature to a continuous cycle of birth and death—this oscillation is like the bouncing of a ball upwards and downwards from the surface of the earth. One must remember that a lot of symbolism, metaphors and allegories have been used in the Upanishadic texts to explain things. One should be wise not to lose the spirit while getting bogged down by the literal meaning of the words; one should not lose the wood while searching for the tree. The 'Pran' wind here symbolises the upward drift which the pure consciousness is inherently inclined to, while the 'Apaan' winds pull it down towards the attractions of the world. The creature remains trapped between the two forces.

This 'vital wind' called Pran is one of the five elements of creation, called the Panch Bhuts, the others being earth, water, fire and sky.

According to various Upanishads, especially the Trishiki Brahmin Upanishad, 1/5 and 2/77-87, as well as Paingalo-panishad, cantos 2, verse nos.3 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, this vital wind is of ten types depending upon the function that the wind element performs in the body of a creature. Amongst them, there are five winds which are considered more important than the rest. As such, these five are called the main 'Pran', or 'Panch Prans', and they are the following—(1) *Pran*, the wind element, as breath, that is exhaled as well as inhaled, and which is responsible for infusing and sustaining life in the body; it is considered the chief wind in the whole setup because without life no other wind would be of any significance to the creature; (2) *Apaan*, the wind that passes down the intestines and is responsible for digestion of the food taken by the creature and its excretion through the anus and urinary organs (kidneys); (3) *Samaan*, the wind that is responsible for equal distribution of nourishment throughout the body, as well as in circulation of blood; (4) *Udaan*, the wind that helps the body to rise and move about, it also helps the body to expel toxic waste gases in the body through the nostrils and mouth in the form of exhalation and cough; and (5) *Vyan*, the wind that helps in maintaining equilibrium and pressure within the body, and it also controls the functioning of the other winds.

Besides the above, there are five subsidiary winds which act more like assistants to the chief Prans. They are—(1) Naag—this junior wind which helps in exhaling breath and belching; (2) Kurma—this subsidiary wind helps the eyelids to open and shut; (3) Krikar—this creates the sensation of hunger; (4) Devdutta—this creates sleep; and (5) Dhananjay—it prevents decay and deformation of the body immediately after death for some time.

According to Subalo Upanishad, canto 9, verse no.1-14 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, these ten winds have the following functions—(1) Pran—this controls eyes and the faculty of sight (verse 1); (2) Apaana—this controls ears and the faculty of hearing (verse 2); (3) Vyan—this controls nose and the faculty of smell (verse 3); (4) Udaana—this controls the tongue and the faculty of taste (verse 4); (5) Samana—this controls the skin and the faculty of touch (verse 5); (6) Vairambha—this controls speech (verse 6); (7) Mukhya—this controls the hands (verse 7); (8) Antaryaama—this controls the legs (verse 8); (9) Prabhanjan—this controls the anus (verse 9); (10) Kurma—this controls the genitals (verse 10); (11) Shyen—this controls the Mana or the thoughts and emotions (verse 11); (12) Krishna—this controls the discrimination, intellect and wisdom (verse 12); (13) Shwet—this controls Ahankar or the notion of ego, pride, arrogance, vanity etc. (verse 13); (14) Naag—this controls the ‘Chitta’ or the faculty of concentration, memory, sub-conscious, reasoning (verse 14).

Location of the five chief vital winds, called the Panch Prans, in the body—(1) Pran—it is present in the mouth, nose, heart, navel, big toe of the leg; (2) Apaana—it is present in the intestines and anus, lower abdomen, thighs, knees; (3) Samana—it is uniformly present throughout the body; (4) Udaana—it is present in the hands, legs, joints of the body; and (5) Vyan—it is located in the ears, thighs, waist, heels, shoulders, throat. The subsidiary winds as listed above, i.e. Naag, Kurma, Krikar, Devdutta and Dhananjay are located in the skin, muscles and the bones.

Besides the Upanishad mentioned above, there are others that elaborately describe the vital winds, their locations, their functions and their significance, and the chief amongst them are (1) Chandogya Upanishad in its canto 3, sections 13-18, and canto 7, section 15, (2) Jabal Darshan Upanishad, canto 4, verse no.23-24 of the Sam Veda tradition, (3) Maitrayanu Upanishad, canto 2, verse no.7 of the same Veda (which describes the functions of these winds), (4) Subalo Upanishad, canto 9, verse no.1-14, and (5) Paingalo-upanishad, canto 2, verse no.3 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition. These vital winds have also been elucidated upon in sage Veda Vyas’ Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 4, verse no.38-39.

The Brihad Aranyak Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 3, Brahmin 9, verse no. 26 clearly lays down the pyramidal structure of the five important vital winds. It says that Pran depends and rests upon the Apaana wind, the latter upon the Vyan wind, the latter upon the Udaana wind, and the latter upon the Samana wind although all the Prans are equally important, and there is no distinction between the one and the other as to their importance as well as to the extent Brahm is present in them. We cannot start the counting from any particular entity, saying for example that the Pran wind is number one and more important than the other vital winds. In the present context, this structure is only to show that even in the realm of metaphysics, a hierarchy is maintained, and at the apex of this hierarchical triangle is the supreme entity from which the various vital winds derive their authority and powers and potentials. That supreme entity at the micro level is the Atma as a representative of Brahm who is the supreme authority at the macro level.

Pran is evidently ‘air or the wind element’ because breath is air or wind, and ‘Pran’ is synonymous with breath. Stop the breath of a man, and he dies. Now as we know, a ‘fire needs air to keep burning’. If the speech is likened to the fire, it needs the Pran in the form of wind to keep it alive by being fed with its life sustaining force. The ‘wind’, which is a forceful expression of the powers of ‘air’, is strong enough to blow away trees and even topple ships on the high seas as is evident during severe storms. Hence, the wind, as Pran, empowers a man to do tremendously difficult tasks

requiring strength, stamina, vitality and power. Pran is synonymous with breath or fresh air. At the time of creation, the Wind-God took up residence in the nostril of a man. Worship of Pran is the Adhyatmic form of worship of Brahm, while that of the air or wind is the Adhidaivic form respectively—Aeitereyo-panishad, 1/2/4. The heart is divided into five hypothetical sections and said to have five valves or apertures called Sushi (सुषिः). These are regarded as the ‘holes or doorways’ through which the Pran can enter or escape the respective abodes of the Gods towards whom that particular doorways leads.

The 1st of these five is the valve opening in the ‘eastern direction’ of the heart through which the Pran enters it. The eyes are the apparatus by which the light of the world, both physical as well as metaphorical light of wisdom, enlightenment, knowledge and erudition enter the perception centers of the mind. The world, no matter how beautiful and illuminated, will be in dark if a person does not have the eye. The Sun or Aditya symbolically resides in the eye as its patron God, or as its torch, because it illuminates the realm which the eye is able to see, for the eye cannot see in darkness. The common coefficient in both the cases (i.e. the eye and the sun) is ‘light and illumination’. The sun is radiant, brilliant and splendorous with Tej (energy, radiance, splendour and glory). So this factor ‘Tej’ is the essence and life of the sun even as ‘Pran’ is the essence and life of a creature. If the sun had no ‘Tej’ in it, it would be worthless. Food obviously provides the basic nourishment and energy to the creature. What will the eyes do or what is the use of the sun if there is no food to eat, for in its absence the creature will not survive.

So, all these entities are the 1st categories of Gods who reside in the eastern side of the heart. They should be respected, adored and honoured for the good characteristics, noble virtues and sublime essence that they represent, and not just because they are some powerful Lord who will punish severely if not shown due respect.

The vital signs of life in a human body as shown by his powers to speak, see, hear and think are all different attributes of, or functions carried out by the supreme consciousness called Brahma residing disguised as his ‘Pran’ or the vital wind called breath present in his body. This ‘Pran’ is also synonymous with the Atma/soul, and therefore, Atma/soul is synonymous with Brahma. A man might not speak but he can see, hear and think, he might not see and speak (e.g. a blind and dumb man) but he can hear and think, he might not speak, see and hear (e.g. a dumb, blind and deaf man) but he can think. Finally he might not even think (e.g. when he is sleeping) when all his vital functions collapse into the Atma, but he still is alive. Overtly, for all external purposes, he appears to be dead because he exhibits none of the signs of life depicted by the body when he is awake, but he continues to breathe and therefore, is fully alive. He can never be treated as ‘dead’. So, the factor which decides whether a man is alive or dead is not his faculty of speech or sight or hearing or thinking, but the ‘Pran’ present in his body. As long as he breathes, he is deemed to be alive. That is, the Atma is the entity that truthfully represents consciousness or Brahma, and any person who recognises this fact that all the patron Gods supervising the various activities of creation ultimately find rest in the Atma or Brahma, and then re-emerge from it—as in the case when all the organs of perception and action start to function when a man wakes up from his sleep—is deemed to be an adroit, wise and enlightened person who acquires such stupendous powers that impossible things can be accomplished by him, such as for example the shifting of the mountain. The ‘shifting of the mountain’ is simply a figure of speech to emphasise an enlightened person’s potentials and prowess than the actual and physical movement of the mountain, for the mountain, obviously, doesn’t move! The word Pran broadly refers to the essential vibrations of life; the rhythm and essential functions pertaining to life.

Vyan is the vital wind that maintains equilibrium in the body. It is present everywhere in the body. The ears are the literal doors or holes through which the vital

wind called Vyan entered the body and the Moon-God took its abode there at the time of creation when the 'Viraat Purush' created man in his image and ordained that the various Gods should take up residence in the various parts of the human body which corresponded to the respective part of the 'Viraat Purush' himself from which these Gods were created. The Sun was created from the Viraat's eyes, so it took up its residence in the human eye. Similarly, the Moon was created from the Viraat's ears, so it found shelter in the human ear. And so on and so forth.

Any student of biology knows that the semi-circular canals present in the ear are responsible for maintaining balance in the body. Patients of low or high blood pressure or those suffering from misbalanced pressure of air on the ear drums (the tympanic membrane) can experience fluttering of that drum, snapping sounds when inhaling as well as the sense of dizziness. This can be rectified by deeply inhaling wind, clipping the nostrils tight shut and trying to exhale. The pressure of wind causes the tympanic membrane to inflate and open the closed eustachian tube with a snap. The patient feels relieved.

The ears are the apparatus by which we 'hear and gather' information. Hence, they are the 'ventilators' of the house through which fresh air representing new information and knowledge enters, and like the ventilators, they are placed on the top. The moon is regarded as the pitcher where the Amrit or the elixir of eternity is stored by the Gods. This moon, therefore, symbolises the essential extract (nourishing elements) present in food. Every wise, erudite and knowledgeable person gets fame, renown and a following of disciples, which in turn translates into wealth and ample food to eat, and therefore these qualities represent Yash and Sampadaa respectively.

Apaan wind is the one which goes down in the body and regulates the intake of food as well as its excretion. It is the wind which enables a person to speak because it helps to digest food which in turn provides the necessary energy to a man enabling him to gather sufficient energy to speak, for a weak and starving man can't speak much, and it is associated with the fire element because it helps the body to digest food and provide it with energy to speak. The enzymes present in the alimentary canal which digest food are all acidic or 'hot' in nature like the fire. This is why food is digested in the intestines and utilized by the body by the combined efforts of the *Apaan* wind, the *Samaan* wind and *Vyan* winds. Without the presence of 'heat and warmth' in the body, it would be dead, and there would be no question of eating, digesting etc. So the importance of 'fire' cannot be overstated.

Righteousness, auspiciousness, morality, ethic etc. as well as the study of scriptures, contemplation and meditation are the different virtues which are associated with Brahm realisation, and therefore they are manifestation of his divine characters such as divine glories and virtues. That is why they are called Brahma Tej because the elementary force operating in them is 'Brahm' as opposed to the demonic forces present in the form of worldly pursuits, thinking of worldly matters and devoting oneself to studying worldly material sciences and acquiring worldly skills which are far removed from spiritual knowledge leading to the upliftment of the soul. These features are like Christ and anti-Christ.

Since the downward peristaltic movement of the intestines helps in taking in food, digesting it and help in its excretion, the *Apaan* wind is likened to the ability of the body to absorb and assimilate nourishment from food, or be a 'consumer of food'. The energy trapped in the food is released in the body and empowers it to speak and to acquire all the glorious potentials that Brahm possesses, called Brahma Tej, such as the powers to think righteously, contemplate, meditate, procreate, sustain, protect and nourish the world as well as be auspicious, pious, wise and enlightened.

Samaan is the vital wind that regulates circulation in the body as well as proper and balanced distribution of nourishment to all the cells of the body. The word 'Samaan' means 'equanimity, equity and uniformity'. This wind distributes food and water equitably and uniformly throughout the body, hence has the name of *Samaan*. The mind is associated with this wind because any disturbance in the distribution of

food and water in the body will cause unrest in the mind. Also, when the mind is disturbed, it affects the whole body, thereby disturbing the equilibrium of nourishment in the cells of the body because this wind gets disturbed. Varun and water (cloud) were created by the 'Viraat Purush' from his 'Mana' (mind). Hence, the water element in the form of the cloud is also a form of Samaan wind. More practically, we see that the proper distribution of food in the body depends upon the blood which is a vehicle for such transport of the nutrients present in the food to all the parts of the body. Blood is a fluid, and fluidity depends upon the water element. Without water, the whole process of digestion and absorption will come to standstill. The mind is the epicenter of wisdom and knowledge; it is the regulatory authority of the various functions and actions of the body. A good, healthy, wise and intelligent mind will obviously lead to fame and glory. The proper maintenance of the level of fluids in the body keeps the body healthy and in prime shape with a glowing skin and a complexion full of luster.

Udaan wind rises from the bottom of the body and goes up to the head. It symbolises 'elevation and levitation, upliftment and up gradation'. The word 'Udaan' itself means 'to fly, to go up'. It signifies the inclination of the man to do noble deeds and use his legs to walk higher and climb higher in the spiritual realm. It literally 'helps the soul to fly off into the sky like the bird'; hence it has the name 'Udaan'. Like the hot air balloon, any wind that helps lift a heavier-than-wind object into the air is called 'Udaan Vayu'.

Since air fills the whole sky, there is no segregation between them. It is not possible to separate the sky from the wind or air element simply because the wind or the air element has the tendency to occupy all the space that is available to it. Anything that can 'lift' a heavy body from the ground must be stronger and more powerful than the body which it lifts as well as the forces which try to pull the body down. Hence, this 'Udaan' wind is synonymous with the quality of Aj or Oj (अज—strength, valour, power, potentials and prowess present in a creature). Its glory and importance in upliftment of the man, i.e. in inspiring him towards nobler pursuits and goals in life, and assiduously endeavour for realisation of Brahm makes it Maha (महः), that is important and significant, marked by greatness, grandeur, potent and majesty.

⁵These five organs collectively form the *Indriya Pankti* or the row or series of units that form the sense organs of the body of the individual creature. These five units control what the creature sees, hears, thinks, speaks and feels, and hence are the 'cause' of all its reactions and responses, its behaviours and thought processes as well as its personality, character traits and characteristic inclinations, habits and temperaments. Together they determine how and in what intensity the creature would respond to a given stimuli or set of circumstances. This in turn decides the personality and behaviour of the individual creature, how he interacts with the outside world, and what he makes of this life and its numerous opportunities. In the final analysis, these five sense organs are the means by which the Atma becomes aware of anything related to the external gross world of material objects as well as how and what the response should be. They help the Atma to interact with this world—receiving inputs and responding to them. These sense organs are the external arms of the Atma which helps the latter to relate itself with the world. They can be linked to the tentacles of the octopus or the pseudo arms of the amoeba.

⁶This is called the *Dhatu Pankti* or the series of five units that form the essential or basic infrastructure or skeleton of the gross body in which the pure conscious Atma lives. These three rows of units—viz. the five vital winds, the five sense organs, and the five gross parts that form the skeleton of the body—are called *Adhyatma Pankti* because they are directly related to the Atma. This is because the Atma lives in the gross body made up of these essential units which have been classified into three types depending upon their functions and degree of grossness.

But to make the body function normally and make it a worthy habitat of the Atma, each individual unit of this setup has equal importance and utility. For example, the body cannot do without the vital air known as the breath as much as its inability to maintain its integrity without the sense organs or the internal infrastructure such as the bone or the vein.

⁷The ladder has horizontal steps, and in order to reach the top one has to climb each step. In other words, each unit in the series mentioned in this verse has its unique importance and significance. All form an integral part of the ladder or the flight of steps which take the aspirant to the supreme Brahm much like one reaches the upper storey of a building or the citadel located at the top of the mountain by climbing the steps leading to it. Even if one step is blocked or damaged say by an avalanche, one has to wait till the path is cleared and repaired by engineers before proceeding ahead. Likewise, one has to understand where he presently stands vis-à-vis his mental bearing, intellectual level of development and spiritual stature before he can chalk out a strategy to move ahead from his present state of existence to reach the ultimate spiritual goal of self-realisation and Brahm-realisation. This is a metaphor for final liberation and deliverance of the creature from the bondage of this world of ignorance and its entrapping delusory perceptions. The ultimate goal of life is the final emancipation and salvation of the Spirit—or reaching that state from where there is no return to this cycle of transmigration. This is called the ‘Kaivalya Mukti’—i.e. the liberation and deliverance which is one of its kind.

⁸The Atma of the creature is its true identity. This Atma has to live inside the body, and not without it or outside of it. In order to achieve emancipation and obtain salvation, one has to use this body, and that too while one is alive in this world, because for a dead man either hell or heaven become irrelevant. All the various units mentioned in this verse above pertain to the ‘living world’ or the ‘conscious world’. It is in this world that the creature does good deeds and acquires truthful knowledge which ensures his gradual spiritual elevation till the time it reaches the zenith of self-realisation which is tantamount to Brahm-realisation. This exalted stature is equivalent to liberation from the fetters of ignorance and delusions, which delivers the creature from his horrifying torments and provides him with eternal peace and beatitude. When this auspicious spiritual goal is achieved, the apparently never-ending cycle of death and birth is disrupted, and the creature gets what is known as Moksha—i.e. the final emancipation and salvation of the soul.]

Valli 1, Anuvak 8

1. [This Valli is dedicated to the mystical divine word OM which is regarded as the most auspicious and holy sound in existence.]

The learned and wise teacher proclaimed—‘The word OM¹ is Brahm personified because OM represents the entire gamut of creation, both the animate as well as the inanimate, the visible as well as the invisible, and the comprehensible as well as the incomprehensible. This world is a visible manifestation and tangible evidence of OM.

OM is the solemn affirmation and a respectful assertion of these facts’.

The disciple insisted that more should be explained about this mysterious entity. He pleaded with the teacher—‘Oh revered teacher! Tell me more about OM’.

The erudite teacher said further—‘Those who sing or chant the sacred hymns of the Sam Veda use OM as a salutation and as a holy invocation at the beginning of such singing or chanting.

All the Mantras² (which are sacred mystical phrases or words or syllables having astoundingly glorious and divine esoteric powers), which are as potential and powerful as invincible weapons in the sphere of spiritualism and metaphysics, are said (or chanted or repeated for the express purpose of benefiting from their powerful dynamic powers) by invoking OM at the beginning and at the end of such incantatory chanting or rhythmic repetition of Mantras, and using it as the medium to make these Mantras effective and potent. [In other words, without OM these Mantras lose their potentials and affect; they become ineffective and impotent. OM is like their ammunition; it is also like the vital spark that ignites that ammunition; it empowers these Mantras to become effective mystical weapons to overcome all forms of hurdles faced by the creature, whether they be related to the mundane world, called the 'Adhi Bhautik' problems, whether they be related to the spiritual world, called the 'Adhyatmic' problems, or whether they be related to the unfavorable Gods and malignant stars, called the 'Adhi Daivik' problems.]

During the fire sacrifice, the priest called Adhvaryu³ invokes this divine word OM with each ritual and offering, at the beginning of it and at the conclusion.

It is by invoking OM that the head priest known as Brahma invokes and welcomes the Gods at the start of the fire sacrifice and announces the commencement of the sacrifice ritual. It is by the pronouncement of this mystical divine word that the symbolic arrival of the supreme transcendental Being known as Brahm is announced by the chief priest called Brahma. [Brahm is a disembodied Divinity that appears or reveals itself in the form of the virtues of auspiciousness, holiness and piety that descends upon the venue of the sacred fire sacrifice as a halo. The different Gods that are invited are actually manifestation of the various dynamic forces of creation that are invoked to make the endeavour of the fire sacrifice successful.]

It is this divine and auspicious word OM which is pronounced at the very beginning of each offering to the sacred fire to make each offering holy and sanctified.

Brahmins or the learned ones assert that it is the word OM that is said to salute the Supreme Being at the time of commencement of study by a disciple (in order to seek divine blessings, to become intellectually empowered, and to ensure that what is being taught and learned are clearly grasped and firmly remembered by the student). In fact, the wise and enlightened one who has embarked upon the study of the sacred scriptures pronounces OM and solemnly affirms his sincere desire to attain the supreme and auspicious Truth known as Brahm. He indeed is able to access that mystical and divine entity Brahm with the help of this most powerful, most potent and most strong medium of OM. [In brief, OM is the greatest of the Mantras prescribed in the scriptures. When added as a prefix to other Mantras, it becomes the crown jewel and indicates the supreme Authority which is to be honoured and paid tribute through the medium of the main part of the Mantra that follows the pronunciation of OM. When it is used as a suffix at the end of the Mantra, it represents the final act of reverential bowing to the supreme Authority who was honoured and worshipped by the previous part of the Mantra just said.] (1).

[Note--¹OM is a monosyllable mystical divine word first appearing in the Upanishads and is set forth an object of profound religious respect and meditation, the highest spiritual efficacy being attributed to not only to the whole word but also to its three (and on occasions to the four) basic sounds represented by the letters A, U (O) and M.

In later times, OM is the mystic name of the Hindu Trinity—viz. Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer and protector, and Shiva the concluder, and their one united cosmic form known as the supreme transcendental Brahm.

OM also personifies the three Vedas which are the greatest repositories of knowledge in existence.

OM is usually called Pranav which is a synonymous word for the supreme Brahm which is the ultimate Truth and Authority from where the entire known creation as well as the unknown one that is beyond comprehension of any man came into being.

The word OM stands therefore for the entire gamut of creation—right from its beginning, through its development and growth, and till its end.

OM also stands for one who is the dearest friend and helper, one who is most compassionate and kind, one who shows favour and gives protection, one who is the support, foundation and prop of the entire creation, and one who gives solace and succour to everyone without any distinction whatsoever.

In daily use, this word is used as a means of solemn affirmation and respectful assent. It is used at the beginning and end of any sacred and holy exercise such as the reading of the scriptures, chanting of the Mantras or hymns, or saying of prayers. It is invoked as an auspicious salutation to the almighty Authority or to seek intercession of the divine powers in creation for the successful completion of any endeavour or enterprise.

In metaphysics, the word *OM* is a sound symbol representing the supreme reality called Brahm. Brahm is not an object that can be perceived by sense organs, nor can it be comprehended by the mind, or a thought that can be reflected upon by the intellect using its discriminatory faculty. It is beyond human comprehension—i.e. it is unknown to humankind. To understand anything which is unknown, one has to proceed from the known factors. An unknown entity cannot be explained by using other unknown factors. Of all the factors known to man, the subtlest is sound. The realm of the 'known' world consists of five elements—earth, water, fire, air and space in progressive order of subtlety. Different permutations and combinations of these five elements constitute the entire realm of factors known to man, which is called the 'creation'.

The divine word OM has four vowel sounds represented by the letters A, O, U, M. When the composite word is pronounced it appears to have only one syllable, i.e. it appears to be a monosyllable word OM, but on analysis it has these four basic Sanskrit vowel sounds. From the perspective of metaphysical analysis, it is said to have six Sanskrit syllables or letters as follows—the first is 'A' (अ) which is the 1st letter of the Sanskrit alphabets, the second is 'Oo' (उ) which is the 5th letter of the Sanskrit alphabets, the 3rd is 'Ma' (म) which is the 38th letter, the 4th letter is the half-syllable ' ' (), the 5th is the 'Anuswar' (dot •), and the 6th is the crescent shaped 'Naad' (ँ) placed on the symbol for the word OM. The final shape of the word OM is—ॐ .

These four letters of OM, viz. A, O, U and M represent the four ethereal sounds which the composite Mantra 'OM', also known as Pranav, consists of. They are like an algebraic coefficient in mathematics, establishing a link between the various holy and divine facets each of the individual units of the composite Mantra OM as represented by each of these four letters and the cosmic sound that they represent. At the same time, they act as a constant that enhances and multiplies the value and magnitude of the whole composite Mantra. Each of these letters or syllables is assigned the same ethereal, divine and spiritual importance, significance and value as that given to a complete Mantra; they form an integral part of the whole Mantra and the Mantra cannot have any value if even one of its parts is de-linked from it. It is like a complex organic chemical formula where each component is of equal value and importance as its next companion to maintain the integrity of the entire structure.

The four components of this formula are represented by the four letters that constitute OM. The first letter 'A' represents the conception of the creation; the second letter 'O' represents the development and of the cosmos; the third letter 'U' represents the expansion; and the last letter 'M', the fourth, represents the conclusion of the creation. The vowel sound of each of these letters represents the various hues of the creation as mentioned here.

Of the five elements, Space is the subtlest, and Sound is the essence of space. Sound is created only in space (for instance, the gap between our palms helps us to clap, but in a piece of wood, there is no space, hence no sound can be created). This sound is the subtlest because it can be perceived by only one sense organ, e.g. ear. It directly impinges on the mind and intellect apparatus. It is considered as the very first manifestation of the supreme truth since the un-manifest truth lies just beyond the manifested world. This being so, sound is the best and the subtlest vehicle to transport one from the 'terrestrial world of the known' to the 'transcendental world of the unknown'.

The question is why OM is selected out of all the sounds known to mankind to represent the supreme Brahman. The reason is that this single word represents the entire phenomenon of sound. It consists of three different and distinct sounds—viz. 'A' which is a throat sound, emanating from the root of the tongue; 'U' is created by rolling forward of the muscles of the tongue between the root and the lip of the mouth; and the letter 'M' is the concluding sound produced by closing of the lips. Hence all articulate sounds are aptly represented by the three letters A, U, M of the word OM. This word is a coordination of all that is indicative of life because only a living entity can speak, and not a dead entity.

OM represents, therefore, the supreme truth/reality which pervades the three states of consciousness—the waker (Viswa), the dreamer (Taijas) and the deep sleeper (Pragna) states of consciousness of the creature in the terrestrial realm of the 'known world' of the creation called microcosm as far as the creature is concerned. The same logic when extended to the cosmos results in OM representing the cosmic waker (Viraat), the cosmic dreamer (Hiranyagarbha) and cosmic deep sleeper (Eswara) aspect of macrocosm.

The silence that follows the sounding of the word OM (i.e. after closure of the lips) is called 'Amtra-OM'. This silence represents the fourth state of consciousness called Turiya which is all blissful and a transcendental reality. Since sound emanates (A), expands/progresses (U) and collapses/merges (M) back into space—it naturally follows that space existed before the very advent of sound. Hence this fourth state of consciousness represents that 'Turiya state' or the pre-sound and post-sound state of all-pervading space. This silence is bliss, serenity, placidity and tranquility.

But the most astounding thing about the cosmic silence is that it is not inert and inane because it has the capacity to generate or create sound. And anything that 'creates' must have a life infusing capability. Taking a leaf from microbiology, a cell must have a nucleus so the space must also, logically, have a nucleus. This nucleus is the Atma or the soul of the cosmos or, in other words, the macrocosmic soul (Parmatma) of the cosmos which is the counterpart of the microcosmic soul (Atma) of the Jiva.

If there were no silence, we cannot hear the sound. It is the background of the silence which enables us to hear the sound in the first place. Therefore, the word symbol OM represents the entire gamut of manifest world of plurality as well as the un-manifest world of Reality. OM, the sound, represents the former (manifest) world while the silence represents the latter (un-manifest) world. When this all embracing, all-pervading, blissful internal cosmic silence is reached, the seeker becomes one with the Supreme Reality, a state of God or self realisation.

The principle by whose mere presence the intellect thinks, the mind feels, and the body perceives, is the 'Subject', the substratum for all the experiences of the body,

mind, and intellect. This principle that lends its light to every being is the divine principle OM, or Atman (the Self), according to Vedanta.

It would be pertinent here to quote extracts from two Upanishads that define OM very succinctly. They are (a) Ram Tapini Upanishad, canto 3, verse no.5-9, and (b) Pranava Panishad which has only 13 verses dedicated to OM.

²It is to be especially noted here that delineation has been made between the hymns of the Sam Veda chanting and other types of Mantra chanting. This does not at all mean that the hymns of the Sam Veda do not qualify as Mantras. Nothing is far from the truth—in fact every hymn of any Veda is called a Mantra. The only reason to separate the hymns of Sam Veda from those belonging to other Vedas is the fact that the former are ‘sung’ melodiously like any song, while the latter are chanted in a rhythmic manner much like the staccato sound emanating from the wheels of a speeding train.

³A fire sacrifice requires four types of priests—the Brahmins who were the senior most priests representing Brahma and they invoked the Rig Veda hymns during the fire sacrifice. It was done at the beginning and in complete silence mode. If for certain reason whatsoever, the priest spoke before the silent invocation of the deities of the Rig Vedic hymns was completed, it meant breaking of a sacrosanct rule and therefore was tantamount to defilement of the ritual. The role of the other three priests (Hota, Adhvaryu and Udgata) came afterwards. But once defiled, the cycle of ritual got disrupted, which was tantamount to defiling of the whole sacrifice itself. And this was an unpardonable, horrendous sin according to the ancient tradition. What the text says is that by speaking during the silent mode, a Brahmin priest has caused a virtual fracture in the whole setup or has disrupted its continuity, though he might resume his silent meditation mode after speaking and breaking the silence once. But the damage has already been done. The minor disruption or fracture will affect the entire structure of the fire sacrifice of invocation of the sacred hymns according to prescribed method though the other three priests have not committed any offence.

A fire sacrifice or Yagya is performed to clean the environment because the various herbs that are put in the fire as offerings produce smoke and scent which has numerous antibacterial, antifungal properties. The fumes emanating from the fire pit clears the atmosphere around the site of the fire sacrifice even as chimneys spewing toxic gases from a factory can potentially damage and pollute the atmosphere. The wind carries the fume or smoke from the fire sacrifice to every direction, thereby cleaning the atmosphere of its impurity. Hence, it is likened to the Yagya itself.

The four types of Priests who preside over an elaborate fire sacrifice are known as Ritwijs. (i) Hota—he is the priest who offers oblation to the sacred fire; he uses the hymns of the Rig Veda; (ii) Adhvaryu—this is the priest who chants the hymns of the Yajur Veda; (iii) Udgata—he is the priest who sings the hymns of the Sam Veda; and (iv) Brahma—he is the head and elder class of priest who is a representative of Brahma the creator; he uses the hymns of the Atharva Veda.

Each of these chief priests has a hierarchy of assistants or juniors who would help them in the performance of the elaborate rituals associated with a fire sacrifice. Depending upon their position in this strictly hierarchical setup, the donation received during a fire sacrifice was also divided between them.

There were four categories of priests called Ritwij who participated in a fire sacrifice. (a) The first category consists of the chief priests such as Hota, Adhvaryu, Brahma and Udgata. They were entitled to the largest portion of donation, and if the cows were to be donated, they had the largest share. (b) The second category of priests were junior to them, and they were called Prastotaa, Pratiprasthaataa, Brahmanaanchasi and Maitraa-varun. They worked under the chief priests in that order respectively. Their share of donation was half of what was given to the chief priests. (c) The third category of priests were called Achaawaak, Neshtaa, Aagnidhra and Pratihartaa respectively. They were junior to the second category and their share

of donation was one-third of what the chief priests got. (d) And finally, the fourth category, i.e. the lowest helpers or the junior most priests who were probably only apprentices were also four types who worked under the instructions of the third category. They were called respectively Graavastut, Unneta, Pota and Subrahmanya. Their share of donation was equivalent to one-fourth of what the chief priests got.

Valli 1, Anuvak 9

1. [This Valli describes the different auspicious deeds or activities—the so-called Triad of Auspicious Deeds—that forms the essential pillars of religion and spiritualism, and that support an aspirant's religious endeavours. They must be systematically, honestly and diligently adhered to. They are like the sacrosanct codes of conduct collected in a compendium of hymns called the 'Sanhita' which lay down the principal sacraments, rules and regulations as well as duties of any spiritual aspirant and act like a reference guide for such purposes.]

A spiritual aspirants should painstakingly undertake to dutifully and diligently follow the three essential tenets or Triad that form the pillars of religion—viz. 'Rit' (ascertaining of the fundamental truth as determined by the scriptures and having firm and steady conviction and faith in them), 'Swaadhyaaye' (self study of the scriptures with deep thought and paying attention to their profound meaning), and 'Pravachan' (preaching and teaching about what one has learnt himself for the benefit of others who are less privileged)¹.

Similarly, spiritual aspirants should undertake to diligently and dutifully follow the next three essential tenets or Triad that form the pillars of religion. The next tier consists of 'Satya' (or speaking the 'truth' and nothing but the truth), 'Swaadhyaaye' and 'Pravachan' respectively². [This means that one should first decide that he will seek the 'truth' and nothing but the truth. He should then endeavour to find out what that 'truth' is by studying the scriptures. Finally, having determined it, he should preach about this 'truth' or Satya.]

The third set of tenets or Triad to be strictly and dutifully adhered to by spiritual aspirants consists of the principles of 'Dam' (restraint over the sense organs), 'Swaadhyaaye' and 'Pravachan' respectively. [Like in the previous case of Satya, the aspirant should first decide that he would observe restraint, study the scriptures to find out what it consists of, and then preach the profound principles of Sham.]

The fourth set of tenets or Triad to be strictly and dutifully observed by spiritual aspirants consists of the principles of 'Sham' (restraint over the mind), 'Swaadhyaaye' and 'Pravachan' respectively³. [The same interpretation applies here as well.]

The fifth set of tenets or Triad to be strictly and dutifully followed by spiritual aspirants consists of the worshipping of the sacred 'Fire' (by means of the fire sacrifice or even in a symbolic manner by worshipping it in the elements or even in one's Pran) along with the other two principles of 'Swaadhyaaye' and 'Pravachan' as described previously⁴.

The sixth set of religious sacraments that are to be dutifully observed by an aspirant consists of the Triad of 'Agnihotra'⁵ (offering oblations to the holy fire by doing a fire sacrifice daily) as well as the other two principles of 'Swaadhyaaye' and 'Pravachan' as described previously.

The seventh set of three religious duties that form the next Triad which are ordained to be strictly and dutifully followed by spiritual aspirants consists of 'Atithi'⁶

(i.e. to respectfully welcome a guest and serve him) besides following the previously mentioned two tenets of 'Swaadhyaaye' and 'Pravachan'.

The eight set of three religious duties that form the next Triad which are ordained to be strictly and dutifully followed by spiritual aspirants consists of 'Manush'⁷ (i.e. the duties that one should do as a human being which are according to established tradition and practice) besides following the previously mentioned two tenets of 'Swaadhyaaye' and 'Pravachan'. [That is, one should first decide that he will lead a noble and righteous life, a life marked by the highest standards of morality and probity which would act as exemplary benchmark for others to emulate. Then he should study the scriptures to find out the details about it. And finally, he should preach about these profound tenets for the benefit of others.]

The ninth set of three religious duties that form the next Triad which are ordained to be strictly and dutifully followed by spiritual aspirants consists of the three aspects of procreation—viz. 'Prajaa' (i.e. the offspring and providing for their worldly comfort and wellbeing, besides being kind and magnanimous towards all others in this world and treating them as one's own children), the 'Prajanan' (the physical process of procreation) and 'Prajati' (kith and kin; grand children and their offspring) besides following the previously mentioned two tenets of 'Swaadhyaaye' and 'Pravachan'⁸. [A man should first learn how to raise a noble family and how to inculcate auspicious values in its members. This individual family symbolises the large creation in microcosm. This is possible by studying the relevant scriptures. Once the details are known, they should be painstakingly implemented in practice and taught to others.]

Sage Satyavacha (literally meaning one who speaks only the truth), the son of sage Rathithar, solemnly affirms and firmly believes that 'Satya' or Truth is the only entity which is worthy of pursuance and worship. Truth is the only eclectic and divine virtue, with all its connotations, that is to be revered and honoured.

Sage Taponitya (literally meaning one who does regular Tapa and is devoted to their principles), the son of sage Purushistha, solemnly affirms and firmly believes that 'Tapa'—i.e. observing the rigid tenets of austerity, doing penance, upholding the principles of noble and virtuous life, and suffering hardships for a noble and auspicious cause—is to be honoured and praised as the best tenet and virtue. It is to be regarded as the holy sacrament to be diligently and devotionally observed by the aspirant.

Sage Naak, the son of sage Mudgal, solemnly affirms and firmly believes that 'Swadhyaye' and 'Pravachan' are the sacrosanct duties of all spiritual aspirants. They must spend their time and energy in study of the different scriptures, distil the vast treasury of knowledge they contain, arrive at the correct deduction regarding their fundamental principles without any distortions, determine the Truth hidden in them and then put into practice what they have studied. He is of the firm conviction that study of the scriptures, delving into their truth, and then spreading the good word through the medium of discourses is the best thing to do. In his considered view, this is the real Tapa; this is indeed the Tapa according to him (1).

[Note—¹The Triad mentioned here is basically aimed at acquiring knowledge, and this knowledge is about the ultimate profound Truth in creation. This can be done either by self study or *Swaadhyaaye*, by hearing about it from those who are well versed in the subject or by hearing discourses, and this naturally involves giving religious lectures called Pravachan. The main aim of course should not simply be the acquisition of any knowledge but to have correct and truthful knowledge which is auspicious and conducive to the spiritual welfare and growth of the individual. This is called Rit—i.e. arrival at the truthful meaning of what is studied and heard, and then

benefiting from this knowledge. Incidentally, this has a far reaching implication because once a man understands the 'true' meaning of what the scriptures say then this world for which he has sacrificed his whole life becomes redundant and meaningless. What remains is the ethereal peace of the 'truthful eternal Self' sans all delusions and deceptions pertaining to this mortal existence.

A short note on *Pravachan* would not be out of place here. *Pravachan* literally refers to giving a discourse on any religious theme. But in terms of this verse, it includes preaching, teaching as well as open discussions on the subject matter. This approach is beneficial to the teacher as well as to the disciple because on the one hand when one teaches his conceptions become more clearer and well defined, and on the other hand it benefits the disciple as he can properly understand the intricacies involved in the concepts which might elude him if he tries to decipher the meaning all by himself. *Pravachan* also helps to spread the good word far and wide, benefiting even those who are not so privileged enough to study the scriptures themselves. But to make this process an effective tool for knowledge dissemination and removal of doubts and confusions, it is essential that it is a two-way process of questions and answers as well as open discussions on the subject without any prejudice of any kind.

²This is an extension of what has been said above. One should preach only what is the truth and not say anything to please the audience. Similarly, one should hear only the truth and not false doctrines. The meaning of what one studies should also be the correct and truthful meaning and not to suit one's whims and fancies.

³The principles of *Dam* and *Sham* form the basis of Yoga philosophy. It is obvious that without restraining the natural wayward tendencies of the sense organs and the mind, no one would be able to achieve any lasting success in any endeavour, whether it pertains to the mundane world or to the spiritual world. This two stanzas teach about the importance of disciplining the body by restraining its sense organs along with training the mind to learn to be focused and attentive so that the man can properly concentrate on what is being studied, remember what is learnt, intelligently apply his knowledge into practice, coherently and cogently speak when he teaches or preaches to others (because a preacher has to be very articulate and have a sharp memory), and to grasp what is being taught or preached. Thus, the utility and validity of 'Dam' and 'Sham' cannot be under estimated.

⁴The sacred *Fire* is the most holy and pure entity in creation. It is assigned the status of a God precisely for this reason—it is holy, incorruptible, auspicious and purifying. When one worships the Fire with this erudition, the worshipped deity, i.e. the Fire God blesses the worshipper with these virtues of holiness, incorruptibility, auspiciousness and purity.

⁵The offerings that are made to the holy fire during *Agnihotra* are actually meant for the Gods who symbolise all the divine and pure qualities and virtues in creation. It is done to honour such virtues and to remind the worshipper to inculcate them in his personal life to make it worthwhile and gradually enhance its positive values and slowly eliminate the negative ones. It is done daily because even as a man needs food for his sustenance on a daily basis, the exalted Gods too need these offerings to sustain them on a daily basis.

Besides this point, since it is mandatory to repeat Mantras during fire sacrifices, this edict ensures that one does not forget the learnt Mantras, as daily repetition ensures this does not happen. There is a psychological aspect also—when one does the fire sacrifice daily, one is constantly reminded that he is a religious man and should not do anything considered unholy or inauspicious that is detrimental to his religious pursuits.

⁶This stanza establishes the religiously sanctioned and ordained necessity of welcoming the *guest* warmly and serving him as if he were the Lord God himself visiting the household. This is why India is famous for its warmth of hospitality. When the other two duties are added to it, the meaning becomes great—the incoming guest is not only to be treated with food and material comfort but the opportunity

should be exploited to study the scriptures and discuss their finer points. In this regard, this visit would become a holy mission in the enhancement of knowledge.

⁷The duties that are ordained to be done by all people are determined by the Varnas (class of society to which the man belongs, as well as the Ashrams (the phase of life to which he belongs). Let us have a brief over-view of these strictures.

(a) The four *Varnas*—The Hindu society has been divided into four sections or classes by ancient sages to regulate its functioning by delegation of authority and clearly specifying the jobs each section is supposed to do to maintain order and system in the world, to prevent overlapping of functions and avoid anarchy and chaos. These four sections are— (a) Brahmins¹—the learned and teaching class; a wise one well-versed in the knowledge of the ultimate Truth about the supernatural Being called Brahm. They also presided over religious functions as priests, because these functions were central to life in the Vedic period; (b) Kshatriyas—they were the warrior, fighting, kingly class. They were assigned the job of giving protection to the society, dispensing justice and maintaining general law and order. (c) Vaishyas—they were the trading and farming class responsible for commerce and wealth generation. They provided for the necessities for a comfortable life. And finally (d) the Shudras—the service class of people whose main function was to free the other three classes from the humdrums of daily chores and concentrate their energies to the particular jobs assigned to those classes to which they belonged.

¹The salient features of Brahmins are the following—they should possess these noble qualities—(1) 'Riju'-be expert in the Rig and the Yajur Vedas, (2) 'Tapa'-should be involved in doing penances, observing austerities and enduring sufferings for the welfare of the soul and the society, (3) 'Santosh'-be contented and satisfied, (4) 'Kshamaa'-to be forgiving and tolerant, (5) 'Sheel'-to have such virtues as good character, dignity, decorum and virtuousness, (6) 'Jitendriya'-to have self control over the sense organs, (7) 'Data'-to be a giver, one who sacrifices his own interests for the benefit of others, (8) 'Gyani'-one who is well learned, wise, enlightened and erudite, (9) 'Dayaalu'-to be merciful and compassionate. [Shatpath Brahmin.] An entire Upanishad called Vajra-shuchiko-panishad, belonging to the Sam Veda tradition is devoted to the subject.

These four classes of the human race were created from the single father, the Viraat or Brahma. Their origins are indicative of the different jobs that they were assigned so as to enable the creator perform the task of governance just like a king assigns separate jobs to his different ministers. But it must be clearly understood here that each class of the human race was like a part of the body of the Supreme Being, and even as a man feels disfigured and handicapped as well as feels the pain equally if his leg is cut off from the rest of his body as he feels when his arm or head is severed, the Lord feels betrayed and hurt when even one of his sons is subjected to humiliation and pain. The four classes had specific jobs cut for them so that the society could function smoothly.

The Brahmins have their origin from the mouth of Brahma the creator. Since the mouth is used to give advice and teach others, the primary job of the Brahmins was to act as moral guide to their brethren. The four Vedas, which are repository of all knowledge that exist, were also created from the mouth of Brahma; hence these Brahmins were considered most wise and learned. The arms are metaphors for strength and powers; they are used to protect and help others. Hence, the Kshatriyas, who were created from the arms of Brahma, were those sons of his who would give the needed protection and security to their other brethren. In order to feed his creation, Brahma had to toil and labour to provide for the maintenance and financial and material wellbeing of the society for merely teaching and protecting would not suffice without some one to take care of the other necessities of life. So he created the Vaishyas from his thighs, symbolising labour, to pick up the mantle of mundane affairs of life. But there must be someone who would do the daily chores, such as

tilling the fields, doing the harvesting, washing and cleaning, and all other such odd jobs. This was assigned to the Shudras created from Brahma's feet symbolising service.

None of these classes were meant to be inferior or superior to one another; they were all parts of the body of the same Brahma. In fact, the leg bears the burden of the body; just imagine what would have happened if Brahma had not created anyone from his legs? How would the Brahmin walk, how would the Kshatriya fight, and how would the Vaishya do his commercial activities if he could not walk? Similar arguments can be applied to other classes. See also Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, 1/4/11-15, and Aitereyo-panishad, 1/1/4.

(b) The four *Ashrams*—The life of a Hindu man is divided into four segments or Ashrams—(a) Brahmacharya—this is the 1st phase of life in which a person studies the scriptures under the tutelage of a wise teacher. This phase of life is marked by austerities, keeping of vows, observing celibacy, abstinence and continence as well as leading a regimental life style, (b) Grihasta—when a person has studied and prepared himself to face the world, he comes back to his house and enters the 2nd phase called Grihasta Ashram which is a householder life. He marries, raises a family, produces wealth and helps to carry forward the cycle of creation. This is the most important and enjoyable phase as well as the most tough one because on the one hand there are the comforts and pleasure of the world to be enjoyed, and on the other hand there are the various tribulations and miseries of a family life and dealings with this deceptive world with all their accompanying horrifying problems, (c) Vanprastha—this is the 3rd phase when a man hands over the responsibilities of the world to his heirs and renounces his attachments to the house as well as the world, and heads for the forest, leaving the home for his next generation. It is now that he goes on pilgrimage and prepares for the final stage of his life, and (d) Sanyas—this is the 4th and last stage of life when there is complete cutting off of all the ties with the world, spending time in contemplation and meditation, living a life of total renunciation and begging for food, and single mindedly aiming for emancipation and salvation. This phase of Sanyas also has many stages depending upon the spiritual elevation and accomplishments of the aspirant, viz. Kutichak, Bahudak, Hansa, Paramhans, Turiyatit and Avadhut.

These four Ashrams, their characteristic features and virtues are described in detail in an Upanishad called 'Ashramo-panishad' belonging to the Atharva Veda tradition.

⁸The three components in the process of propagation of creation as envisioned by the supreme creator are the physical activity of procreation called *Prajanan*, the result of this activity which is the creation of children called *Praja*, and to have grand children and a large community of kith and kin called *Prajaati* symbolising the continuity of this process in the future.

The word Praja literally means the subjects of a king. Here it means that one should raise a family as one of his religiously sanctioned duty during his second phase of life as a householder, and then amply provide for it. This is considered a 'religious duty' because it is by this means one is contributing according to his ability to the divine mandate of the supreme creator Brahm who had initiated this creation and instituted this process of procreation to ensure that once he has set the ball rolling it would continue to roll in a perpetual manner all by itself. A man should not regard procreation as a sinful act or something that is to be done with a guilty conscious, but as a sacred contribution and with the same piety as one does a fire sacrifice.

As has been mentioned above in this note, the person should treat the entire creation as the subject of the supreme Lord, and himself as a representative of that Lord. So he must treat all with equal respect and with great equanimity. One should therefore inculcate the divine kingly virtues of compassion, mercy, benevolence and magnanimity.

The creator of this world, i.e. Brahma, is called 'Prajapati' or the one Lord who is responsible for the welfare of all the subjects of this vast creation without having any distinction between them. The fact that one creature suffers and the other does not is none of Brahma's faults but that of the creature itself because it goes berserk and does not follow the sanctioned paths as laid down in the different Upanishads, especially highlighted in this Valli in a very specific manner, and therefore has to undergo the consequences for its actions. The reason is that this world is characterised by the theory of action and reward, and what one does he is bound to enjoy or suffer from its results.

The notable point here as is in all the other stanzas is fact that the second component of Swaadhyaye and Pravachan are common to all of them. In the present context, it implies that even while the person is involved in this process of meeting his worldly obligations, he must not forget to continue with his spiritual aim of self study and listening to religious discourses in order to focus his mind on greater sights and remain free from delusions and ignorance-based conceptions about this world. This is to ensure that inspite of seemingly being engrossed in mundane matters of the perishable and transient world marked by falsehood and deceit, the aspirant remains clean and above its pollutions and hallucinations. Constant study of the scriptures, contemplation on what is the real truth amidst the dense forest of deceits and delusions, and meditation upon the Truth and the pure conscious Self ensures that the aspirant never loses his track and keeps the main object of life and its divine goal in sight while going about his daily chores. In fact, Swaadhyaye and Pravachan act like reins to keep the horse under control so that the chariot of life can reach its destination safely and in one piece!]

Valli 1, Anuvak 10

1. [This Valli describes the extreme exultation and profound ecstasy expressed by a self-realised man who has realised the ultimate Truth about his 'self' which is Absolute, pure Consciousness and the universal Brahm personified.]

'I am the one who (in my original and primary form as the transcendental Supreme Being) has initiated the process that resulted in the creation of this vast and colossus world resembling a huge tree¹.

My auspicious fame and divine glory is as majestic and exalted as the high summit of a huge mountain. I am like a citadel of purity and auspiciousness at its best.

Just like the Sun possessing the glorious virtue of being the cause of production of all food in this world, let me also be a fount of all divine virtues that are auspicious, pure and holy².

I possess the divine asset of self-realisation and am an embodiment of the pure conscious truthful Soul of creation in the form of my Atma.

I possess the best of intelligence and mental qualities marked by auspiciousness and truthfulness.

I am an embodiment of Amrit, i.e. the elixir that provides eternity and everlasting beatitude and felicity.

I am imperishable and immortal (being the pure conscious Atma which has these virtues as its basic and integral quality).

I am faultless and immaculate, uncorrupt and untarnished.

I am indeed completely soaked and infused in Amrit which is the divine ambrosia of eternity and bliss'.

This is what the great sage named Trishanku has firmly asserted and solemnly affirmed. His assertion and affirmation is in accordance with the teaching and proclamations of the Vedas. [In other words, what this sage said was the essence of the teaching of the scriptures and not something he cooked up himself to get himself praised) (1).

[Note—¹Refer *Kathopanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 2, Valli 3, verse no.1, this entire creation is like a tree. *Rudra Hridaya Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda in its verse no. 41 describes that the body of the creature is like a tree where two birds live, one bird representing the Jiva (the living creature who thinks that the body is its true self) and the other is Ishwar (the conscience that inherently lives in each individual). The latter represents the voice of Brahm. The *Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad* of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 3, Brahmin 9, verse no. 28 compares the living being with a tree and describes the difference between the inanimate world and the animate world, i.e. the world which does not have an Atma and the world which has an Atma.

²The *Sun* is the harbinger and sustainer of life in this world because no food production in the form of crops and vegetation is possible without the sunlight. The Sun provides the much needed light, heat and energy that literally power the engine of this creation. This virtue of the Sun to sustain and protect life forms makes it a metaphor for life itself and its majestic potentials. The Sun has been burning since the beginning of creation and it would supposedly last till the last day, making it virtually everlasting vis-à-vis the life of an individual creature. So it is a de-facto eternal and imperishable pitcher of life. The aspirant therefore prays that he should too shine like the brilliant Sun, he too shall have all the glorious virtues and divine splendour and radiance exhibited by the Sun, and he too shall be blessed with the auspicious ability of providing sustenance and giving protection to his dependants like the magnanimous and benevolent Sun.

The Sanskrit word for Sun is *Surya*. The word *Surya* has three connotations—viz. (i) *Sarta-ha*—one who moves like the wind or the cloud. This refers to the Sun because it moves constantly across the sky. It also refers to the supreme cosmic Consciousness that makes all movement possible. (ii) *Svikriti-ha*—this means one who receives and accepts. This virtue refers to the fact that all offerings offered to the fire sacrifice are done in the presence of the Sun, and since the latter is the celestial cauldron of fire all the offerings are deemed to be offered to it. In another plane, it refers to the Jiva, the living being, who receives stimuli from the world and then accepts them and deduces that the world from where they originate is real and true. (iii) *Shuvrate* and *Savita*—meaning one who shines brilliantly. This is very obvious in the case of the Sun. This virtue refers to the supreme Self or the supreme Consciousness that is self-illuminated and self-effulgent.]

Valli 1, Anuvak 11

[This Valli describes the final advice given to the disciples by the teacher during the valedictory speech when they have completed their formal education in the scriptures and are preparing to leave the hermitage and prepare to face the harsh realities and turmoil of the world.]

1. The teacher gives the following advice to the disciples at the end of their education—‘Speak the truth. Be firm and steady in following the path of righteousness and auspiciousness, the path of probity and propriety, the path of

nobility and greatness. Don't be lazy, careless, negligent and deceitful while pursuing the principles of Swadhyaye (self study of the scriptures on a continuous basis even after leaving the hermitage).

Pay your dues to your teacher (i.e. even after you have left the hermitage, you should continue visiting the teacher and feel indebted to him; you should set aside some portion of your earnings for the purpose of donating it to the hermitage of your teacher, or your Alma Mater, so that others like you, but who are less privileged, can benefit by your charity and endowments).

Do not violate the tradition of righteous and noble way of procreation. Be honest and steadfast in maintaining the sanctity and holiness of the institution of marriage and propagating creation. [That is, be honest and loyal to your wife and family, and strive to keep them happy and well provided for. Ensure that they your offspring develop noble virtues in them right from their cradle and live up to the high standards of morality and ethical ways right up to their last breath.]

One should never divert from the Truth, never be negligent or careless in pursuance of the Truth, and never be compromising on the principles of Truthfulness (i.e. one should never lie under any circumstance, never be deceitful and crafty, and never follow the path of falsehoods and delusions. This is an inviolable principle that must be strictly adhered to in life.

One should never sway away from the path of Dharma (i.e. one should be steady and unwavering in following the path of auspiciousness, righteousness, probity, propriety, nobility and truthfulness). One should not commit any mistake in this direction.

One should never be careless or negligent towards doing auspicious and righteous deeds that give one great fame and help to establish his good name. There should not be errors on this count.

One should never be careless and negligent towards Swaadhyaye (self study of the scriptures on a continuous basis) and Pravachan (giving and hearing religious discourses, lectures and the like, along with discussions and consultations to seek clarifications on each matter which comes up and which requires understanding and further clarifications) (1).

[Note—This stanza implies that one should continue to study even after leaving the hermitage of the teacher because education is a life-long process. One must continue to imbibe more knowledge and learn from even the most innocuous events and things that one comes across one's life during its progress in time. He must keep himself abreast of the latest developments in his field of expertise in order to keep himself updated. But at the same time he must selflessly share his knowledge, wisdom and experience with others so that the society as a whole benefits from them. In this endeavour, they would truly personify the sun which gives light to the whole world selflessly irrespective of the fact whether the creature offers the Sun his respects or not. The light of knowledge and wisdom which the learned man gives to the world should be equally marked by magnanimity and equanimity. This selfless attitude of his would help remove the darkness of ignorance and delusions of even those who are not directly approached by him. What more noble deed can he do; what more charity can he make?

The idea that one should not restrict himself to imbibing knowledge only when he is a student but make his entire life a learning experience and a school classroom is best exemplified by sage Dattatreya who had made twenty four Gurus or teachers. The remarkable thing is that none of these twenty four Gurus was a human being—he learnt even from animals (elephant, deer), birds (pigeon, hawk), reptiles (snake, worm), insects (moth, bee, spider), the moon and the sun, a child, a girl etc. This is a very interesting episode, and is being briefly summarized here.

The following are the twenty four teachers and what Dattatreya learnt from them.

(1) Earth—the earth sustain all sorts of life and nourishes each creature, even those who virtually eat into her bosom by mercilessly and ruthlessly exploit her and dig into the bowels for his vested self interests. (2) Air—the wind moves everywhere, visits all kinds of places but never gets attached to any place or thing. It purifies everything and gives life to all without any discrimination on the basis of gender, caste, race, creed etc. It gives life to a friend as much as it gives life to one's enemy. (3) Sky or Akash—the space of the sky accommodates everything and everyone. This taught him to accept and accommodate all in life but remain uninvolved in or unattached with them just like the sky which harbours uncountable things in its bosom but remains totally indifferent to them and unaffected by them. (4) Water—it is refreshing and cool and nourishing. No life is possible without water, and it is regarded as the only universal elixir of life. This taught him to sustain all and be soothing and refreshing for all the creatures. (5) Fire—it gives light, heat and energy. It is upwardly mobile—as is evident from the direction the flame of a raging fire takes. It is all-purifying on the one hand, and burns to ashes whatever impurity is put in it on the other hand. This taught him to welcome everything like the fire but purify them before finally accepting anything, and reduce to ashes all that is impure and tainting for the purity of the Atma. (6) Moon—it appears to wax and wane but really it remains the same. This taught him the fact that the world and the body undergo innumerable changes but the true 'self' remains uniform and immutable. (7) Sun—it is the 'eye' of the world and gives the latter light, heat and energy in a selfless and unbiased manner. The sun illuminates all but does not need anything to illuminate it and neither does it get tainted by the thing it illuminates. This taught him to illuminate the world and removes its darkness of ignorance by the light of knowledge and wisdom while remaining immune to the darkening effects of this world. (8) Pigeon—this is the typical story of a householder's life. The parent pigeons went out in search of food for their young one day when a bird-catcher spread his nets and caught the offspring. When the parents return, the mother pigeon saw the plight of the young one and jumped into the net. Then the male pigeon too jumps into the net because he cannot live without the family. The bird-catcher was overjoyed. This taught him that worldly attachments lead to ruin and downfall. (9) Python—it stays at one place and swallows any creature that happens to pass that way. He would not forage for food but wait for it to come to him. This taught him to be contented with what comes his way. (10) Ocean—it never overflows when rivers flow into it continuously. It remains contented, calm, un-wanting, fathomless, steady and endless. These are grand virtues that a wise man should inculcate. (11) Moth—it gets attracted to the fire and gets caught and burnt. This taught him not to be caught by the beauty and charm of colour and form of this artificial world. (12) Honey Bee—it collects nectar from numerous flowers and converts them into one homogenous honey. This taught him to imbibe knowledge from whatever source available. A mendicant should also collect a little bit of food from different household instead of relying on one house. (13) Elephant—it is notorious for the sense of touch. During the mating season they rub against each other. This weakness is exploited by hunters to catch them. This weakness taught the sage that he should be wary of the pleasure obtained by touching sensual things in this world. (14) Honey Gatherer—he stealthily takes away all the honey collected by the honey-bee assiduously over a long period of time involving immense labour. This taught him two things—it is useless to hoard things as one day death would snatch everything away, and second it is futile to hoard without sharing things with others because one day they are bound to be snatched from us. (15) Deer—it is by nature attracted to music, a weakness exploited by the hunter to trap it. So, one should be wary of pleasant and sweet sounds emanating from this world because poison is more often than not laced with sugar. (16) Fish—it is attracted to the hook and got caught due to its desire to eat the bait. So, the fish taught him to have control over the taste buds of his tongue. (17) Pingala—she was a prostitute.

One day the saint, during his wanderings, came to take rest under the tree on a street where she lived. He watched her eagerly waiting for a customer who never turned up. She finally gave up and went to sleep with the realisation that if she had spent so much time invoking the Lord present in her own bosom, she would not have to wait for him so long. This taught the saint that disappointments come to us when we expect something from this world and hope it to provide us with comfort and joy. The real happiness lies inside. (18) The Kurara Bird (a species of Hawk; an Osprey)—the bird had a small piece of flesh in its beak and other larger and stronger birds pounced on it. Distraught, the Kurara suddenly realised that the cause of its torments is the piece of meat, and so it dropped it from its beak. The other birds swooped on the meat and stopped pursuing the Kurara. This incident taught the saint that if one clings on to material things, no matter how desirable they are, they would never let him live in peace. It is better to drop them at the earliest; it is better to drop all worldly attachments and devote time to the Truth of life. (19) Child—a child becomes so engrossed in his playthings that he forgets hunger and other bodily needs. Children fight with each other during the course of playing, but soon forget everything. This taught him to remain engrossed in contemplation on the ‘self’ and play with it like the child, remaining immune to the world and even to one’s own bodily problems. A wise man must be innocent like a child—he might get angry at others but never takes anything to heart. The child plays with toys, but suddenly throws them away and wants something new. Likewise, the wise man enjoys the world but never gets hooked to it at the emotional and sentimental plane. (20) A Girl—some people had come to see the girl with a proposal for marriage. She went inside the house to prepare food for them. In the course of grinding spices her bangles clashed with each other and made a disturbing noise. She removed them one by one until one remained—then there was no noise. This taught him that when the mind is distracted by so many things, the man never finds peace. So the best way to concentrate the mind is to remove all extraneous distractions in the form of numerous paths and philosophies, and instead focus on one ultimate Truth preached by the Upanishads, the Truth that is absolute, uniform and immutable. (21) An Arrow-smith—he was so engrossed in his single pointed devotion to his work of preparing the arrows and giving them the right contours, aerodynamic shape and the sharpness to their tip that he was unaware that the king’s entourage was passing by. This taught the saint the importance of single-minded pursuit of one’s goal. (22) Snake—it never makes its own hole and lives in holes made by nature or other animals. A true saint should realise that the Atma has no body of its own but lives on borrowed bodies during its sojourn in this world. Again, the snake effortlessly leaves its dead cuticle to teach him that the Atma would similarly leave this body without any effort, pain or attachment to find a new abode for itself. (23) Spider—it creates a web from itself, moves around it and then swallows it, the supreme Lord has created this world, sustains it and finally retracts it into himself. Further, the spider creates the web and remains trapped in it much like the creature who creates this artificial world by his mind and then remains trapped in it for life. And finally (24) Worm—a wasp caught hold of a worm and kept it in a hole. The wasp kept humming around this worm that was so terrified of the wasp and continuously subjected to this humming that ultimately it became a wasp itself. Similarly, when a man concentrates upon something continuously, whether willingly or unwillingly, he would become one like the subject on which he contemplates. If he contemplates upon the world, he would become one like other mortal ignorant creatures, and if he contemplates upon the sublime and divine he would become sublime and divine himself.

An entire Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition is dedicated to sage Dattatreya. It is called ‘Dattatreya Upanishad’, and it is the 30th Upanishad of this Veda.]

2. One should never be careless and negligent in any work that relates to one's parents and to the Gods (such as serving them, obeying their orders, attending to their needs and paying due respect to them).

Always treat your mother, your father, your teacher and your guest with the same respect, reverence and honour that one gives to the Gods.

One should pursue only those paths and do only those deeds that are beyond reproach and cannot be regarded as deplorable or ignominious under any circumstances. [That is, one should be careful in what one does, and be on the guard on the probity and propriety, the righteousness and auspiciousness of each action and every deed done by him.]

You should always emulate us and inculcate in your own life those qualities which are deemed to be good in us (i.e. in your teachers and elders). [In other words, you should not pay heed to our shortcomings which are natural for us because we too are human beings and have our natural failings. We cannot be text book samples of perfect-ness and immaculacy for the simple reason that no human being is perfect and everyone has his own shortcomings and failings.] (2).

3. You should not pay heed to or emulate other characters other than the good ones that we have. [In other words, you should become one like the legendary Swan which picks up the pearl and discards the rest of the gems to indicate that it prefers to have the best. In essence, you should be selective and wise, using your own prudence and wisdom to pick up what is the best for you and leave the rest like unwanted dirt.]

If anyone who is better qualified and more enlightened than me comes to your place, you should offer him the same respect that you would show to me (your teacher), and give him a seat as a token of your honour for him. [In other words, you should welcome goodness and auspiciousness from any quarter, and imbibe good qualities whenever they come your way in life.]

One should give (donation, charity and alms etc.) with devotion and respect as well as keeping in mind the dignity and holiness of the institution of making charity and giving donation. Never should it be done otherwise. [In other words, one should never donate under compulsions and with regret. There should be an element of internal happiness and satisfaction, there should be enthusiasm and willingness as well as the notion that something good and noble is being done when one makes charity and gives donation. One should never exploit such charities for one's vested interests such as gain name and fame, or to undermine the self respect and dignity of the recipient.]

One should never give out of peer pressure or out of fear. One should give according to one's means and with the greatest of humility and submissiveness. [That is, one should not donate beyond one's financial means, and the entire process has to be done courteously and with greatest of humility. There should be no fear of being treated as stingy and miserly if one does not give and thereby face the ire or rebuke of the society. Giving under duress of any kind is counter-productive.]

One should give or contribute with the eclectic idea of universal brotherhood. [That is, one should give with the conviction that he should share what he has with his other less fortunate brothers. This is because all are children of one universal Lord, and the more privileged sibling has his moral duty as well as responsibility to support his less privileged ones along with other such kith and kin.]

In case you are in doubt on any subject or indecisive about what to do and confused about any code of conduct, i.e. when in your life you face any moral dilemma----(3).

4. ---Then in that circumstance, you should follow the advice given by any wise, erudite, diligent, dutiful, simple hearted, honest and self-motivated Brahmin (or any elder person) who is a faithful follower of the path of Dharma (auspiciousness, righteousness, probity and propriety) himself. [In other words, in the long journey of life, you would come across problems which would leave you confounded and perplexed. You might then find that you are not aware of the solution of that particular vexing problem. Under such conditions, you should seek guidance of some learned and wise man available at the place itself instead of rushing to me to seek advice.]

If you come across someone in high position whose deeds and actions, whose behaviour and words etc. put you in confusion as to what is right and what is not, then under such conditions of moral dilemma you would do good by consulting some wise man who has wisdom and erudition, who is self disciplined and righteous in his deeds and words, who has simplicity of heart and no deceit in him, and who is neutral, unbiased and selfless while giving advise to you. You should then follow his advice.

This is the final advice I am giving to you. The principles I have mentioned above in this Valli should be the guiding principles for you in life. These are the principle codes enunciated by the Vedas, and they are their principle teaching and tenets. You should follow them faithfully, and you should inculcate these values and virtues in your practical life (4).

Valli 1, Anuvak 12

[This Anuvak no. 12 is similar to Anuvak no. 1 which was an introductory prayer said at the time of investiture ceremony when the new disciple was inducted into the discipline. When he finally concludes his formal education and prepares to leave, the prayer is repeated during the valedictory function.]

1. OM salutations! Let the God known as Mitra be benevolent and munificent upon us. Let him bestow us with great auspiciousness and welfare.

Let Varun God be benevolent and a provider of happiness and peace to us.

Let Aryama God be benevolent and a provider of happiness and peace to us.

Let Indra be benevolent and a provider of happiness and peace to us.

Let Brihaspati be benevolent and a provider of happiness and peace to us.

Let Vishnu whose steps are very huge and measureless be benevolent and a provider of happiness and peace to us.

We salute and pay our obeisance to the supreme transcendental Brahm.

Oh Vayu, the Wind God! We salute and pay our obeisance to you as you are a manifestation of the supreme Brahm. It is indeed you who is known as Brahm; you personify the glories and the grand virtues of Brahm.

You are also called Rit and Satya. [The word 'Rit' means righteousness, while 'Satya' means truth. Hence, Brahm is an embodiment of righteousness and truth.]

Let that sublime and supreme Brahm (who is personified by the above divine entities) protect me.

Let that sublime and supreme Brahm protect my teacher.

Let that Brahm protect both of us.

OM salutations! Let all our (i.e. the disciple's and the teacher's) torments be calmed down and be dispelled. Let all our torments be calmed down and be dispelled. Let all our torments be calmed down and be dispelled (1).

[Note—Refer Valli 1, Anuvak 1 for details.]

Valli 2—Brahmanand Valli

[As the name suggests, this Valli is dedicated to the eternal bliss and happiness obtained by the spiritual aspirant from Brahm-realisation. It has nine Anuvaks.]

Valli 2, Anuvak 1

[This Anuvak briefly describes the eclectic spiritual rewards that come to the spiritual aspirant from Brahm realisation. It goes on to describe the genesis of creation.]

1. OM salutations! It has been declared in the scriptures that one who is well versed in the truth about the supreme transcendental Brahm is deemed to have attained a spiritual stature which is supreme and synonymous with the ultimate Absolute Truth of creation known as the Parmatma who is the supreme cosmic Soul of the entire creation. This Absolute Truth is Brahm.

That Brahm, which is the target of all spiritual endeavours and the teaching of the scriptures, is the ultimate and irrefutable Truth of creation. It is an embodiment of Gyan (eclectic, eternal and truthful knowledge), and it is known as Anant (because it is without an end).

A wise, erudite and enlightened Brahmin (i.e. any learned person who is acquainted with the knowledge pertaining to the supreme Truth and absolute Reality of creation known as Brahm) is one who understands that this esoteric, enigmatic and mysterious supreme transcendental entity known as 'Brahm' uniformly pervades and is universally present throughout the space of the sky in an invisible form. The same Brahm also lives ensconced secretly in the cave-like sequestered chambers of the heart of the spiritual aspirant¹. [That is, Brahm has a macrocosmic presence as the vast and fathomless sky, and at the same time it is present in an atomic form in the subtle space of the heart of the creature as his Atma at the microcosmic level.]

Now the sequence of creation is being narrated. Verily, it is from this conscious element known as the cosmic Atma that emerged the 'Akash' (sky or space element) in the beginning of the visible creation. [The sky is the subtlest amongst the five gross elements in creation which formed its building blocks.]

From the Akash came into being the 'Vayu' (wind or air element). From the Vayu came into being the 'Agni' (fire element and energy). From the Agni came into being the 'Apaha' (water element). From the Apaha came into being the 'Prithivi' (earth element). From the Prithivi came into being the 'Aushadhi' (the different herbs and medicinal plants). From the Aushadhi came into being the 'Anna' (food in the form of crops and flesh). And finally from the Anna came into being the 'Purush' (literally the 'man' but implying the entire living world)².

Since the body of a man has been formed or crafted from the essential juices in the form of nourishment extracted from food of all hues, it is said to be a visible

manifestation moulded out of Anna (food) and Rasa (juice or extract of herbs or plants)³.

The 'head' of the living creature (e.g. the man) is therefore the head of that divine Being, the 'right' hand or side of the creature is the right hand or side of the divine Being, and the 'left' hand or side of the creature is the left hand or side of the divine Being. The 'middle' area (i.e. the chest where the heart is located) is the symbolic abode of the Atma or soul. And the lower end or tail end or the hind part of the body represented by the 'legs' (i.e. the part of the body below the navel up to the feet) helps it to be established or stand on the ground. Hence, it is called its 'Pratistha', i.e. which aids in establishing the creature and helps him to acquire fame, glory, majesty and reputation along with the erudition and wisdom to obtain his objective in life^{4**}.

Verily, it is for this purpose that this verse has been narrated (1).

[Note--¹At the cosmic level, this 'sky' is a metaphor for the vastness and all-inclusiveness of the supreme Brahm which encompasses everything that exists in the entire creation, while at the microcosmic level of the individual creature this Brahm is located in the secret cavern-like heart in the form of the pure consciousness or Atma. This secret and most enigmatic esoteric supreme entity can be known only through the application of the subtle mind as the latter has the potentials of penetrating deep inside the surface and peeping into the realm of the sub-conscious to unravel the secret of Brahm. The gross organs of the body are totally incompetent to perceive Brahm.

When the wise and enlightened person realises, with due application of his subtle mind and intellect, that he is a microcosmic embodiment of the macrocosmic, all-pervading and all-encompassing supreme transcendental Truth and pure consciousness in creation known as Brahm, and that his true identity is not his gross body but his pure conscious Atma which is the only truth in his body and which is synonymous with Brahm, then this person begins to see the creation from a wider and broader perspective which comes with wisdom and knowledge and which is absolutely different from the selfish view that is seen with the physical organ of sight known as the eyes of the body. Such a man realises, as a result of deep study of the scriptures and self realisation, that his Atma is the same as the Atma residing in the heart of all the creatures of creation. And therefore, the pain and suffering as well as the happiness and joys of others are also his own.

To draw another parallel, the enlightened man can be compared to the Sun because even as the Sun is bright and splendorous in the sky from where it removes all darkness from all the remote corners of the world, the wisdom and erudition of an enlightened and realised man is able to dispel all the darkness of ignorance that might engulf him, thereby lighting up the eternal Truth for him. With this light of realisation of the Truth, such a man sees Brahm and the Atma, in all their glorious and splendorous radiance, everywhere and in all the creatures.

This is what is meant here when the verse says that 'he begins to enjoy everything in this world at the same time'.

²Everything that has come into existence has one or the other quality or virtue inherent in it which is characteristic of that entity. In the present case, all the five elements that came into being also have certain attributes and qualities that are specific to them and form their defining characteristic feature. The number of such qualities or attributes or virtues, called the 'Gunas', would determine the grossness or subtlety of that individual entity; the lesser number of Gunas mean the higher level of subtlety and vice versa. The first element is *Akash* or sky. This element has the basic virtue of bearing sound, and it is characterised by its ability to be able to propagate sound. Since sound is the subtlest of virtues in existence and sky is the subtlest of the

elements, the duo are the nearest analogue for Brahm or 'pure consciousness' which is the ultimate subtle entity in this creation.

Next comes the *Vayu* or wind/air element. This element has two basic virtues or qualities—viz. one that comes from its predecessor sky, i.e. the ability to bear and propagate sound, and other characteristic virtue is to make itself 'felt' by the sense of 'touch'. This is evident when we 'feel the touch' of a soft breeze blowing against our face even though we cannot see the wind or air. Similarly, sound is generated and propagated in the form of waves and it requires the medium of the air to go from one place to another. That is why we cannot 'hear' when there is no open space filled with air between the speaker and the listener. Similarly, we can hear the 'howl' of a raging wind during a severe storm. Since the air or wind element has two virtues inherent in it as compared to one virtue present in the sky, it is grosser or heavier than the latter.

The third element is *Agni* or fire which has three basic virtues or qualities or attributes (*Gunas*) as its integral feature. Like its predecessor, it also borrowed its first two characteristic virtues of sound and touch from the air element, and the third is typical to it, and this is the property of having a 'form, size, colour and contour'. This is a metaphoric way of saying that the fire is the first element that can be physically 'seen' by the naked eye. The fire has 'light' emanating from it, and this light makes it possible for us to not only see the fire burning but also the surrounding area. In other words, the fire renders everything in this world visible to the creature. Besides this, the outlines of the fire are clearly discernible, its features are clearly visible in the form of a tongue of flame, the colour of this flame, the sputtering sound that emanates from the burning fire, and the bright and crackling sparklers that fly from it in every direction to proclaim that the fire is established at a particular place away from the spot where the sparkler lands. As compared to the sky and the air which spread and cover all available space, the fire has a localized existence, thereby establishing its heavier and grosser nature because the more subtle and lighter the entity is the more difficult would it be to contain it and restrict it to a specific area. Having three attributes as enumerated here, the fire element is heavier or grosser than the sky element.

The fourth entity that came into being in terms of creation and also in terms of grossness is *Apaha* or water element. It has four qualities or virtues characteristic to it—three borrowed from its predecessor the *Agni* element, and the fourth being its own. In other words, the water element has 'juice or essence or fluidity' giving rise to the sense of 'taste' as its own specific attribute, besides exhibiting the three that it borrowed from the fire element—viz. it has 'sound' as is evident when we hear the thunderous roar of a deep waterfall or the ocean, the gurgling, gushing and rippling sound of a spring or a brook, or the swishing, splashing, bubbling, sloshing and rippling sound of a river, it has 'touch' which gives rise to the sense of it being felt cold, hot or warm, and 'form' because water can be easily seen and contained and given any shape such as having the contours of a river, an ocean or even the water in a bottle. Having four attributes as enumerated here, the water element is therefore heavier and grosser than the fire element.

Finally in this progression is the fifth element, viz. the *Prithivi* or earth element. It has five attributes or qualities typical to it. Out of these five, it has borrowed four from its predecessor the water element, while the last attribute or quality is specifically its own—and it is 'smell'. That is why all things present in the earth and having the earth element as one of its constituent emanates a smell no matter what name is given to it, such as a fragrance, perfume, scent, aroma or stink. The existence of the other four characters are easy to witness in earth—viz. it makes a 'sound' which is heard outside its atmosphere as a humming sound attributed to its magnetic field, it has 'sound' integrally present in its bosom which can be heard and measured by sonographic instruments, and the earth is full of noises and it is not as quiet a place as other deep recesses of the cosmos. The earth surely has a definable and solid

‘form’ which can be ‘seen, touched and felt’. Having five attributes as enumerated here, the earth element is therefore heavier and grosser than the water element.

Anything that has a density and shows movement which is a vital sign of life has a propensity to attract other lighter and subtler entities towards its self as is evident from the fact that the heavy earth which constantly rotates on its axis is able to not only keep the heavier elements such as the water and fire attracted to it but also manages to prevent the air element from escaping into the outer reaches of the cosmos. The only element that remains beyond its command is the ‘sky’ and its constituent the ‘sound’. This is why we have no ‘fire’ and ‘water’ outside the atmosphere of the earth but ‘wind’ in the form of cosmic storms and ‘air’ in the form of cosmic ether as well as ‘sky’ in the form of cosmic space elements exist even millions of miles away from earth.

This earth has been envisioned as the base or foundation of the living world. In the progression of creation wherein one gross element emerges from its subtle parent, the next entity is the herb or medicinal plants. Such plants are small in size and rare, and they have a natural inclination to be of benefit to others in a selfless manner—thereby making them subtler than their bigger, heavier and grosser brethren in the form of verdant forests, green crops, mosses and ferns and the numerous other varieties of plants and trees that thrive endlessly on this earth.

The seed produced from these plants are metaphors for the sperm of the Supreme Being because they help to perpetuate this creation. Thus, from the seed was produced the ‘fruit’ in the form of the ‘living creature’ who inhabit this known world.

There are many Upanishads dealing with these *elements*, notably the Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 2, Brahmin 5, and Subalo-panishad, in its verse 2 of Canto 13, as well as in Canto 14.

³We come to a very interesting point now—when we say that the body is ‘moulded or crafted from something, it is implied that there must be someone who has done this moulding or crafting. Who is he, the question arises. That ‘he’ is Brahm; Brahm is the supreme master ‘molder or crafter’ who has expertly moulded or skillfully crafted this entire creation from the very basic and primary ingredients of sky, air, fire, water and earth that came into being at the beginning.

How the different *juices of creation* help sustain life and body have been elaborately explained elsewhere in other Upanishads, notably in Chandogya Upanishad of the Sam Veda tradition, in its Canto 6, Section 5-9, and Brihad Aranyak Upanishad of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition in its Canto 1, Brahmin 5, verse no. 1-3

The *Genesis of Creation* has been elaborately and fascinatingly described elsewhere in other Upanishads as well. Some of them are the following-- (a) Aiteriyo-panishad of Rig Veda tradition; (b) Mudgalo-pansishad of Rig Veda tradition, in its Canto 2-4; (c) Chandogyo-pansishad of Sam Veda tradition, in its Canto 3, Section 19, Canto 4, Section 17, verse nos. 1-3, Canto 6, Section 2-10; (d) Painglo-pansishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 1-2; (e) Subalo-pansishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 1-15; (f) Brihad Aranyak Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 1, Brahmin 1-2, 4-5, Canto 6, Brahmin 4.

⁴A man stands on his legs, and this ‘standing’ is a figure of speech indicating that he has acquired a great name and enviable fame for himself in the entire spectrum of creation. This is because a man has intelligence and wisdom, he can think and decide for himself, he can choose and pick, he can study the scriptures and find his final emancipation and salvation which is not possible in any other life forms such as that of an animal or a plant. The human body acts as a launching pad for the Atma’s final exit from the cycle of birth and death—and therefore it likened to the Atma’s Pratistha. It is this body that gives the creature called a man its honour and dignity as well as helps to establish its superiority over the rest of the creation. The creature known as the ‘man’ is the master of all other creatures though the same Atma lives in

all of them. That is why this leg is called the Pratistha of the Atma in the body of a human being.

There is another way of looking at this. The word 'end' signifies that this human body should be treated as the 'last post' in the arduous journey that the Atma has been undertaking through numerous births and deaths. It is the 'last chance' to get liberation and deliverance. If it is lost, then everything is lost. So a wise and erudite man should endeavour to use this golden opportunity in the best possible way the scriptures have described.

Yet another interpretation may be this—the person's establishment of wisdom and intelligent behaviour depends upon his ability to interpret what he has learnt from his past experience, or from his 'hindsight' indicating the metaphoric importance of the 'hind' part of the body. What one leaves 'behind' as his legacy is more important than what he had done in his previous life before he was born with the present body.

**Brihad Aranyak Upanishad of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 1, Brahmin 1 and 2 uses the metaphor of the horse to describe the living creation as a visible manifestation or personification of the Supreme Brahm. Similar concept has been envisioned in Chandogya Upanishad of the Sam Veda tradition in its Canto 5, Section 18, verse no. 2.]

Valli 2, Anuvak 2

[The following five Vallis, from no. 2 to no. 6, describe the origin of the five elements from the supreme Being and their transformation into the five 'Koshas' or sheaths that form the gross body of the creature and surround his 'true self' which is the pure conscious Atma.

This present Anuvak 2 describes the importance and significance of 'Anna' or food that is the main lifeline of the living world and forms the first Kosha or sheath called the 'Anna Maye Kosh' or the food sheath.]

1. It is from 'Anna', or the nourishment provided by the food eaten, that living beings are created. All the subjects (creatures) of this living kingdom, whether they be mobile or immobile (such as the man and the tree respectively), that have the earth as their base or habitat, are born¹ from the essential life-giving nourishment provided by food, are sustained by its life-sustaining properties, and merge in its primary elements at the time when the body perishes or dies². This is because Anna (food) has preceded all the creatures³. Anna is the primary element needed to sustain life and is therefore regarded as the best, the elder or the superior entity in the living world.

Anna is called 'Sarwoshadh' or literally the entity that is the remedy of all ills, implying that it is the one entity without which life is just not feasible, sustainable and imaginable. It is the one indispensable entity that is universally and unambiguously needed by all the living creatures of all shades and hues. Anna is the most important ingredient in life; it is the most essential and primary requirement for sustenance of life in any form. Hence it is deemed to be the most esteemed, the most senior and the most honourable entity vis-à-vis the rest of the elements in creation. That is why it is called 'Sarwoshadh'—one that is the most exalted and like a crown jewel in creation. It is from the Anna that living beings are born, it is the Anna that sustains them from their cradle to their graves, and it is the Anna that helps in their growth and development⁴.

Those wise, erudite and sagacious persons who are convinced that 'Anna is Brahm personified', i.e. who worship and honour 'food' as a manifestation of the

stupendous life creating and sustaining virtues and abilities of the supreme transcendental Authority in creation known as Brahm—in other words, who see food as a visible divine blessing of the supreme Lord which he has provided to his creation for its sustenance as well as to help it gather sufficient energy, stamina and strength to recreate the next generation in the form of an offspring—are sure to get all nourishment and benefit that the food has to offer⁵.

Anna is eaten by all the living beings, and the irony is that they are also eaten by this Anna. This is why it is called ‘Anna’ meaning ‘one that is eaten as well as that eats’⁶.

Now, enclosed in this outer sheath formed out of the food element and hence called the Anna Maye Kosh or the food sheath (i.e. the gross body of the creature build from the nutrients extracted from the food eaten by him) is the vital factor called ‘life or consciousness’ present in the second sheath called ‘Pran Maye Kosh’. This is the cell which harbours the Pran which are the different vital winds present in the body and which are synonymous with the actual presence of ‘life’ inside the outer sheath of the creature’s body called the Anna Maye Kosh⁷. The Anna Maye Kosh is gross and inane but it surround the subtle and life-bearing sheath called the Pran Maye Kosh and surround it from all sides to form a sack-like structure. These Prans or vital winds fill up the entire space enclosed by the food sheath which consists the outer covering of the body.

This Pran is distinctly different from the external gross body of the creature—for whereas the external body is perishable and gross, the Pran is an eternal entity and subtle. Verily, this Pran is a personification of the eternal and supreme transcendental Being called Purush who resides in the body of the individual creature as his consciousness and identity at the micro level of creation, and in the entire creation as the cosmic all-pervading universal Consciousness at the macro level.

This Pran is therefore of the same dimension and properties as the Purush whose personification it is. In other words, the vital Wind or Air called the Pran is the essential ‘life’ of a living being, and since it is a manifestation of the Supreme Being known as the Purush, it also has a body of its own, though this body is subtle and invisible unlike the gross and visible external body consisting of the food sheath.

This subtle and invisible body of the Purush in the form of the vital wind has all the subtle body parts symbolised by the different forms of this vital wind. Thus, the ‘head’ is represented by the vital wind known as Pran (breath without which the creature would suffocate to death); the ‘right’ side or flank is represented by the vital wind known as Vyan (which pervades thorough the body and maintains equilibrium); the ‘left’ side or flank is symbolised by the vital wind called Apaana (which passes down the intestines and helps in digestion and elimination of waste from the body); the Akash or sky is its Atma or ‘middle’ parts or the area of the heart (because the Atma lives in the lotus-like heart of the creature); and its tail or ‘lower’ parts of the body is represented by the Prithivi or earth (because it stands upon its legs much like the earth which supports the entire living world and upon which the rest of the creatures live and find their abode).

This Shloka (verse) is in relation to this body which has Pran residing in it to represent the Purush, who is the Supreme Being. In other words, the supreme transcendental Brahm resides in the body of the creature as its pure conscious Atma as well as the life giving vital wind called the Pran (1).

[Note—¹The essential life giving energy contained in the food eaten is converted into sperms or eggs. From them is created new life forms.

²This is because the body of all living creatures is based on organic matters, and after death the body decays and carbon products are released into the soil of the earth to be re-absorbed by the plants which are eaten by other creatures to sustain themselves. That is why the dead body is usually called 'Maati' which literally translates into 'soil or mud'. It is from this Maati or soil that the plants, which form the basic food of all living creatures, draw their nourishment. Even those who eat flesh are indirectly being nourished by these plants because the animal whose flesh is being eaten has drawn its nourishment by eating plants.

³Even as a creature is born from a parent who was present before the creature's birth and who nourishes it in its womb, after it is born and throughout its life, this Anna or food also carries the same function. Again, even as the body of the creature is moulded in the womb of the mother and replicates the body of the parent, the creature created by this food also symbolically replicates it. That is why the gross body is called *Anna Maye Kosh*, or the enclosure or cell (Kosh) made or crafted out of the food (Anna) eaten by the creature that encloses its true self (the pure conscious Atma).

⁴The inherent virtues present in food are its vital energy and basic nutrients as well as its life sustaining and creating properties. When food is eaten, its vitality, energy and other essential eclectic virtues are absorbed by the body and this extract is converted into sperm which then literally transfers the energy, vitality and the goodness of the food to the offspring. The fact that it is not possible to survive without food is succinctly brought out in an episode mentioned in Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 5, Section 7 in which sage Uddyalak had proved this point to his son Shewtketu. The astounding importance and indisputable value of Anna or food have been succinctly mentioned in many major Upanishads, such as Chandogya Canto 6, Section 5-7, and Canto 7, Section 9; Subalopanishad, Canto 14; and Brihad Aranyak Canto 1, Brahmin 5, verse no. 1-3 to mention a few. In fact, the entire process of creation hinges on the ability of the organism to eat food, digest it and utilise its glorious values while rejecting or eliminating its grosser parts. We deduce that when the Upanishad praises Anna or food, it lauds and honours its divine and sublime values which are subtle and hidden from view, and not its external attractive features or enticements in the form of its mouth watering taste, its charming colours or its enchanting overbearing aroma.

⁵Food is the very basis of life, it is the only factor without which no life can be sustained, and as is mentioned in the previous stanza, it preceded creation as well as follows it. It precedes the creature in the form of the sperm out of which the creature is conceived in the mother's womb, and it proceeds in the form of the fundamental elements into which the organic body of the creature breaks up after death and decay. That entity that lasts after the creature has died, and which pre-existed it and from which the present life was born is known as the everlasting, imperishable and infinite Brahm. Both these entities—the subtle and invisible nutrients present in the food eaten by the creature as well as the basic elements called the five Bhuts that act as fundamental building blocks of life (i.e. earth, water, fire, sky and air) create and sustain life; both precede and proceed it; both are absolutely essential; both are not visible; and both have manifested themselves in the form of the body of the creature. The gross part of the body called the Anna Maye Kosh is created by the food eaten by the creature, while the subtle and essential life-giving force of Nature revealed in the form of the vital winds called the Prans mould the *Pran Maye Kosh*. The body would need both to survive, and therefore it represents the glorious manifestation of Brahm both in its gross aspect as well as in its subtle aspect.

It would be pertinent to note here that both Anna and Brahm have two distinct forms—one is the visible form which is the gross aspect of both the food and Brahm, and the other is their subtle forms which is not visible but is nevertheless the essential part of both of them. The visible form of Anna consists of the external features of what we eat, and its subtle and invisible form is the various nutrients and fundamental

life-sustaining properties that are inherently present in the food eaten by the creature. Similarly, the visible world we see is the gross external form of Brahm while the numerous qualities and virtues as well as the different forms of subtle elements that constitute this visible world that are an integral part of this creation are Brahm's invisible form.

⁶If food is eaten in moderation it is of course beneficial for all the creatures, while if it is indulged into it proves to be as harmful as poison, leading to so many diseases and their attendant problems. This is a metaphoric way of saying that 'food eats those who eat it'!

⁷According to metaphysics, the body of the creature consists of the following *Koshas* or cells or sheaths which enclose its true self in the form of the pure conscious Atma. These sheaths are—Food Sheath (Anna Maye Kosh), Vital Air Sheath (Pran Maye Kosh), Mental Sheath (Mano Maye Kosh), Intellect Sheath (Vigyan Maye Kosh), and Bliss Sheath (Anand Maye Kosh). These different Koshas have been succinctly described in Painga Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 2, verse no. 4. Presently, this stanza is referring to the second sheath consisting of the vital winds which pervade throughout the body and keeps the food sheath maintainable in its current shape and form. To illustrate this point we can cite the example of a balloon—the external body of the balloon is the Anna Maye Kosh, while the air inside it is the Pran Maye Kosh. If the air escapes, the external sheath of the balloon would collapse.]

Valli 2, Anuvak 3

[This Anuvak expounds upon and elucidates the eclectic value of Pran, the vital life-giving winds or airs without which any form of life is unimaginable and untenable in this creation.]

1. All forms of living beings in this creation, whether they are Gods, humans or animals, rely upon the Pran to live, exhibit all signs that are the hallmarks of life, and undertake all activities that are synonymous with life in one way or the other. Hence, Pran is synonymous with life in all its numerous connotations and shades of meaning, and therefore it is also regarded as being equivalent to the 'age' of all living beings¹. That is why it is called 'Sarwaayush' or the symbol of age and life of all the creatures.

Those wise and erudite persons who worship and respect Pran as a manifestation of Brahm are blessed with a full life (i.e. they do not have to die prematurely). Since Pran is synonymous with the age of all the living beings, it is called 'Sarwaayush'.

The Anna Maye Kosh, or the gross body called the 'food sheath' (mentioned in Valli 2), surrounds this Pran, which are the different vital winds present inside the body in its second sheath called the Pran Maye Kosh or the 'vital air sheath'. This Pran Maye Kosh is enclosed by the outer shell of the gross body called the Anna Maye Kosh and forms its integral life. This is because without the vital winds the body (or the food sheath) cannot survive and live in this world; it would lose all its relevance and significance. [This is because without the presence of the Pran or vital life-bearing winds inside the body, the latter would be dead, and no one likes a dead body which has no Pran or 'life' in it.]².

This vital air sheath encloses the third layer consisting of the vital signs of consciousness in a creature. This third layer or cell is called the 'Mano Maye Kosh' or the 'mental sheath'. This mental sheath or the Mano Maye Kosh wafts and wefts

through the entire being of the living creature because it consists of the mind which controls all the functions of the creature's body as well as his interactions with the external world³.

This Mano Maye Kosh or the mental sheath is also a manifestation of the supreme transcendental Brahm known as Purush (because this mind exhibits all the subtle, sublime and grand virtues and magnificent qualities displayed by Brahm). Verily, it is Brahm personified; the mind has the same dimension, possesses the same qualities and virtues, and displays the same potential and abilities as the omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, almighty, all-pervading and all-encompassing Brahm who is most profound, magnificent and grand yet most enigmatic, esoteric and mysterious⁴.

In fact, both these two sheaths—the vital wind or air sheath and the mental sheath—have the same shape, form and dimension as that of Brahm. Even as the sublime and subtle Brahm has no fixed shape and size and fits into all available space, being all-pervading and diffused uniformly in the entire creation, the two entities that constitute the vital air and mental sheaths, viz. the air or wind and the mind, also follow the characteristic features of their parent Brahm⁵.

This body of Brahm (i.e. the mind) has its 'head' representing the Yajur Veda⁶; its 'right' side or flank representing the Rig Veda; its 'left' side or flank representing the Sam Veda; its Atma or consciousness residing in its bosom represented by its 'middle' part as the entity that commands it is its ability and authority to give orders and issue instructions⁷; and the sacred hymns or Mantras of the Atharva Veda envisioned by the sages Atharva and Angira form its hind part or 'legs' (on which it is established)⁸.

This verse is dedicated to that Brahm which has the mind as its personification or manifestation, whose form is revealed in the form of the mind with its astounding abilities and stupendous potentials (1).

[Note—¹When the *Pran* decides to leave the body, the latter dies. No other organ is potent and capable to make the body live once the *Pran* decides to leave it. Therefore, the 'age' of any creature is decided by the *Pran* present in its body. This unique ability of *Pran* makes it the most revered and praised entity in the living world, and therefore to be raised to the high pedestal of being treated as Brahm personified. This virtue of *Pran* that nothing can live without it, and that it is to be worshipped with the same devotion and honour reserved for the supreme transcendental Authority in creation known as Brahm have been magnificently brought out, inter alia, in Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, 4/1/3, 5/13 and 6/1; and in Chandogya Upanishad, 1/2-3, 1/11, 4/4/3 and entire Canto 5.

²As has been noted in the note of Valli 2, the *Anna Maye Kosh* has the *Pran Maye Kosh* inside it. This *Pran Maye Kosh* is called the Vital Air Sheath which lies within the food sheath and outside of the Mental Sheath called the *Mano Maye Kosh*. The vital airs that keep the body alive reside in this sheath. Once the vital airs or wind leave the body, it becomes dead in spite of the fact that all other organs are there as before.

At the time of death, they collect themselves and make a simultaneous exit from the body as described in Subalo-panishad, Canto 15.

How these vital winds control the functioning of the body has been described in Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse no. 9. Similarly, how the creature is able to interact with the world with their aid has been described in Subalo-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 4, verse no. 2.

³According to metaphysical concepts, the body of the organism is broadly divided into three levels—viz. the *gross body* consisting of the five organs of perceptions (ears, eyes, nose, tongue and skin) and five organs of actions (hands, legs,

mouth, genitals and excretory), the *subtle body* consisting of the mind and intellect, and the *causal body* consisting of the pure consciousness called the Atma.

⁴The fact that the mind or *Mana* is a personification of the supreme Brahm, displaying the latter's stupendous glories and eclectic virtues, has been a constant refrain of all the Upanishads. Refer for example Chandogya 3/18, 4/4/3 and 7/3 as well as Brihad Aranyak 4/1/6 to name a few. The word Purush means someone who lives in a 'Pur' or a place of dwelling. Since the Supreme Being lives in the body of the creature, making the body his habitat, he is called 'Purush'. The astounding qualities and eclectic virtues as well as the magnificent abilities and stupendous potentials which the sublime mind displays are some of the immeasurable ones that are so characteristic of the enigmatic and esoteric Brahm. This is metaphorically said when mind is said to be a manifestation of Brahm.

The Mana or mind is characteristic with having doubts and confusions as opposed to the intellect which is called Buddhi. Both work in tandem to drive the body of the creature—the mind receives the inputs from the external world through the medium of the organs of perception and then 'instructs or issues commands' to the organs of action to act accordingly. Routine matters are handled in this mundane way. But the intellect, which is senior to the mind in the secretariat of the king called the Atma, is send all those files that require thought and decision. It is the intellect that comes in direct contact with the king, the Atma, and when it is unable to decide for itself, it consults the king, the Atma.

⁵At the time of creation, the human body was created as an image of the *Viraat Purush*. The gross body is therefore is the microcosmic or miniature form of the vast macrocosmic form of Brahm whose gross body is called Viraat. Now, even as water and air take the shape of the vessel in which they are kept, this vast creation which was formed from the body of the Viraat also took up the shape of the parent, i.e. of the Viraat, and then was filled with the elements which naturally would fit into the available space, which in this case was the body of the Viraat. Thus, they assumed the same outer contours and shape as that of the body of the Viraat. In other words, all the subtle entities living inside the gross body and uniformly present throughout in a diffused manner must take the shape of the external covering if they are to be honoured with the epithets of being subtle, uniformly diffused and all-pervading.

⁶Those hymns in which the number of letters has no fixed rules set for composition of a poetical verse, called the Chanda, are collectively called Yaju. Since the mind has a reckless tendency, jumping from one subject to another in quick succession and not remaining fixed for long, i.e. it has no systematic way of functioning, it is likened to *Yaju*. Such verses predate the organized pattern of hymn composition, and it is from them that the systematic pattern evolved. So they are senior to their poetical brethrens, and hence metaphorically called the 'head'.

When an idea comes to the mind at the beginning, it is usually not well organised. When that idea is expressed in words, the words also reflect this primary stage of thought. But thoughts originate in the mind; they require words to be expressed, which in turn require the letters to have a structure, the mouth to speak them (and the need of the tongue to make articulate speech that makes sense of those words, instead of just guttural sounds), the throat to create the voice to that would allow the mouth to speak, the ear to receive this sound, and finally the mind again to interpret what has been said. All these entities are located above the chest, and therefore 'Yaju' is likened to the head of Brahm who actually does the speaking.

Further, since the offering to the sacred fire is done by saying 'Swaha' which invariably need the services of the mouth and the entire apparatus concerned with speaking, besides the fact that the mind uses the head to direct the coordination of the different organs to perform the fire sacrifice, the *Yajur Veda* is regarded as a symbol of the 'head' of Brahm.

When the mind hears something, it forms its own opinion and tends to either swerve to the right or the left of the center. With the 'rightist' inclination, views, the mind is said to be represented by the *Rig Veda* which has a high level of eclectic verses. With the propensity of the mind to delve in worldly matters as symbolised by its tendency to sing and dance to the tune of this charming world and be attached to it and be fascinated by it, the 'leftist' tendencies of the mind are symbolised by the *Sam Veda* because it involves singing and drinking of Som which is an intoxicating liquid.

⁷Only a person in authority can give orders and issue instructions to others. The supreme Brahm is that authority that commands everything else in this creation, and therefore Brahm is the 'soul' or Atma which is the 'consciousness' present in the otherwise lifeless and inert piece of flesh that the mind is to drive it and enable it to display the stupendous and magnificent qualities and virtues that it actually does. Therefore, the mind has the ability to give orders and issue instructions at its core that gives it its great value and importance.

⁸The great Mantras visualised by the two sages Atharva and Angiraa are the best ones which guide the mind in its endeavours, and so they are the ones which help to give it glory and majesty. Hence, these hymns are said to be the mind's 'Pratistha' or that which helps something to get established and acquire fame and honour.]

Valli 2, Anuvak 4

[This Anuvak describes the glorious fruit of Brahm-realisation, and it goes on to describe the fourth sheath called Vigyan Maye Kosh or the intellect sheath which is separate from the Mano Maye Kosh or the mental sheath.]

1. That mystical state of divine attainment and eclectic bliss which remains beyond the reach of the combined efforts of the speech and the mind (i.e. which is indescribable by the faculty of speech and cannot be accessed by the mind and its various faculties of perception) is called 'Brahm-Anand', or the bliss of Brahm-realisation. A fortunate person who has experienced this enigmatic, nectar-like and divine state of rarefied spiritual existence has no fear from any quarters¹.

The Mano Maye Kosh or the mental sheath is like the Atma (basis, foundation and support) of its predecessor Pran Maye Kosh or the vital wind or air sheath².

Inside it is the next sheath or cell called the Vigyan Maye Kosh or the intellect sheath. This sheath or cell (i.e. the intellect) forms the core of its outer sheath (i.e. the mental), completely filling it from the inside³.

Like its predecessor, this Vigyan Maye Kosh is a revelation of the stupendous abilities, eclectic attributes, divine virtues and magnificent qualities so characteristic of Brahm. In other words, the intellect sheath is the higher level of the subtle body of the divine Being called the Purush residing in the body of the individual creature, and it controls his mind, his vital winds and his physical body along with its gross organs.

[The intellect is like the Prime Minister of the Sovereign, the pure conscious Atma which is the creature's true 'self'. The Atma controls the body as well as the world through the medium of the mind-intellect apparatus called the Mano Maye and Vigyan Maye Koshs respectively. The intellect supports the mind and forms its solid foundation; the intellect helps the activities of the mind from behind the scene, and therefore is called the de facto 'brain' or 'soul' or 'Atma' of the mind.]

This manifestation of Brahm in a subtle form or shape of the intellect sheath, or the Vigyan Maye Kosh, has the 'head' representing the grand virtue known as 'Shradha', or having devotion, conviction, belief and faith. Its right' side or flank is

representative of 'Rit' (the eternal, unequivocal and universal Truth which is sublime and subtle, invisible and intangible). Its 'left' side or flank is representative of Satya or truth (the visible aspects of that universal Truth)⁴; its 'middle' part (i.e. the heart region) is a representative of Yoga (literally that establishes a union between the unseen Truth and the seen Truth; also referring to meditation and contemplation by which this coordination is brought about); and all its glorious and divine virtues, its magnificent qualities and astounding abilities, its wisdom, erudition, sagacity, enlightenment, skills, expertise, scholarship and such other noble and auspicious virtues that help it to acquire such a matchless and unique position in the hierarchy of evolution is like the tail end or lower part or the 'legs' on which it stands⁵ (1).

[Note—¹With *Brahm-realisation*, the self-realised person realises that the body is not his true self, rather it is the pure consciousness residing in his bosom as his Atma. This Atma is immortal and fearless in the sense that it cannot be destroyed and harmed by anybody else. Besides this, the Atma is the same within his own body and that of the rest of the creatures of this creation. So even as no one fears his own self, there is no cause of having fear from others in the view of a self-realised man.

Again, when the man is intoxicated with the ethereal and supernatural feeling of ecstasy and eternal bliss, he becomes immune and indifferent to all external stimuli of either pain or joys originating from this world, which is a metaphoric way of saying that he has no fear from being disturbed by them. Thus, such a man remains in a perpetual state of bliss, peace and happiness much like a man who has drunk some ambrosia and then has nothing to do with other liquids which would give him only temporary bliss, peace and happiness.

²This is because the *mind* controls the functioning of the entire body, including the vital winds or airs that actually carry out the orders of the mind in controlling or regulating the different functional aspects of the living body such as intake of food, its digestion, its assimilation, the circulation and even distribution of blood and nutrients in the body, excretion, maintenance of equilibrium and general order inside the body, its movements and other such vital functions that distinguish a living body from a dead entity.

Without the active, alert and agile mind, the body of a *man* would no better than a *tree* which also has life forces in it but no mind, or some *lower organism* which have movement and other landmark signs of life but no mind to think and decide for its self.

³As has been explained in note to Valli no. 3, the *intellect* is the part of the brain which controls the mind. Even the animal has a mind, but what distinguishes them from humans is the presence of 'intelligence'; that is why a man is called 'an intelligent animal'.

Left to its own devices, the mind can carry out only the routine work pertaining to the functioning of the body, but it is the intellect that guides it all its constructive endeavours and progressive activities. That is why an 'intelligent' mind which has sharpness and wit, alertness and discriminatory abilities, profound wisdom and deep insight, capacity to critically analyse and rationally predict, and which is steady and even-keeled is much sought after as compared to a mind which lacks these eclectic virtues and values.

Thus we observe that all the three units of creation—the *tree* or any other member of the botanical kingdom, the animal or any other member of the zoological kingdom except the man, and the human being—have life forces in them. But the component that sets them apart from one another is the presence of the mind and intellect. The tree has life but no mind; the animal has mind but no intelligence of the same level as that present in the humans; and the man who has a highly evolved instrument of the mind-intellect combine which makes him the highest placed species in creation.

⁴The fact that truth is a manifestation of Brahm has been very magnificently brought out in Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 5, Brahmin 5 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition.

⁵A similar analogy is used in Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad when the Supreme Being is likened to the sacrificial horse in Canto 1, Brahmin 1. The special qualities mentioned in this stanza make a man distinguished, highly respected and acclaimed in society. This sets him apart from other men who lack these divine eclectic virtues, and act as the defining criterion to determine which man is famed for his auspicious intelligence and which man isn't. We would observe that each Valli moves one step inwards, starting from the outermost sheath called the food sheath, then moving inwards to the second sheath called the vital wind/air sheath, followed progressively by the mind sheath and then the intellect sheath.]

Valli 2, Anuvak 5

[This Anuvak elaborates upon why the intelligent mind is so valued and honoured in the entire setup.]

1. It is 'Vigyan' (referring to intelligent and deep knowledge of any subject; skills and expertise in any field of knowledge; the ability to critically analyse and make intelligent deductions from available knowledge and thereby make rational predictions and then apply them in practice) that helps not only to successfully complete the various deeds and actions, including the fire and other religious sacrifices as well as other ceremonial rituals and religious sacraments, but also to develop better ways to do them and better ways to benefit from them. That is why all the exalted Gods laud this virtue and honour and praise it as a grand personified form of the supreme transcendental Brahm¹.

Those wise ones who treat Vigyan as a personification of Brahm and a manifestation of Brahm's stupendous eclectic qualities and virtues, those who are firmly convinced of this and remain grouted in this belief without any doubt or confusion as to its veracity, are able to overcome all the evil consequences of the various inauspicious deeds done by their bodies (in the course of living a mundane life), and they become fully contented and fulfilled².

Like in the previous cases, this Vigyan Maye Kosh or the intellect sheath forms the basis and foundation on which its predecessor known as the Mano Maye Kosh or the mental sheath rests. It is the intelligence that drives the mind and lends the latter its astounding capabilities and potentials. In other words, without the intelligence, the mind would be useless much like the body without the presence of life known as Pran in it. Hence, the Vigyan or intellect is the 'soul' or 'spirit' that drives the mind and gives it its magnificent glory, potentials and fame.

Inside this intellect sheath there is the fifth sheath called the 'Anand Maye Kosh' or the 'bliss sheath'. It consists of the causal body of the creature where the Atma—which is eternally blissful and full of beatitude and felicity—resides, giving this sheath its name. The intellect sheath fully surrounds and encloses the bliss sheath. In other words, the 'consciousness' that appears in the form of the subtle body called the mind and the intellect which exhibits stupendous and astounding potentials and powers that even the gross body fails to exhibit is different from the 'consciousness' that resides in the bliss sheath of the causal body. Though primarily the 'consciousness' is one and a non-dual entity which is universal and immutable, still its

role varies from body to body. The purest and subtlest form of the universal consciousness is the one seen in the 'causal body' and surrounded by the 'bliss sheath'. As the word 'causal' indicates, this consciousness is the cause of the existence of the entire world, including the subtle and gross body in which it lives. Since it is covered by the 'bliss sheath', it remains in a perpetual state of blissfulness and contentedness. This does not apply to its other manifestations as the subtle or gross bodies—because it has now been tainted by the characteristic attributes of these bodies. So, when the consciousness is reflected through the mind-intellect complex, it exhibits the qualities characteristic of this complex. Similarly, when it is reflected through the medium of the gross body it reflects the characteristic qualities and attributes typical of the gross body.

That divine, eclectic, unique and sublime entity which is an embodiment of eternal and infinite 'Anand' (beatitude and felicity; bliss and happiness; peace and tranquility) is called the Atma, and it is a manifestation of the supreme transcendental Consciousness that resides in the body of a creature in that form. This cosmic Consciousness is the supreme Brahm personified. [Here the deity is Brahm and its form is the Atma. It is surrounded by the bliss sheath while it resides in the causal body of the creature.]³.

This sublime 'Purush' (the supreme Brahm or the cosmic Consciousness) residing in the body as the Atma or soul has the 'head' representing the divine virtue of having Prem (love and affections). Its 'right' side or flank represents the divine virtue of Moda (pleasure, delight, happiness, sweetness etc.); its 'left' side or flank represents the divine virtues of Pramod (delight, exultation, exhilaration, joy and happiness); its fundamental nature that characterizes it and which forms its central core is the eclectic and divine virtue of Anand (extreme bliss and happiness; profound beatitude and felicity); and its unique exalted stature and high position as Brahm personified is symbolically its hind part or its 'legs' which helps it to acquire this peerless and glittering status.

This verse is dedicated to this Atma or the supreme transcendental Brahm in the form of the pure consciousness residing in the body of the creature as his true 'self' (1).

[Note—¹The profound importance of *Vigyan* has been propounded in a number of Upanishads which say in one voice that 'Vigyan is Brahm's magnificent glories personified; Vigyan and Brahm are synonymous with each other'. Vigyan is the eclectic virtue possessed by the mind that establishes the latter's supremacy over elementary entities in creation. When the brain can make intelligent decisions and critically analyse anything from all possible angles, it has the ability to acquire scientific knowledge about that particular thing, which is called 'Vigyan'. It is the higher level of the brain that deals with Vigyan, as opposed to the routine matters that are dealt with its lower levels of intelligence. For example, the mind can learn even the toughest of subjects, but only a few people can have the depth of wisdom, insight and foresight that comes with high level of mental development that would set them aside from the rest of the flock. Only a few people can critically analyse and penetrate deep into the hidden implications of what has been learnt by them by studying the scriptures to make new discoveries and arrive at new deductions. That is, their brain is 'scientifically' tuned; it is analytical, critical and discerning. Only such a brain is able to see the reality and achieve a higher level of success whether it pertains to the material world or to the spiritual world. Refer Chandogya Upanishad, 6/14, and 7/7.

²A wise and self-realised man understands that all the material needs for which he has been hankering all his life, committing all sorts of evil deeds and engaging in unrighteous actions with his body are perishable and impermanent, so the comfort and happiness that they provide are proportionately transient and impermanent.

Besides this, the wise man realises that his body itself is perishable and impermanent, as opposed to his Atma which is eternal and an infinite treasure of bliss and peace. Once this wisdom dawns upon his mind, which is only possible with application of Vigyan or having a deep insight into and critical analysis of all available data and experiences, the man begins to distance himself from the body and all its deeds. Once this aloofness takes firm roots and the man dissociates himself from the body, there is no question of his being accused of any good or bad deed done by the body because 'he' remains only a mute spectator vis-à-vis the actions undertaken by the body. His 'true self', i.e. his Atma, remains neutral, uninvolved and untainted. Since the Atma is eternally a fount of beatitude and felicity, there remains nothing to be sought either from this world or from the body simply because what they have to offer is temporary and transient like a bubble of water.

³In other words, the 'soul' or Atma of the creature is a personification of Brahm with the eclectic virtue of having eternal bliss and peace. Besides this, since Brahm has other eclectic auspicious qualities and divine virtues in it, such as having all the virtues and potentials exhibited by the mind and intellect as well as by all the vital winds and the gross body with its organs of perception and action combined, Atma also displays them as its inherent characteristic qualities and virtues.]

Valli 2, Anuvak 6

[This Anuvak describes the bliss sheath and the eclectic state of Brahm-realisation that leads to the Truth.]

1. Verily, those who do not believe in the truth of the existence of Brahm or deny that Brahm exists become false themselves, whereas those who accept the truth that Brahm exists themselves become an embodiment of the eternal Truth¹. Such latter types of people are regarded by wise ones as true saints and holy souls.

That which is the Atma or soul or spirit of the Vigyan Maye Kosh (the intellect sheath) is the same entity which is the Atma or soul or spirit of the Anand Maye Kosh (the bliss sheath). [In other words, the essential entity or factor that drives the intellect and lends it its stupendous qualities and virtues as well as its magnificent powers and potentials is the same entity that resides in the heart of the creature and enables it to derive pleasure and happiness, joys and bliss from any perception received by the creature from any source.]

Now, after the wise teacher has taught these profound truths to his disciple, the following questions arise—Is it possible for an ignorant person (who is unaware of the truth about Brahm as evidenced by the fact that a doubt about Brahm's existence arises in his mind) to attain Brahm (i.e. is it possible for him to achieve the exalted stature of emancipation and salvation which is tantamount to realising the supreme Truth) after death? Does a wise and realised person (who has no doubt about the truth of Brahm) indeed attain Brahm after death?²

To answer this question, the wise teacher said—'That supreme transcendental One decided to replicate himself into numerous forms. So he did Tapa (i.e. he did severe penance and made sincere and diligent effort in this direction). It is by doing Tapa that he created all that which is here in creation. Having done so, he entered what he created in an imperceptible manner as the Atma of the creation³.

Thus, the supreme One (Brahm), who is an embodiment of the eternal Truth, manifested himself in a visible form as the gross body of creation, and at the same time remained in an invisible form as the subtle body and the pure conscious Atma of

creation. That supreme One assumed a form which could be easily described and discerned while retaining his primary enigmatic and esoteric form which is indescribable and indiscernible. One of his forms (the visible, physical and mundane world) needed some or the other kind of physical support to survive, while his other form was so mystical and ethereal that it did not need anything to support it (as it itself was the support of everything else in existence). One aspect of his form was the conscious animate world while the other was the inanimate world. Similarly, everything in the behavioural world, whether it was falsehood or truthfulness, was a manifestation of that single, immutable, irrefutable and unequivocal Truth that is both what is apparent as well as what is not apparent. [See note no. 4 below.]

Verily, whatever there is, whatever is experienced and witnessed here, is regarded by those who are well-versed in the primary knowledge of Brahm as a revelation of the eternal, universal and infinite Truth.

This verse is about ‘that’ Truth in the form of ‘this’ truth⁴ (1).

[Note—¹This is a natural corollary of what has already been said in the previous Vallis. In brief, since everything, from the miniscule to the grandest, is suffused and soaked in Brahm, the latter being all-pervading, all-encompassing and omnipresent, and the fact that everything in existence is nothing but one or the other manifestation of this majestic, mystical and most fascinating entity known as Brahm, it follows that nothing in existence is outside the purview of Brahm and that nothing falls beyond the outer perimeter of Brahm. Therefore, the very person who makes the statement that ‘Brahm is not there’ is speaking an evident lie as all that is very much visible, verifiable and tangible around us in this world simply cannot be denied and wished away. Denying Brahm is like denying the existence of the true self and the actual, physical and tangible presence of the world which is an incredulous proposition.

²The question whether a person’s Atma lives after *death* or not has been asked by Nachiketa and answered in great detail by the God of death himself in Kathopanishad, which is chapter no. 1 of this volume. Other Upanishads that answer this eternal question about death are, inter alia, the following—Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, 3/1/3, 3/2/11-12, 3/9/28, 4/3/36, 4/4/1-25, 5/10-5/11, 6/2/2, 14-16, etc.; Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 5, Section 3-10; and Kaushitaki Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 1.

The metaphor of the *tree* has been brilliantly employed to explain ‘what happens after’ death in Brihad Aranyak 3/9/28, and in Chandogya 6/11/1-3.

³This fact has been described in all the Upanishads dealing with the genesis of creation. For example, the following Upanishads have this idea explicitly mentioned-- (a) Aiteriyo-panishad of Rig Veda tradition; (b) Mudgalo-panishad of Rig Veda tradition, in its Canto 2-4; (c) Chandogyo-panishad of Sam Veda tradition, in its Canto 3, Section 19, Canto 4, Section 17, verse nos. 1-3, Canto 6, Section 2-10; (d) Painglo-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 1-2; (e) Subalo-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 1-15; (f) Brihad Aranyak Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 1, Brahmin 1-2, 4-5, Canto 2, Brahmin 5, verse no. 18, Canto 6, Brahmin 4; and (g) the present Taittiriyo-panishad in its Valli (Canto) 2, Anuvak (sub-canto) 2.

The very fact that the supreme One ‘desired’ or ‘decided’ to replicate himself and ‘procreated’ shows that he had consciousness and the ability to do so, a virtue that establishes its primary abilities to ‘exist and create’ even when nothing else existed in the beginning. Therefore he predated this creation and existed after the end of the last creation. In other words, it is beyond the reach of death, and is therefore eternal and imperishable. It is possible to replicate oneself by the asexual means as is shown by the invertebrates of the animal kingdom. Besides, the man’s sub-conscious mind also exhibits astounding powers to create a vast array of colourful scenes in the world of dreams.

⁴The word *that* indicates the mystical Truth which is beyond comprehension and imagination. 'That' Truth is not 'this' Truth—i.e. the eternal immortal Truth which is beyond comprehension and reach of the mind and intellect is not this mortal world, but at the same time since everything that exists is a manifestation of the 'one' Truth that is immutable and indivisible, this world is also 'true' and a reflection of that truth. A reflection or image is not 'true' in the technical sense because it cannot be touched and felt like the original, but it nevertheless does have an existence because any real object will produce a reflection in a mirror. This is proved by the fact that reflection is not formed of ghosts and phantoms.

Further, Brahm is 'truth personified', and this world is a manifestation of Brahm and hence of this 'truth'. Therefore, the world has to be 'true' albeit in a reflective mode. This is also because truth cannot produce non-truth or falsehood. This is the great paradox about Brahm vis-à-vis this world and the body of the creature as laid out in this verse. That is also why the scriptures call Brahm as an entity that is best described by the words 'Neti Neti' meaning 'not this not this', or 'neither this nor that'.

This verse essentially asserts that the supreme Brahm has taken up his residence in the creation as its consciousness called the Atma. The later resides in the body and does so many things and creates a world of its own. This world is visible and for all practical purposes 'true' as it is verifiable and tangible. On the other hand it is perishable, changeable and transient which makes it 'false' because something that is true would be steady, uniform and unchangeable. In short, it presents two opposing propositions—one of falsehood and the other of truth. On the contrary, the Atma is 'only true', without any trace of falsehood, because it is eternal, steady, universal, unchanging and imperishable—which are the characteristic features of 'truth'. So Brahm appears to be both 'true' as well as 'false' for a person who is not fully aware of the fundamental truth of Brahm, creating a doubt in his mind about Brahm's very existence.

As to the answer to the twin questions asked in this verse, the position is that since everything in existence is Brahm personified, those who are ignorant about the reality as well as those who are well-versed about it attain two destinations—the former take rebirth in 'this' world which is 'true' for them, while the latter attain emancipation and salvation by attaining 'that' world which is 'true' for them. 'That' world is not somewhere far off but 'here' in the Atma itself, and the Atma lives in 'this' world inside the gross body. So it is the degree of intellectual development and self-realisation that decides for a creature how it sees and observes the presence and truthfulness of Brahm.

The basic concept is that the creature attains that place which he desires for at the time of *death*—refer Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 4, Brahmin 3, verse no. 12 which is very explicit on this point. Further, it also depends upon the creature's mental awareness and conception of what constitutes the 'Truth'. Refer Brihad Aranyak Canto 6, Brahmin 1, verse no. 1-6.]

Valli 2, Anuvak 7

1. Before the coming into being of this manifest (visible) world, everything was in a 'formless' form which had no attributes and qualities, no names and contours, and therefore appears to be a 'non-truthful existence' because that which cannot be visualised and imagined, that which cannot be defined and known, that which has no form and name appears to be the 'non-truth'. That is, there was an all-pervading, all-

prevailing and all-permeating sense of unqualified neutrality which was neither true nor false!

Out of it emerged what is the known and verifiable, the tangible and 'truthful' world. This qualified creation had discernible attributes, qualities, virtues and specific characteristics¹.

[Then what happened? The answer is--] That formless, attributeless and unqualified entity metamorphosed its self into an entity that had a form, was with attributes and was qualified. That is why it is called 'Su-krit' or the 'one who is self created'.

That famous Sukrit is the entity which is indeed and without doubt the 'Rasa', which literally means the essence or juice at the core of the entire visible creation. [In other words, even as the fruit is valued by the body for its juice and not for the pulp, this world is valued for the presence of this eclectic entity known as conscious Brahm in the form of the Atma and not for the gross matter of which it is constituted.]

Indeed, when this juice or essence is accessed or drunk by a wise and self-realised person, it gives him eternal ecstasy and a sense of fulfillment.

Had there been no such 'living' entity known as the pure consciousness present in the subtle space of the heart (called the Hridaya Akash), who would have done the 'Aapaan Kriya' (which is the process of imbibing food, digesting it, extracting nutrition from it, and eliminating waste from the body) or the 'Pran Kriya' (which is the process of breathing and stoking the fire of life inside the otherwise dead and inert body). In fact, this mystical and enigmatic entity, i.e. the subtle Atma which is the 'pure consciousness' present in the otherwise 'unconscious' gross body, is the one who not only enables and empowers the body to do what it does, but also enjoys them and lets the creature's body enjoy them as well.

At the time when an aspirant is able to realise (through the medium of Yoga which helps to establish a coordination between all units of consciousness in a harmonious way) that this eclectic entity known as Brahm—an entity that is invisible, has no specific body or form or shape or odour or colour, is indefinable and beyond the scope of the faculty of speech, and which needs no support or prop for its existence because it is the support and prop of others—resides in his own heart and he remains firmly established in or grouted to this divine supreme Truth, it is only then that he is able to reach the state of fearlessness².

On the contrary, if the aspirant treats himself as separate and different from that Truth, or in other words when unfortunately he dissociates himself from the eternal Truth residing in his own self as his pure consciousness, and instead begins to treat this gross body and the material world as the 'truth' about himself, he is subjected to all kinds of fears and their attendant sorrows and miseries so typical of this mundane existence.

So it happens that the same Brahm can be a source of fearlessness for a wise man as well as of all the fears for an unwise one³ (1).

[Note—¹This concept has been described else where also in the process of Genesis of Creation, especially in Subalo-panishad, 4/4; Chandogya Upanishad, 6/12/1; and Brihad Aranyak 1/4/7.

²*Fearlessness* from many aspects of life—such as fearlessness from death because Brahm in the form of his Atma is eternal; fearlessness from enemies because he begins to treat all with a profound degree of love, compassion, equanimity and fortitude as he treats all living beings alike, being an image of the same Brahm or Atma that resides in his own heart; fearlessness from wants and shortages because the Atma is ever contented and fulfilled, never in dearth of anything.

How different degrees of erudition and knowledge of the same entity effects the creature has been described by the God of Death, Yam, himself in Katho-panishad, Canto 1, Valli 2, verse no. 4 onwards, especially Canto 2, Valli 2, verse no. 7. This Upanishad is chapter no. 1 of this volume.

³It is very easy to understand this phenomenon. Brahm pervades uniformly throughout the known as well as the unknown world, the visible as well as the invisible world, the animate as well as the inanimate world, the microcosmic as well as the macrocosmic world. So, when the wise and self-realised man sees Brahm in its purified form as the 'essence and juice' of creation residing in his own Atma as well as outside of him as the consciousness prevailing throughout the world, he exults in its glory and basks in its brilliant sun-shine of divinity and holiness. On the contrary, if he sees Brahm with the eyes of materialism, he would also enjoy that ambrosia of happiness and joy that are an integral part of Brahm, because the matter which is so adored by him is also a form of Brahm, but such happiness and bliss would be short-lived as the material world is perishable and transient, and anything that is not eternal but temporary cannot be the 'truth'. Pursuing falsehood instead of truthfulness can never give permanent peace and tranquility to anyone, whether wise or not.]

Valli 2, Anuvak 8

[This Valli describes the stupendous and magnificent divine glories and majestic powers and authority of the almighty Supreme Being who is the Lord of the entire creation. It also describes the level of profound Anand or bliss and ecstasy that are an integral part of Brahm-realisation.]

1. It is out of the fear of this supreme transcendental almighty Authority (i.e. Brahm), it is to honour its dignity and pay respect to its high exalted stature, it is to maintain the decorum of his high office and supreme state of being the divine creator of all that exists and therefore superior and senior to everything else in existence, it is to uphold and respect the sanctity of its sacrosanct and inviolable commands and observe the rules and regulations framed by it in order to keep the creation regulated and working systematically and orderly, that everything and everyone in existence, from the miniscule to the grandest, is compelled and obliged to obey its commands and pay tributes to it.

In other words, it is out of respect of that divine and exalted almighty Authority and out of fear of violating its sacrosanct commands that the Wind or Air moves¹ (i.e. the wind or air element shows its inherent virtue of movement and keep the tide of life flowing perpetually under the instructions of the supreme Authority), the Sun rises and shines to give its light, heat and energy to the world (because this is the duty assigned to the Sun by the supreme Authority), and the Fire burns (i.e. the fire exhibits its special qualities of producing heat and burning things which come in its contact, either to punish them by reducing them to ashes or purifying them of their impurities by burning these denigrating ingredients, because this is the duty assigned to it by that supreme Authority).

It is out of the fear and respect of this Authority or under the sacrosanct and inviolable command of that Authority that Indra (the king of Gods)², and the fifth entity Yam³ (i.e. the God of death) move—i.e. they perform their respective duties with agility and diligence, without resting even for a while or showing any

callousness and lethargy out of fear of violating the inviolable orders of the supreme Lord.

[Now the following stanzas expound on the extent of qualitative and quantitative bliss and happiness that is present in Brahm by using the scale of happiness and joy derived by a man of high acclaim as described herein below. Starting with this basic scale, the verse goes progressively upwards to weigh the happiness and joy at different levels of existence in a pyramidal style to finally give an idea of the extent of it at the top of the stack or pyramid. This is a symbolic depiction of the stupendous beatitude and felicity that is accessed by those who have attained Brahm. It is for the purpose of measuring that glorious virtue which is actually beyond comprehension and any kind of measurement.]

The term ‘Anand’ meaning happiness, joys, exhilaration, exultation, bliss and ecstasy has many connotations, degrees and dimensions. The Anand of an exalted and acclaimed man who is young and of a pious temperament, who has studied the Vedas (i.e. is learned and scholarly), who is most optimistic and has a positive attitude towards everything, who is very strong and powerful as well as able and competent in his field, who is well-mannered, courteous and cultured, and who has lordship over vast tracts of fertile land (e.g. if he is a king or a big land holder), having all worldly comforts and material well beings at his disposal—the happiness and joys enjoyed by such a lucky man, is one unit of Anand. This is called ‘Manush Anand’, or the unit measurement of happiness and joy that a man can have at the most. [That is, it is the maximum happiness and joy that a mortal man can derive from this world at its height. In other words, on the scale where happiness and joy is measured or weighed, the one enjoyed by a most successful and prosperous man is considered as a standard unit of ‘one’. The happiness and joy that other forms of life enjoy are then compared to and measured with reference to this unit.]

A hundred units of such Manush Anands form the next single unit of Anand (1).

[Note—¹The *wind* element is at the very foundation of life because besides moving the clouds in the sky to the places where rain is needed, it also sustains life in the entire creation in the form of the vital airs. These airs present inside the body of the creature help it to perform all its functions, including moving about. This factor of ‘movement’ is a vital sign of life. In fact, if the air does not show its inherent virtue of movement then life would suffocate to death. But it must be observed that sometimes this air becomes absolutely calm for a short while before resuming its movement, thereby indicating that left to its own accord it would like to rest like all other elements in creation, but is compelled to move under the ‘fear’ of being punished by the overbearing authority of the tough task master known as Brahm. It is not that the latter is cruel and without compassion, but he has to bear a tough outer face if he has to keep the state machinery of his creation moving and performing in a well oiled and synchronized manner in order to serve the large population of subjects that inhabit his kingdom!]

²One might ask why this God continuously kills the creation which Brahm has so assiduously sustained, nourished and developed. Yam explains this here—he is doing it on his express commands. Now, why would Brahm want his own creation be killed? It is because an ecological, evolutionary and developmental balance has to be maintained. If no one dies, the creation would have no place for new species, and there would be no space and food to sustain those who are already born.

³*Indra* is the God who controls the clouds and rains. So this verse implies that the Emperor Brahm uses his knight *Indra* to ensure that all the corners of his kingdom get

rainfall which is a metaphor for life on this earth. Further, Indra is also the chief God of all the 'Indris' or organs of the body, implying that the Supreme Being known as Brahm uses his assistance known as Indra to exercise control over all the organs of the body at the micro level and over all the units of the creation at the macro level.]

2. One hundred units of such Anand of humans (as described above) is one unit of Anand enjoyed by the 'Manush-Gandharvas', i.e. by those who spend their time in singing and dancing, remaining ever cheerful and indifferent to the pains and miseries of this mundane life. This Anand is similar to the one enjoyed by those who have no desires whatsoever.

The Anand of such people when multiplied a hundred times is one unit of Anand of the celestial 'Dev-Gandharvas'—i.e. the celestial beings who have attained the stature of semi-Gods who remain ever cheerful, merrily dancing and singing in the heavens.

Hundred times of the Anand of Dev-Gandharvas forms one unit of Anand that is available to those Spirits which have attained an abode in the Pitri-Loka (the abode of dead ancestors where the Spirit goes after death, pending its promotion to the next higher heaven where Gods live; this existence is better than that of the Gandharvas). Such Anand is also available to those exalted persons who have no desires whatsoever.

Hundred units of the Anand that is enjoyed by the spirits of dead ancestors who have a long life in their ethereal form, forms one unit of Anand that is enjoyed by the exalted Gods known as 'Aajaanaj Devas'—literally those Gods who have a life span many times greater than that of the Spirits living in the Pitri-Loka, and hence called 'Aajaanaj' (2).

3. The Anand enjoyed by the Aajaanaj-Devas (Gods) is also available to those exalted persons who have no desires whatsoever.

Hundred units of the Anand enjoyed by the Aajaanaj Gods forms one unit of the Anand enjoyed by the 'Karma-Gods' (i.e. those noble spirits which have attained the high state of Godhood by diligently doing various religious sacrifices, observing different sacraments and generally doing noble deeds and observing the tenets of righteous living). This Anand is also available to those exalted persons who have no desires whatsoever.

One hundred units of the Anand of the Karma-Gods is one unit of Anand of the senior Gods who are the true, principal and full-fledged Gods. [Such as for example, the Fire God, Wind God, Water God. These are the primary Gods in creation, while the rest came into being as the creation evolved.] This Anand is also available to those exalted persons who have no desires whatsoever.

One hundred units of the Anand enjoyed by the full-fledged and principal Gods is one unit of Anand that is enjoyed by Indra, their king (3).

4. This Anand enjoyed by the Gods is also available to those exalted persons who have no desires whatsoever.

One hundred units of the Anand enjoyed by Indra forms one unit of Anand that is enjoyed by Brihaspati, the moral preceptor of the Gods. This Anand is also available to those exalted persons who have no desires whatsoever.

Similarly, one hundred units of the Anand enjoyed by Brihaspati forms one unit of Anand that is enjoyed by Prajapati, the forefather from whom the creatures

who inhabited and populated this earth were born. This Anand is also available to those exalted persons who have no desires whatsoever.

And finally, one hundred units of the Anand enjoyed by Prajapati forms one unit of Anand that is enjoyed by Brahma, the grand patriarch of the entire creation, from the most miniscule to the grandest. This Anand is also available to those exalted persons who have no desires whatsoever (4).

5. That Purush (supreme transcendental Being or Brahm) who resides in the creature (as his pure consciousness) is the same that lives in the Aditya (the heavenly Sun)¹.

A person who has the high level of erudition and sagacity, who has reached the exalted state of wisdom and enlightenment to enable him to understand the secret of what has been said in this Valli (regarding what is real happiness, joy and bliss) would voluntarily disassociate himself from this mundane delusory world of falsehoods and illusive charms of the sense objects, and instead attain the eternal bliss and felicity that comes with realising the true nature of his self, which is inherently and naturally contented, fulfilled, blissful, cheerful and happy.

Since the Atma is at the core of all the different levels of existence as described in earlier Anuvaks of this Valli, such as the Anna Maye Kosh (the food sheath) etc., the self-realised wise person sees the same Atma as operating at different levels in these sheaths or Koshas which together make up the body in which he lives in this world to enjoy it. He is deemed to have realised that this Atma is his 'true self', and that the Atma is an embodiment of the virtues of eternal bliss, happiness, joy, peace and contentedness. Therefore, such a man would automatically exhibit these eclectic virtues of the Atma as opposed to the gross qualities shown by the physical body—for he would have realised that the body is not his true self. Since the Atma is the cosmic Consciousness or the ethereal Spirit, no matter in which form or body it lives—whether as a human, an animal, a bird, an insect, a Gandharva, a God etc. or even as Indra, the king of Gods—it would exhibit the same set of eclectic divine virtues so typical of it. Blissfulness, cheerfulness, happiness and contentedness are some of these virtues.

Hence, a self-realised man would show these glorious attributes even without making any conscious effort in this direction while he lives in the gross body that has all these Koshas or sheaths and seems to be a treasury of grossness, miseries and falsehoods.

Thus, he sees the same blissful Atma as operating through the different Koshas or sheaths—such as the Anna Maye Kosh (the food sheath), the Pran Maye Kosh (the vital air sheath), the Mano Maye Kosh (the mental sheath), the Vigyan Maye Kosh (the intellect sheath), as well as the Anand Maye Kosh (the bliss sheath).

Naturally therefore, such a man would be eternally blissful and contented. This verse is dedicated to this idea of blissfulness so characteristic of the Atma² (5).

[Note—¹In other words, that mysterious and divine entity which lights up the inner self of the creature as its *Atma*, which lives in the gross body as its consciousness and gives it the energy and vitality to live and perform its duties, is the same enigmatic and ethereal entity that lights up the *Sun* and enables it to light the world and sustain life in it by its sunlight, energy and heat. This supreme, majestic, ethereal, mystical and divine entity is known as *Brahm*. This eclectic and divine idea is elaborately explained in Chandogya Upanishad which explains the nectar-like values of Brahm by treating the Sun as a pitcher of honey and then meditating upon it to imbibe the glory of Brahm. Refer Chandogya, Canto 3. This Upanishad is of the Sam Veda tradition and included as Chapter no. 2 of the volume dealing with such Upanishads in this series. Further, this idea is also explained in Shukla Yajur Veda tradition's

Brihad Aranyak Upanishad 1/5/12; 2/1/2, 13; 2/3/1-6; 2/5/5,12-15; 3/7/9,15-16; 4/1/1-7; 4/2/2; 4/4/5; and 5/13/1-4.

Meanwhile, it is pertinent to note here that the meaning of the word Surya, which is the Sanskrit word for Sun, fits in perfectly with the concept of the Atma. The word Surya has three connotations—viz. (i) Sarta-ha—one who moves like the wind or the cloud. This refers to the Sun because it moves constantly across the sky. It also refers to the supreme cosmic Consciousness that makes all movement possible. (ii) Svikriti-ha—this means one who receives and accepts. This virtue refers to the fact that all offerings offered to the fire sacrifice are done in the presence of the Sun, and since the latter is the celestial cauldron of fire all the offerings are deemed to be offered to it. In another plane, it refers to the Jiva, the living being, who receives stimuli from the world and then accepts them and deduces that the world from where they originate is real and true. (iii) Shuvrate and Savita—meaning one who shines brilliantly. This is very obvious in the case of the Sun. This virtue refers to the supreme Self or the supreme Consciousness that is self-illuminated and self-effulgent.

²In short, this entire Valli is named ‘Brahmaa-nand’ to highlight the eclectic and ethereal beatitude and felicity that one obtains when one understands that all that exists, from the individual creature’s gross body to the highest of heavens and levels of existence, is a manifestation of one single immutable divine entity known as Brahm. And this Brahm is characterised by such virtues, inter alia, as being eternal, blissful, cheerful, happy, peaceful, contented, truthful, omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent.

With the realisation that this astounding Authority resides in the bosom of the person himself as much as it resides outside, and to seek the eternal bliss associated with accessing Brahm one need not search outside, rather it is to be sought inside one’s own bosom, the wise person feels fulfilled and contented. He has indeed found the everlasting fountain of bliss and happiness.]

Valli 2, Anuvak 9

1. That sublime, ethereal, eclectic and holy Divinity known as Brahm, which provides the extreme sense of beatitude and felicity known as Brahmanand that is beyond the reach of both the mind and the faculty of speech (i.e. the magnitude and dimension of which cannot either be fathomed by the so-powerful and so-potent mind, and which is so profound and glorious that the speech is unable to describe it in words), a wise and realised person who has an experience of and has witnessed ‘it’ and its natural ‘Anand’ (the bliss and happiness, the ecstasy and exhilaration of Brahm-realisation) becomes fearless from all quarters¹.

In other words, when a person has achieved the exalted stature of Brahm-realisation, nothing else matters for him. He is not worried about whether or not he has done anything good and auspicious (because such distinctions matter to men of the gross world), or why he has done anything sinful and unrighteous².

An enlightened and realised person who is wisened to the fact that such worries (about not doing good deeds or doing bad deeds) only create more worries in their wake and snatch the peace and bliss that he has been enjoying hitherto by remaining concentrated on the pure and unadulterated Truth represented by the ‘self’ in the form of the conscious Atma and its parent body, the Brahm, both of which are beyond reproach and not involved in doing any deed of any kind whatsoever, is able to strengthen and validate the immaculacy and supremacy of his Atma. He is able to

assert that his Atma is beyond such mundane worries, and remains absolutely untainted by what the body does.

For him equanimity and equality is the overriding principle. Therefore, he sees and treats both the kinds of deeds with this attitude of the mind, remaining dissociated from them and their results, both good and bad. [Fundamentally this is because a wise man remains dissociated from the body which actually does any deed, and instead he remains engrossed and submerged in contemplation and meditation. Such a man remains oblivious of what his body is doing, and this oblivion is not a crafty method to cheat the world, but most sincere and honest.]

This Upanishad is meant for such persons who understand these facts as mentioned in this Valli. It is intended for such enlightened persons who wish to attain the glorious state of remaining perpetually in a state of bliss and happiness by knowing the universal Truth that is Absolute (1).

[Note—¹This idea has been expressed in Valli 2, Anuvak 7 also and explained there. Basically this is because a Brahm-realised person would see Brahm in the entire creation, even in his enemy, would have no wants and desires related to this deluding and perishable world, being in a state of perpetual contentedness of self fulfillment, and being in a state of perpetual bliss and ecstasy, he would have no time or inclination and neither the need for having any fear from any quarter. He would not even fear death—simply because he knows that what dies is the body and not the Atma which is imperishable and eternal, and that body is not his true self; so the cause of all fears vanish. He need not fear the Gods also because he has direct contact with the greatest God of them all, i.e. Brahm.

Since for a self-realised man the whole world is a manifestation of Brahm and is inhabited by the conscious Atma which is the same as the one residing in his own bosom, because Atma is one whole indivisible non-dual entity, he has no reason to fear others because no one fears his 'own self'. It is only when he sees 'duality' in creation—i.e. when he thinks that the other person is his competitor or rival, or is his companion or enemy, that all senses of fear, jealousy, ill will and hatred on the one hand, and affection, belonging, attachment and love on the other hand come into play.

²A man is usually worried about his deeds not being good and being sinful because he fears punishment here in this world or going to hell after death. For a wise man the Atma is always free from doing any deeds because the deeds are done by the body and not the Atma. Since the Atma merges with Brahm upon leaving the gross body just like water present in a earthen pot becomes one with the water of the river or ocean once the pot is broken, or the air trapped in the balloon becomes one with the air present in the atmosphere when the balloon is punctured, there is no cause of regret for any deeds done or deeds left undone as far as a wise man is concerned.]

Valli 3, Anuvak 1

[This Valli narrates the grand metaphysical tenets pertaining to the supreme transcendental Brahm which were preached by Varun, the God of water, for the benefit of his son sage Bhrigu when the latter approached his father to enlighten him about Brahm. Varun's reply forms the outline of the grand and magnificent glory and eclectic virtues that are so unique to the Divine Being who is all-pervading, all-encompassing and all-inclusive by nature and is known as the Absolute Truth of creation and the cosmic Consciousness called Brahm. This concept has also been the guiding principal of all the Upanishads, which invariably emphasize that whatever is

visible in this creation as well as even that which is not so apparent are all one or the other versions of Brahm, and nothing but Brahm.

Anuvak no. 10, verse no. 1 states the tenet about honouring one's guest as one would honour Brahm, establishing a tradition of warm hospitality so typical of India.

Presently, this current Anuvak no. 1 visualises Brahm in all the vital faculties of the individual creature's body and their functioning, as well as those entities that help to sustain, nourish and develop this body and aid in its perpetuation by the way of re-birth or procreation.]

1. The famous son of Varun (the Water God), named Bhrigu Vaaruni¹, went to his father and said, 'Oh Lord! Please enlighten me about Brahm'. [That is, Bhrigu requested his father Varun to preach him about that divine entity which is regarded as the supreme transcendental Authority in creation and the universal cosmic Consciousness which is the principal origin, the principal cause and the principal defining factor of this creation..

Varun replied, 'Anna (food)², Pran (the vital winds present in the body)³, Netra (the faculty of sight represented by the eyes)⁴, Srotra (the faculty of hearing represented by the ears)⁵, Mana (the mind and heart; the emotions and thoughts)⁶, and Vak (the faculty of speech represented by the tongue and mouth)⁷—all of them are the means by which Brahm can be attained.

That from which all these Bhuts (the primary elements such as earth, water, fire, air and sky as well as their manifestations in the form of all living beings in this creation) have come into being, that upon which they rely for their existence, support, foundation, succour, sustenance, empowerment and authority, that in which everything that has come into being finally collapses and merges or dissolves without leaving a trace⁸—verily, that is essentially the entity known as Brahm. You must strive to be acquainted with this unique, mysterious, enigmatic, eclectic, divine and supreme entity which is known as Brahm. Indeed, it is Brahm'.

When he was advised to know Brahm with these magnificent qualities, sage Bhrigu began doing severe Tapa to realise this mysterious, most enigmatic, astounding and divine entity known as Brahm (1).

[Note—¹Sage *Bhrigu*—He is a well known sage and seer who appears in a number of Vedic and Purnaic works. His name 'Bhrigu' is derived from the root word 'Bhrij' or 'Bhraaj' which literally means to roast or burn, and therefore it could mean the sage who was a fire sacrifice priest who had some mystical powers which allowed him to kindle the altar fire. According to mythological history, the patron God of lightening, Lord Maatarishwan, brought the celestial lightening down to earth and taught three priests the art of kindling the sacred altar fire using the Aranis ('the fire sticks' used to kindle fire by vigorous rubbing together). These three priest were the Bhrigu, the Angiras, and the Atharvan.

Sage Bhrigu has been described as the 'Manas Purta' (the one born with mental determination and not any physical process) of Brahma the creator. He is also stated elsewhere as being the son of Indra (the king of Gods) as well as of Varun (the Water God). This is why he is called 'Bhrigu Vaaruni' here in this verse. He was the father of Laxmi, the divine consort of Vishnu the sustainer and protector of creation. That is why Laxmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity, is also known as Bhargavi, the daughter of Bhargava, or Bhrigu. In other births he is regarded as the father of Shukracharya, the moral preceptor of the Demons. He is also said to be the father of sages like Chavanya.

He was one of the ancient sages after whom a lineage was established—and his descendents assumed his name as their surname or title. It is 'Bhargava' or 'Bhrigu'.

Some well known names of sages who followed him in this lineage are sages Jamdagni and Parashuram.

He once tested the Trinity Gods (Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva) and determined that Vishnu is the best amongst them and alone deserves worship. He is one of the four sages (the others being Marichi, Atri and Kashyap) who had elaborately described the Vakhaanas Agam followed by some Vaishnav sects (followers of Vishnu worship).

He performed severe austerity and penance at a place called Bhṛigu Kaccha located on the banks of river Narmada where it merges with the Arabian Sea. It is situated in the Broach area of Gujrat state of western India.

He is credited with composing the tome of astrology and horoscopes known as 'Bhṛigu Sanhita'. It is said to contain a data base of all possible horoscopes that can be created by considering all possible permutations and combinations of the nine planets and twelve zodiac signs.

²Food or *Anna* provides the much needed energy and nutrition that gives the required sustenance and energy to the body. A weak body is unable to concentrate upon anything. This irrefutable fact is beautifully brought out in Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 6, Section 7. Food was one of the primary and first creations of the supreme creator, and the rest of the creation is the fruit of this food element. This is wonderfully explained in Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 1, Brahmin 2. Refer also to Valli 2, Anuvak 2 and Valli 3, Anuvak 2 of this present Taittiriya Upanishad.

The entire living world—from the microcosm to the vast macrocosm—is a manifestation of Brahm (Chandogya, 5/18/2). Brahm is therefore a synonym of life symbolising the light of wisdom and knowledge as opposed to death which symbolises darkness of delusions and ignorance. No one praises the latter, but everyone worships the former. Food is the basic requirement and fundamental building block of life. The tree absorbs food from the earth, grows by using its energy and vital nutrients, and then produces fruits which represent the essence of what the tree has 'eaten'. This fruit produces the seed which helps in the divine mandate of carrying forward the process of creation and perpetuating it further. When the tree and its part die, they fall to the ground and form soil and organic matter which help to replenish the stock of food on earth. Thus, at the time of death, the organic tree symbolically reverts back into its origin in organic food.

The same analogy applies to the man. He eats food and derives energy and vitality from it. This provides him with the strength, stamina, vigour and drive to grow and perform all his functions and duties. What he extracts from the food is converted into his own fruit in the shape of his semen, and the essence of this semen is its life-bearing abilities present in its core, the sperm. This semen and sperm help in the divine mandate to carry forward the process of creation in a perpetual manner. When any creature dies, its body disintegrates into the elements. The waste product of what a creature eats is converted into manure; the body dies and decays into organic matter. Thus, the creature's gross aspects having their origin in organic food eaten revert back into their original form of soil and organic matter.

In other words, food displays all the unique virtues and qualities of Brahm—it creates life, it sustains life, it develops life, and in it the living creation collapses.

Amongst the larger Upanishads, those describing the importance of Anna or food in great detail are, inter alia, Chandogya, 1/10/1-7, 1/11/9, 1/12-13, 5/2, 5/17/2, 5/18/1, 6/5/1, 6/6/2, 6/7, 7/9 etc., and Brihad Aranyak, 1/2/2-13, 1/5/1-13, 5/12 etc.

³*Pran* is a synonym of life and vital winds which sustain and maintain life. No life is tenable without oxygen or other forms of the air element; life would suffocate to death had there been no Pran in the body. Further, the word Pran is also meant to indicate something that is very dear and loving. Life is dear to everyone, everyone loves life dearly, and hence Pran is dear to all. In terms of metaphysics, the thing that is to be loved and adored is Truth; the entity without which life is simply not feasible and which is the only irrefutable and immutable Truth in creation is known as Brahm. Therefore, Brahm is the Pran of the entire creation.

Meditation technique called Pranayam essentially involves control of the breath or Pran, and this result in astounding spiritual and mystical achievements for the practitioner. It is possible to attain eternal good health and happiness by meditation. The different vital winds present in the body control all its functions, right from the inhalation of breath, to the intake of food, digestion, assimilation, distribution, circulation and excretion, the maintenance of equilibrium inside the body, its movement, speech, awareness, feelings et al. The importance of Pran cannot be ever over-emphasised vis-à-vis the living creature. So, Pran is the synonym of Brahm as well as the medium of realising Brahm because once we get acquainted with Pran, we easily get the hang of what Brahm is.

The importance of Pran as the most important element in creation in as much as without it life is unthinkable, and it is therefore a manifestation of Brahm has been elaborately dealt with in Chandogya, 1/2/7-14, 1/11/5, 2/7, 3/5/3-4, 3/18/4, 5/1/6-15, 5/2/1-3, 5/19, 7/15 etc. Similarly, it has been lauded in Brihad Aranyak, 1/1/1, 1/3/17-28, 3/2/2, 3/7/16, 4/1/3, 5/13, 6/1 etc. Refer also to Valli 2, Anuvak 3 of this present Taaittiriya Upanishad.

In Chandogya Upanishad, Pran is likened to the brilliant Sun, complete with its magnificent life-sustaining capabilities and its ability to light even the remotest corners of the world—refer Chandogya, 1/2/7.

⁴The eyes or *Netra* help the man to see the world. In other words, the eyes make the man aware of existence of life in this creation in all its majestic finery, glorious splendour, brilliant magnificence and multifarious variety. The eye sees only as long as there is light in the external world. This 'light' is a synonym of knowledge; one comes to get knowledge of the various shapes and colours in which Brahm has revealed its self because one can actually see for himself these shapes and colours; he needs no other proof of the existence of Brahm because he sees the latter revealed in the form of this colourful world first hand himself.

The eye is a gross organ and there is certainly some mysterious and superior power which enables the otherwise inert and inane organ of the eye to carry on with the magical function of 'seeing'. This function of 'seeing' is a conscious and lively function because only living entities see. Dead people don't see though the dead body has the same eye as the living body.

Besides this point, the 'ability to see' also imply the ability of having a deep insight into those aspects of creation which are not so apparent, vivid and clear on the surface. This is intelligent sight and analytical interpretation of available information to arrive at deductions which are 'hidden truths'. Meditation is concentration of mind and research into the 'truthful reality' after removing the surface scum to unearth the 'secret truths' that can be known only by seeing and experiencing them personally as no one else can show them to others. 'Seeing to believe' is a personal phenomenon; one can enjoy the exhilaration that comes with personally seeing something pleasant and enchanting.

This logic can be extended to all other sense perceptions. All have to be witnessed and experienced first hand, and the rest would be like hearsay.

This is the 'mysterious Truth' known as Brahm—i.e. the Truth known as Brahm has to be witnessed and experienced first hand by the spiritual aspirant, whether it is by the means of sight, hearing, tasting, smelling or touching and feeling. Any other method would not be convincing and a confirmation of the presence of Brahm. Since the eye helps one to 'see' this Truth, it is therefore an instrument of Brahm-realisation (Brihad Aranyak, 3/9/15 and 4/1/4).

Truth is a manifestation of Brahm is a constant refrain in all the Upanishads. (Refer for example the Brihad Aranyak, Canto 5, Brahmin 5.)

The Sun, which is the visible manifestation of the dazzling brilliance and radiant splendour of Brahm, is said to reside in a symbolic way in the eye because it is the eye that lights up the world for the Brahm residing in the dark recesses of the gross

body of the creature as his pure conscious Atma. (Brihad Aranyak, 3/9/20 and 4/3/2; Chandogya 4/15).

The importance and significance of eyes have been elaborately described in Chandogya 1/2/4, 1/7/2, 3/18/5, 4/15, 8/7/4 etc., and Brihad Aranyak 1/6/2, 2/3/4-6, 3/2/5, 3/7/18, 3/9/15, 3/9/20, 4/1/4, 4/2/2-3, 4/3/2, 5/5/4 etc.

⁵Next come the ear or *Srotra* and the faculty of hearing. The knowledge that a man acquires relies heavily on what he 'hears', because the ears are the medium by which the words are heard. It may be argued that knowledge can be acquired by reading also, but doubts and confusions are removed by discussions and consultations with wise ones. This necessitates the involvement of the ear. Therefore, the ear is the medium of Brahm-realisation. Besides this point, Brahm is a vast and macrocosmic entity, evenly distributed and dispersed throughout the length and breadth of creation. In other words, Brahm is present in the form of the 'directions' from where all information comes; the directions are the macrocosmic body of Brahm and the ear is the instrument which helps one to learn about this form of Brahm (refer Brihad Aranyak, 2/1/11, 2/5/6 and 3/9/13).

Besides this, sound is the first and most subtle manifestation of Brahm. This sound at the cosmic level is called Naad and it is represented by the ethereal word OM which happens to be the grand instrument of metaphysical research and attainment. Katho-panishad, 1/2/15-17 and this present Taittiriyo-panishad, 1/9 emphasis that this OM is Brahm personified. Since sound can be heard only by the means of the ears and no other organ of the body, it follows that ears are the most important instrument by which a creature can be aware of Brahm.

Brahm living in the ear of a man as the glorious faculty of hearing makes him aware of the external world (Brihad Aranyak, 3/7/19). The importance of ears lie in the fact that a man can come to learn about things even without personally going to the place of any happening or seeing and witnessing any event first hand just by relying on what he has heard about it through his ears. Thus, the ear is medium by which Brahm's existence in the form of sound emanating from various directions can be ascertained. In fact, Brahm has revealed its glorious self in the body of the creature in its faculty of hearing (Refer Brihad Aranyak, 4/1/5.).

The importance and significance of ears have been elaborately described in Chandogya 1/2/5, 1/7/3-5, 3/18/6 etc, and Brihad Aranyak 2/1/11, 2/5/6, 3/2/6, 3/17/19, 3/18/6, 3/9/13, 4/1/5 etc.

⁶*Mana* or the mind and the heart are obvious abodes of Brahm. The emotions and thoughts that are so typical signs of life are metaphors and analogues for Brahm, and the seat of these qualities is the heart and the mind respectively. That is why one has to turn inwards to witness and experience the existence of Brahm because the latter resides in one's own bosom. For meditation purposes and intelligent interpretation of what one hears, sees, learns, experiences and witnesses, the mind is an indispensable instrument.

A man is said to dwell at a place where his mind and heart is as much as where his physical body is. So if he is able to control his Mana and remain steady in it, then he has caught hold of Brahm in a symbolic manner. A happy and contented mind and heart are symbols of blissfulness that comes with Brahm-realisation. Brahm embodies the virtues of Mana and the latter personifies the former with all its magnificent glories, stupendous potentials and astounding virtues. Entire sections of many Upanishads are dedicated to this theme. A brief reference may be had from Chandogya 3/5/3, 3/18, 6/1/13, 6/8/1-2, 7/3; and Brihad Aranyak, 3/7/20, 4/1/6 etc. Refer also to Valli 2, Anuvak 3-4 of this present Taittiriya Upanishad.

⁷The faculty of speech known as *Vak* is the instrument by which Brahm makes itself known to the external world because Brahm embodies knowledge and wisdom, and these eclectic virtues in a man are revealed to the outside world when he speaks aloud about his thoughts. When a man is gravely sick, people look for signs of life in him, but the best sign is when he starts speaking in the way he used to do before he

went into a coma. Since speaking requires a coordination of many functions of the body—such as the breath called Pran because one needs breath to speak, the mind and intellect because one needs them to speak intelligently and coherently, all the while referring to the information stored in his memory even as the talk is continuing, and to speak in a wise, articulate, coherent and cogent manner, the tongue and mouth because these are the instruments of speech. The very fact that a man is able to speak shows that some powerful authority is sitting inside his body to make this happen.

The importance of Vak or the spoken word having its origin in Pran is beyond doubt as no one can speak if there was no life in the body. The significance of the faculty of speech has been highlighted in Chandogya Upanishad because the melodious singing or chanting of the hymns of the Vedas during fire sacrifices is not possible without it, and therefore it is called the ‘Madhu’ or honey or the best faculty of all the living creatures. No wonder then that a person who speaks sweetly and pleasantly, a person who is soft spoken and articulate is most welcome in society even as good orators, singers, teachers, preachers and all those who have the gift of a divine voice are honoured and much sought after.

Vak is also said to be the abode of the Fire God—Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, 3/9/24. It is said that at the time of creation, the Fire God took up his residence in the mouth and throat of the living being, and one of his revelations is ‘speech’. That is why we use such phrases as ‘a fiery speech’.

The importance and significance of Vak have been elaborately described in Chandogya 1/2/3, 1/2/11, 1/3/4, 1/7/1, 1/12-13, 1/8, 3/18/3, 7/2 etc., and Brihad Aranyak 1/5/3-8,11 and 18, 1/6/1, 3/2/3, 3/7/17, 4/1/2, 5/8 etc.

⁸The idea that everything merges back into Brahm, or into their primary source from where they had come into being, has been beautifully explained by citing the example of the river in Chandogya Upanishad, 6/10/1-2. It states that rivers have their origin in the ocean and then flow back into the ocean, their primary source. Similarly, in Brihad Aranyak 2/4/12, the analogy of salt dissolving and imperceptibly merging with water is cited. Salt has its origin in the ocean which is the greatest reservoir of water, and when it is dissolved in water, it finds its original parent body, so it cheerfully hides itself in the parent’s bosom to take rest. This analogy applies to the creature’s Atma as well. It has its origin in the cosmic Consciousness or Brahm which is the Atma of the entire creation. At the time of final rest, the individual Atma would merge with the cosmic Atma known as Brahm.]

Valli 3, Anuvak 2

[This Anuvak asserts that Anna or food is Brahm manifested. Refer also Valli 2, Anuvak 2. It will be noted in this Valli that Varun has advised Bhirgu that the means to understand how Brahm has revealed itself in this creation in its various units or facets is to do Tapa. This medium is a universal instrument in metaphysical field that helps generate sufficient energy which enables the seeker to understand the transcendental phenomena known as Brahm-realisation that ignites spiritual energy and kindles the light of enlightenment in him. It prepares the aspirant to receive the cosmic vibrations of spiritual energy emanating from cosmic Consciousness by fine-tuning his bodily apparatus, specially his mind and intellect.]

1. After doing Tapa, Bhriгу came to the realisation that Anna or food is indeed Brahm personified¹. He determined that it is the truth that all creatures have their origin in food (i.e. they need food to take birth because the embryo grows by absorbing

nourishment in the womb of the mother or from the contents of the egg); after birth also they depend upon food for their sustenance, growth and development; and at the time of death they vanish by merging themselves into their primary form as food².

Once he (Bhrihu) has learnt this, he once went to his father Varun and said, 'Oh Lord! Please preach me about Brahm'.

Varun replied, 'Try to understand Brahm by the medium of Tapa. Tapa is Brahm personified; Brahm can be realised by doing Tapa³'

When his father had advised him thus, Bhrihu did severe Tapa once again to realise Brahm (1).

[Note—¹As has been noted in note to Anuvak 1, Brahm has revealed himself in the form of the inherent life infusing and life sustaining virtues present in *food* eaten by the living organism. No one can survive without food. The gross body of the creature is called the Anna Maye Kosh or the 'food sheath' because it has its origin, its form and shape as well as its strength and vitality in the nutrition extracted from the food eaten by the creature. This gross body of the individual creature is a revelation of the macrocosmic gross body of Brahm known as the Viraat Purush, and within it resides the sublime and subtle entity known as the Atma which is the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm in a miniscule form. Food in the form of the gross body is the habitat of this Atma, and food supplies the necessary energy, strength, stamina, vigour and vitality needed by this Atma to survive in the body. For, if there was no food, the body would become weak and die, thereby forcing the Atma to leave the body along with the Pran. This fact has been very magnificently explained in Chandogya Upanishad, 6/6-7 where Uddalak had demonstrated to his son Shwetketu the importance of food by asking him to fast for fifteen days. As a result, Shwetketu was so weakened that he couldn't even remember what he had learnt earlier. When he ate again, all his faculties began to function properly once again, thereby establishing how the body is heavily dependent upon food for survival.

²All living creatures have organic bodies because it is made of carbon and its products. So when the creature *dies* and its body is buried or cremated, the organic matter present in the gross body disintegrates into its primary ingredients, such as nitrogen, hydrogen, oxygen etc. on the one hand, and metals and trace elements such as phosphorous, magnesium, potassium, calcium, selenium, copper, sulphur etc. on the other hand.

Further, after absorbing vital nutrients, the creature eliminates fiber and other gross matter in food as excreta which form manure that sustain the production of food, and which is reabsorbed as food by the creature.

³The word *Tapa* literally means doing severe penance and austerity as well as sufferance of hardship for a noble cause, thereby burning one's natural impurities and blemishes that have been inherited by the creature as a result of his past deeds and their consequences. In the context of Brahm realisation, Tapa refers to meditation and contemplation because the mystical Brahm can be realised only by turning inwards as opposed to attempting to find and search it out externally in this world. This means that an attempt should be made by the spiritual aspirant to know the nature of the 'true self', instead of the 'illusionary self', as this search would lead to realisation of the Truth. Concentration of the mind and focusing of its intellectual and discriminatory faculties on searching out the 'truth' from the stack of falsehoods appears to be a Herculean task, but with painstaking diligence and accompanying sincerity, with commitment and ardent devotion, the task is not difficult even as searching a piece of Gold in a hay stack seem very daunting on the face of it but once the Gold is retrieved, the entire effort is amply rewarded. While we are at this analogy of the hay stack and the Gold, the easiest and quickest way to retrieve the priceless necklace of gold is to burn the stack of worthless hay. Likewise, the easiest way to realise the Truth is to burn the surrounding shell of worldly delusions and falsehoods. Once the muck and filth is washed off from the mind and heart, their brilliant shine

breaks through, and this light of enlightenment show where the 'gold', or Brahm, is hidden. Verily, that Brahm is not outside but inside one's own bosom. Brahm realisation is marked by the extreme exhilaration and ecstasy that comes to someone who has found his golden necklace amidst the stack of hay!

Even the Viraat Purush had done Tapa when he had decided to initiate the process of creation. The mystical powers of Tapa can be gauged from the fact that he was able to create the dazzlingly magnificent creation literally from nothing, as if by magic! Basically Tapa involves coordination of the energies of the mind and body, and focusing the combined force to achieve astounding results much like the use of razor-sharp laser rays to achieve penetrating powers and obtain very precise results.

What happens to a wise, self-enlightened and Brahm-realised person has been succinctly described in Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 4, Brahmin 4, verse no. 13-14. Briefly, they become fulfilled even while living in this world and going about their normal duties.

Tapa is the most potent weapon in the field of spiritualism, and Bhrigu decided to employ it to verify the truth of what his father had taught him.]

Valli 3, Anuvak 3

[This Anuvak highlights the importance and significance of Pran as a manifestation of Brahm. Refer also to Valli 2, Anuvak 3.]

1. Upon doing severe Tapa, Bhrigu understood the truth of the statement that Pran is Brahm personified¹. Verily, all the forms of life and living creatures have their origin in Pran; upon birth they depend upon Pran for their survival; and upon death they become one with Pran².

After that, he once approached his father Varun, seeking more knowledge about Brahm. 'Oh father! Please preach me more about Brahm'.

Varun advised him—'You should try to realise and understand Brahm by the medium of Tapa. Tapa is Brahm personified; Brahm is known by doing Tapa' (1).

[Note—¹*Pran* is a synonym of life forces present in this creation, especially in relation to the body of the creature. It also supports life in the form of the vital winds which are also called Pran. Since Brahm has these virtues, and since Pran is wind in its basic form, it is an apt personification of Brahm. Nothing can survive in a vacuum if there is no air to breathe life into it, so Pran is Brahm as Brahm fills up all available space in creation even as the air element fills up the entire length and width of the space of the sky in creation. The importance of Pran vis-à-vis Brahm has been explained in note to Anuvak no. 1 above.

²Obviously, the word Pran here refers to the *vital wind* or air which is breath and other vital winds in the body, such as Apaana, Udaana, Vyan and Samaana etc. which sustain life in the otherwise lifeless and inane gross body and helps it to carry on with its functions. When the creature dies, its vital winds leave the body and merge with the air element present outside the body just like the air present inside the balloon merges with the atmospheric air when the balloon is punctured.]

Valli 3, Anuvak 4

[This Anuvak explains the importance and significance of Mana as a manifestation of Brahm. Refer also to Valli 2, Anuvak 4.]

1. After doing severe Tapa once again, Bhrigu realised and understood the truthfulness of the statement that Mana is Brahm personified¹. Indeed, all creatures are born out of Mana; they live relying upon this Mana; and they perish and merge into Mana at the time of death².

With this realisation, Bhrigu once again approached his learned father Varun and requested, ‘Oh Lord! Please preach me about Brahm’.

Varun replies as earlier, saying, ‘You should try to realise and understand Brahm by the medium of doing Tapa. Tapa is Brahm personified.’ (1).

[Note—¹*Mana* technically refers to the mind, but it also involves the heart because the mind and heart work in close coordination with each other. The mind exhibits tremendously astonishing qualities that are characteristic and typical of it, and it is aided in its endeavours by the heart. To remain focused, the mind needs the support of the heart, otherwise it would face distraction and would digress from its chosen path. That is why it is said that one ‘learns by heart’ and not by one’s mind. A person is said to dwell where his heart dwells and not where his mind is, because the heart is the abode of the almighty Atma, which is the pure consciousness that forms the true identity of the creature and is the manifestation of Brahm himself inside the body of the creature.

Brahm reveals itself with two attributes—‘emotions’ that form the jurisdiction of the heart, and ‘thoughts’ that form the jurisdiction of the mind. Obviously they must work in tandem to make a man stable and capable. When Brahm reveals itself as the creature, it sits in the heart and controls the mind and vice versa. The characteristic virtues exhibited by these two entities are actually revelation of the virtues of Brahm. In fact, they are like the two faces of the same coin. If everything in existence is a manifestation of Brahm, i.e. if everything that has a verifiable existence is a revelation of the ultimate Truth in creation known as Brahm, then it is natural that Mana is no exception.

The importance of Mana has been explained in note to Anuvak no. 1 of this Valli.

²Since *Mana* relates to the mind and the heart, it is directly concerned with the process of life. How? Well, the entire process of procreation depends upon conjugal relationship between a man and a woman, and obviously the heart and mind have an all-important role to play in the entire process. This fact is so obvious that it needs no elaboration. After birth, it is the man’s mental setup and the emotional quotient of his heart that shape his entire personality and behavioural pattern. Suppose a man is very depressed or distressed, he would not eat properly, and this would have an adverse impact on his physical wellbeing. Similarly, he might even die if overcome with grief and struck with sudden misfortunes.

At the time of his death, he takes a new birth depending upon where his mind and heart were rooted at the time of death—a fact endorsed by Katho-panishad, Canto 2, Valli 2, verse no. 7 which is Chapter no. 1 of this volume.]

Valli 3, Anuvak 5

[This Anuvak highlights the importance and significance of Vigyan (analytical and critical intelligence and knowledge) as a manifestation of Brahm. Refer also to Valli 2, Anuvak 5.]

1. When Bhrigu had done severe Tapa, he realised and understood the truth about Vigyan. He learnt that all the creatures are born out of Vigyan (i.e. special knowledge and skills are needed to set in motion the process of creation); they are sustained by

Vigyan (i.e. special knowledge and skills are needed to provide for all the material needs of this living world and take care of its general welfare); and they conclude in Vigyan (i.e. special knowledge and skills are needed even to dispose of the body properly by way of performance of elaborate cremation rites and other rituals, or embalm it before burying).

In short, from conception right up to its conclusion the creation needs Vigyan at each step of its existence¹. At the time of death, a wise man benefits from his lifetime of experiences and learning, and detaches himself from this delusory and illusionary world of material objects which are non-eternal and the cause of all miseries and torments because they tend to tie and bog the Atma down to this lowly world of transmigration and prevent its final liberation and attainment of salvation.

Bhrigu went to his father Varun once again and requested, 'Oh father! Please preach me about Brahm'.

Varun replied—'You should try to understand and realise Brahm through the medium of doing Tapa, for Tapa is Brahm personified; it is the means to get acquainted with Brahm'.

At this advice of his father, Bhrigu once did Tapa (1).

[Note—¹This Anuvak about *Vigyan* emphasises that it is the progenitor, sustainer and concluder of the entire creation. It is obvious deduction because creation is such a complicated process that it requires exceptional intelligence and skills as well as critical ability to use available information to start, sustain and conclude the tremendous explosive potentials of the forces and energy of Nature for constructive purposes, and to keep a strict tab on it so that it does not digress from its mandate and prove counter-productive.

Even during the life of a creature, it needs the help from all fields of knowledge in order to meet its daily needs and provide for its material and bodily comforts and wellbeing.

When *Gyan* is put to test and a rational knowledge is arrived at, when it is witnessed or experienced in practical terms, it is known as 'Vigyan'; it is logical derivation, confirmation and affirmation of certain things known in theory and now ratified as the unequivocal truth and the irrefutable fact, reasoned acknowledgement, or actual witness of facts so that there is no doubt or confusion as to their authenticity, veracity and truth. In other words, Vigyan is experimental Gyan, or Gyan put to practice by following the guidelines of Vedant. [See Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 4, verse no.38-39.]

Therefore, Vigyan literally means application of mind, intelligence and rational logic, having in-depth knowledge, intelligent and rational learning or science of anything which can be verified, any knowledge which is empirical, rational, logical, scientific and applicable in practice. Vigyan is analytical and critical intelligence and knowledge obtained as its result. [The concept of Vigyan has been elaborately described in Chandogya Upanishad, canto 7, section 7.] Vigyan is the wisdom and intellect that is inherent in a man. It is the rational mind that decides what is to be remembered, what is to be thought, what needs attention and concentration of mind, and what is worthy of paying any attention and thought at all in the first place. This selective aspect of the discriminatory intellect is called Vigyan.

Any body of knowledge is called Vigyan because it is verifiable and derived at by application of intellect and mind free from any pre-conceived notions and belief. Consciousness is called Vigyan because it is self-sustained, self-enlightened, self-illuminated, radiant and glorious; it is a fount of knowledge and awareness, of wisdom and enlightenment. All other entities in this creation have whatever they have because of the potentials and powers bestowed to them by this consciousness. Their very relevance and importance and significance are there because the consciousness has given them this privilege. These entities are nothing else but a marvelous display

of the magnificent majesty and potentials of the consciousness. This realisation is called Vigyan because it is based on intelligent application of knowledge and wisdom. It is Vigyan because it is empirical and thoughtful; it is rational and logical; it is truthful and real. Vigyan refers to a superior body knowledge that is not based on hearsay or conjectures. It has a solid foundation and steady relevance.

Information and knowledge that stand the test of logic and rationale is called Vigyan; it is this Vigyan that takes a man forward. With knowledge come joy and happiness, satisfaction and a sense of achievement, elation and a sense of fulfillment. In the spiritual realm, this leads to bliss and self-realisation. This realisation pertains to the awareness of the irrefutable and immutable Atma or soul which is consciousness. The macrocosmic counterpart of this individual Atma is known as Brahm. Hence, self-realisation is equivalent to Brahm-realisation.

Consciousness itself refers to the truthful knowledge of anything that is real and true, and not that is hypothetical and imaginary. That is why the Atma or soul is called consciousness and a personification of Vigyan.

Relationship between ‘Gyan’ and ‘Vigyan’—The difference between ‘Gyan’ and ‘Vigyan’ can be succinctly summed up in the statement—‘Brahm is’ or ‘Lord is’. This awareness and firm conviction of its truth is Gyan, while to say truthfully that ‘Brahm is I’ or ‘Lord is I’ is called Vigyan.

‘Gyan’ and ‘Vigyan’ are closely related to each other. The realisation or awareness that Atma is, inter alia, different from the body, and is the true identity of a creature, is called ‘Gyan’. This Atma is a very unique entity and is called the ‘true self’ of the creature. Gyan refers to self realisation and attainment of enlightenment about the absolute Truth and Reality in this creation. It encompasses a broad swathe of philosophy which is taught by the Upanishads, called Vedanta. When Gyan is put to test and a rational knowledge is arrived at, when it is witnessed or experienced in practical terms, it is known as ‘Vigyan’; it is logical derivation, confirmation and affirmation of certain things known in theory and now ratified as the unequivocal truth and the irrefutable fact, reasoned acknowledgement, or actual witness of facts so that there is no doubt or confusion as to their authenticity, veracity and truth. In other words, Vigyan is experimental Gyan, or Gyan put to practice by following the guidelines of Vedant.

Therefore, ‘Vigyan’ literally means intelligent application of mind; intelligence and rational logic; having in-depth knowledge; intelligent and rational learning or science of anything which can be verified; any knowledge which is empirical; rational, logical, scientific and applicable in practice.

The concept of Vigyan has been elaborately described in Chandogya Upanishad of the Sam Veda tradition—7/7, and in Brihad Aranyak Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition—3/7/22.]

Valli 3, Anuvak 6

[This Anuvak asserts that Anand or the sense of eternal and unbound happiness and joy, beatitude and felicity, bliss and peace, are synonyms for Brahm realisation. Anand is a manifestation of Brahm. In fact, the entire Valli 2 of this Upanishad is so-called precisely for this reason.]

1. Bhrgu realised and understood upon doing severe Tapa that Anand (the sense of eternal and unbound happiness and joy, beatitude and felicity, bliss and peace) is indeed a manifestation and synonym of Brahm. Verily, it is due to Anand that all the creatures have come into being (i.e. their origin lies in the sense of happiness and joy

that the parents have in conjugal relationship and the prospect of it producing an offspring), it is because of Anand that they live (i.e. every living being wishes to live because he finds happiness and joy in this life and enjoy the world), it is in Anand that they finally find their rest upon death (i.e. with death the living being is got rid of all the miseries and agonies he was subjected to while alive), and it is to obtain Anand that a creature does anything at all (i.e. all the activities of all living beings are aimed at providing him with happiness and joy, with pleasures and comforts, for no one would do anything if it harms him or gives him pain)¹.

With this realisation and achievement of eternal 'Anand', sage Bhrigu was fulfilled and contented; he had indeed realised and understood the essential meaning of Brahm and Brahm-realisation. [That is, he understands that obtaining eternal peace, tranquility, bliss and happiness is the aim and culmination of all spiritual practice, and that obtaining these eclectic virtues is tantamount to Brahm-realisation. In other words, if Anand is not achieved, Brahm-realisation has not been achieved.]

This knowledge pertaining to the supreme transcendental Brahm as preached by Varun (the Water God) to his son sage Bhrigu is so eclectic and sublime, so ethereal and subtle, so profound and all-inclusive that it is compared to the vast, infinite, fathomless and measureless sky element called the 'Param Vyom'. In other words, this knowledge is so profound and majestic, so magnificent and eclectic, so important and significant, and so vast and all-inclusive that it resembles the Sky in its reach and dimensions². This is because the sky is famous for its unique qualities of being astoundingly vast, measureless and fathomless, being mystically all-pervading, all-encompassing, all-inclusive and omnipresent, being neutral and indifferent to all the uncountable objects with numerous taints that are present in it simply because it is the habitat of the entire creation, and the irrefutable fact that it is pristine pure, absolutely incorruptible, extremely subtle and most sublime.

A person who is wisened to this eclectic and divine knowledge pertaining to Brahm becomes established in Brahm. [That is, once he has found the eternal fount of everlasting peace and happiness, no wise man would abandon it in exchange of sorrows and miseries so typical of the mundane and perishable world.]

A wise, learned and enlightened man is never in shortage of anything—such as food and livelihood as well as worldly prosperity and wellbeing in the form of livestock and offspring. He is great and acclaimed, he is famous and honoured, and he is praised, revered and lauded by all in this world (1).

[Note—¹The sexual process by which any creature is conceived is *Anand* personified because the activity gives extreme satisfaction and pleasure to both the parents. No one would enjoy sex if there was pain in it! A creature enjoys this world because there is Anand in it. No one likes to enjoy pain and miseries. So if one realises that Anand is a personification of Brahm then he would see Brahm in everything that gives him happiness, joy and bliss. In other words, if this world gives him Anand, he surely must be seeing Brahm in it. When one comes to understand the profound import of this observation then the same world which was entrapping for him hitherto proves to be liberating for his soul. This is because true Anand and Brahm are synonymous with each other, and Brahm can never be the cause of any bondage or serfdom; Brahm can never give miseries and torments.

Since 'life' in any form is Viraat Purush personified, Anand is the supreme Brahm who created this Viraat in order to enjoy its own maverick tricks. Why did Brahm create this illusionary creation? Well, he did it for the sake of his own pleasure much like a magician creates a magical world just for pleasure, knowing fully well that it has no substance in it. This fact that Brahm created this world for his own Anand has been elaborately described in Brihad Aranyak Upanishad in its Canto 1 in the process of genesis of creation.

Throughout one's life, a man seeks happiness and joy of one kind or another. No one seeks pain and sorrows, and if they come un-invited the man tries his best to throw them away. If the life is spent happily and joyously, it does not seem a burden; on the other hand a life of miseries and pains is horribly difficult to pass.

Finally, at the time of death, every man finds peace. This is because no matter how hard he tries, real Anand is a very illusive object; it is rarest of the rare thing that is available to any man. If he is financially well off, then he has bodily ailments afflicting him; if he is healthy then he might be living hands to mouth—and so on and so forth. The fact that death gives Anand is proved when someone says 'I will find peace only in my grave', or when we make the general statement 'his body was laid to rest' or 'let his soul rest in peace'. Why is it so if Anand was available in this life and not after death?

²The sky is the most subtle element amongst the five primary ones created at the time of creation—viz. sky, air, fire, water and earth. Sky is regarded as a synonym of and the nearest analogue to Brahm because of its unique qualities which depict the uniqueness of Brahm. Sky and Brahm are both famous for their unique qualities of being astoundingly vast, measureless and fathomless, being mystically all-pervading, all-encompassing, all-inclusive and omnipresent, being neutral and indifferent to all objects with numerous taints that are present in them because they are the habitat of the entire creation, and the irrefutable fact that they are pristine pure, absolutely incorruptible, extremely subtle and most sublime.

The blemishes, faults, vices, evils, sins, corruptions, misdemeanors and all sorts of digressions present in the world are like suspended dust particles, smoke, moisture, clouds, the numerous other things such as the various birds and the celestial bodies high up in the sky which create an illusion of a sky that is spotted or dotted or polluted or coloured or overcast with these uncountable objects that are extraneous to the sky, that are not integral to it but nevertheless appear to be a part of the sky. The sky has nothing to do with them; it remains absolutely unconcerned with and untainted by them, for once they are removed from the scene the sky is uniform and spotless from one end of the horizon to the other. This example is very practical and can be observed by anyone. That is why 'sky' is used as a metaphor to describe anything that remains free from the influences of those things that appear to be an integral part of it but are in actual fact not related with it by even any remote chance.

The sky has the opposite types of characteristics present in it. For example, the space of the vast cosmos has no form but the space inside a bottle or a pot takes the shape of the bottle or the pot respectively. Similarly, the vast sky in its basic and truthful form is spotless and without any colours, but it appears to be spotted with so many stars and specs of clouds and smoke of different colours as well as with birds of different forms, colours and shapes flying here and there. The colour of the sky during the evening or morning hours present a canvas of so many colours which appear to be real, but they are obviously a reflection of the colours of the light of the sun as reflected from the various impurities present in the otherwise spotless sky.

This is what is meant here—though the Atma or Brahma are inherently and basically pristine pure and clean, but when they come in contact with this world, the different flaws and faults of the latter cast their shadow and make them appear to have some or the other kind of spots in them.

The sky has such grand and majestic attributes as being vast, measureless, uniform, immutable, spotless, clean, colourless, calm, all-pervading, all-encompassing etc. The sky is the measurement of Brahm in the sense that if it was ever possible to measure the length, breadth and depth of the sky, it would then have been possible to measure Brahm. But that is not at all the case. The calmness of the higher reaches of the sky is experienced by Para gliders and can even be witnessed on top of mountains which are high above the ground and located somewhere in the space around the earth, symbolised by the sky, where there is an eerie silence. The

sky has no colours of its own; whatever colours that we see are actually the scattered sunlight.

Everything that exists does so in any one of these spaces. Every nook and corner where there is no solid or liquid is filled with space or 'Akash', which is a synonym of sky. It is omnipresent, all-pervading and all-encompassing. That is, these three forms of the skies, viz. the outer, the inner and that which is present inside the heart, are all the same; there is no distinction or demarcation or boundary or fundamental difference between any two skies. The apparent boundary or limitation imposed on the sky by the physical body or the membrane of the heart is only deceptive in nature. Once a person dies, for example, his body perishes, and the space present inside the heart merges indistinguishably with the space present inside the body when the body is cremated or decays when buried, and they together merge with the vast space present outside the body.

The 'sky', which was originally conceived as something that was 'void' or 'nothing', gets filled with 'air', simply because void can't exist, and the creation which came into being in this void needed some base for its origin and coming into being. The molecules or atoms of air are in a state of continuous agitation and flux; they collide with each other, they form a chain of molecules which give rise to different layers or strata of air which extend from the surface of this earth to the stratosphere. This continuous turmoil produces 'sound'. Various physical and chemical processes come into play, producing gases of varying density and characteristic features. Air has particles of dust and different gases, which produce the perception of touch. Friction of the various molecules present in the air produces static electricity which is observed as a scintillating display of atmospheric discharge of electrically charged particles in the sky often observed at the poles. This sparkle of static electric discharge is synonymous with 'fire'. Perhaps the Upanishadic sage got this brilliant idea when he observed a meteor shower during the night. The two elementary gases hydrogen and oxygen combine to form the molecule H_2O commonly known as 'water'.

With all these essential ingredients in place, the solidifying and cooling down process of nature starts its effect and produces soil and rocks which are symbolised by the 'earth' element. Then gravity and magnetic forces come into play, giving density, gravity and grossness, indicative of the grossness or heaviness of not only the earth but also of the air around it. Previously, before gravity and other forces of nature came into play, this air was subtle and very light; it spread universally and uniformly to all the corners of the cosmos. But with the gradual formation of different celestial bodies from the primordial cosmic gases, each having its own gravity and other natural physical and chemical forces, the air was pulled or sucked in, leaving the rest of the space beyond the reach of these celestial bodies into a big void.

Besides this point, the sky has many names and connotations depending upon the attributes exhibited by it. This implies that if Brahman has manifested itself as the sky element, then all these individual classifications of the sky pertaining to different existential forms are also evidence of the presence of Brahman in all these forms.

According to one interpretation, there are *five subtle skies* representing the space surrounding the five sheaths or 'Koshas' present in the body of a creature.. They are the sheaths that surround the Atma and are called 'Panch Akash'. These are the following—(1) the Food Sheath called Anna Maye Kosh; (2) the Vital Air Sheath called Pran Maye Kosh; (3) the Mental Sheath called Manomaye Kosh; (4) the Intellectual Sheath called Vigyan Maye Kosh; and (5) the Bliss Sheath called Anand Maye Kosh. Ref.-- Mudgal Upanishad, 4/5 of the Rig Veda.

According to another concept, there are ten subtle skies. They are the following:-- (1) Ghatakash—the space inside a hollow pot; (2) Mathakash—the space inside a holy building, such as a holy shrine, a monastery, an abbey etc.; (3) Hridayakash—the subtle space inside the heart; (4) Akash—the vacant space above the earth; (5) Suryakash—the space of the solar system; the space around the sun, or the solar

system illuminated by the light of the sun; (6) Paraakash— the space above or beyond the solar system, it is said to burn with the celestial fire; (7) Mahakash— the great sky that is aglow with divine illumination, the heaven; that space which is radiant with a divine glow; (8) Paramakash— the supreme sky beyond the Mahakash, it is said to be very magnificent and encloses everything that exists, including all the other skies; that space which is illuminated, all pervading, all encompassing and full of bliss and felicity; (9) Tattwakash— the elementary space that is at the core of the concept of space, or the space that surrounds the basic elements of creation; by natural corollary it refers to the subtle, sublime, ethereal and supreme space where the eternal, transcendental Brahm has his abode because Brahm is the cause of all the basic elements of creation; there is complete beatitude and felicity there; that space which surrounds the essential truth known as Brahm; and (10) Anatariksha—the physical space where stars are present in deep space; the inter-galactic space. Besides these, there is one more space called ‘Swarga’ which means heaven or the Duloka.

These skies have been ascribed different names just to facilitate understanding, and not because any one form of sky is fundamentally different from the other. For example, the space present inside the mud-pot, called the Ghata-kash, is the same as the space present outside the body of the pot. When the pot is broken, the demarcation wall of the body of the pot is removed, and both the space inside and outside of the erstwhile pot become indistinguishably and inseparably the same. Therefore, the various names are artificial and misnomers.

Paingalo-panishad of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, canto 4, verse nos.19-20 states that Brahm is like ‘Akash’ and how the realised ascetic becomes one with the supreme Soul upon his death by citing the instance of the ‘Ghata-kash’. It says—“ A truly realised and enlightened person called a Gyani dissolves himself and merges with the supreme transcendental entity (Brahm) wherever and however he dies because that supreme entity is all-pervading, omnipresent and immanent like the sky” (verse no. 19). This is because for a true Gyani his body is not his true self but it is his Atma or pure consciousness which is another form of the supreme entity and has the same set of characteristics that that entity, known as Brahm, possesses. When such a man dies, he, as his Atma, rides upon the Pran or the vital winds present inside his body and simply leave the latter and makes its exit from it just like a serpent leaving its old cuticle and effortlessly coming out of it.

Another interpretation is this—When such a wise man dies, then he simply discards his gross physical body. The sky or space present inside the body and the one outside it is one uniform and inseparable element; it is the artificial boundary of the sac-like body that has created an artificial division between the two. So when this artificial demarcation is removed, it is but natural that the two skies become one. Further, a wise man is expected to know that Brahm and sky are synonymously treated because the former has all the attributes of the latter—it is immutable, immanent, omnipresent, all-pervading, pure and untainted, vast and fathomless, infinite and eternal. The air fills the sky and the second element after the sky that is nearest analogue for Brahm, for it is the air the sound called the cosmic Naad or the divine ethereal sound of cosmic music of creation that made its presence felt before the visible creation came into being. Pran or the ‘vital spark of life’ is a name given to the air element present inside the creature that gives the body its much needed life and vitality.

Therefore, when he dies, his Pran simply coalesces with the air present outside his body, and his Atma present in the subtle sky of the heart, known as the Hridya-akash, simply merges with the supreme all-pervading Atma present in the sky outside the body because the limiting and segregating boundary of the body has now been removed.

“Even as the limited space present inside the mud pot is called ‘Ghata-kash’ just to identify it for hypothetical purposes and it becomes one with the space outside when the pot is broken, because it is essentially no different from the vast and

fathomless sky present outside the pot, the wise Yogi (ascetic or hermit) who has become truly enlightened and acquires the truthful knowledge of the reality, is able to access that supreme, immutable and infinite state of existence characterised by being without any form or shape, and which has or does not need any support for itself. This state is called 'Gyan Loka' or the abode marked by the state of existence where there is truthful awareness of reality, where there is truthful knowledge, where there is erudition and wisdom, where there is the light of self-realisation, and which is infinite, formless and all-pervading as the sky. Such an abode symbolises a treasury of Gyan, and hence it is called a Gyan Loka, and its inhabitant is Brahm who is Gyan personified" (verse no. 20).

According to another interpretation in the Upanishads, there are five subtle divisions of the sky as follows—The sky is the subtlest of the five elements (the others being air/wind, fire/energy, water and earth) in creation. Basically sky is indivisible and uniform, but for the purpose of study it has been hypothetically divided into five components or sections. These divisions of the physical sky are based upon the different forms it appears in with respect to an observer on earth. These divisions are then used to draw parallel with various metaphysical concepts in order to bring out the subtle differences between these concepts clearly and make them comprehensible. These hypothetical divisions are therefore used as metaphors for the purpose of study and comprehension, and not to suggest that the sky can be actually divided.

Now, technically the *Akash* is the first form of the sky just above the surface of the earth, the sky which is infinite, fathomless, measureless and eternal, the sky which appears bright during the day time as if it has its own illumination radiating from it, the sky which is dotted by so many things that are extraneous to it but appear to be an integral part of it, the sky which is there but cannot be touched, felt, smelled and tasted but only witnessed, but technically not 'seen' because something that is vacant cannot be seen had it not been for the impurities present in it, the sky which appears to have a wide variety of colours like a multi-coloured canvas but is fundamentally colourless, and the sky which is fundamentally pure and uncorrupt and untainted by any of these things. Therefore, this word 'Akash' is a hypothetical division of the immutable sky which is used as a metaphor to describe some aspect of metaphysics.

The second division of the sky is the *Paramakash* which is the sky seen during the night time. This portion of the sky is dotted by stars and is not totally dark because of the light reflected from the twinkling of the stars as well as the presence of the moon, the reflected light from the earth's lighted side and other celestial bodies that reflect sun's light.

The third division of the sky is the *Mahakash* which is the greater sky just like we have a city and its outer suburban out lying areas called the greater city area. This sky is the vast space beyond the solar system, and stretches into the deep recesses of the cosmos, and it includes the inter-galactic space. Obviously this is like hell where there is no trace of life and if any one goes there, even hypothetically, then he just gets lost to humanity. It sure is burning with hellish fire of cosmic explosions where new stars are continuously being born and destroyed, where new galaxies are formed and old ones get annihilated, where suns explode into black holes and supernovas create immense cauldrons of unimaginable heat and energy.

The fourth division of the sky is the *Tattwakash* which refers, as the name suggests, to the essential form of the sky element which is the subtlest form of the five elements created in creation and has, inter alia, such virtues as being infinite, eternal, immutable, immaculate, omnipresent, all pervading, all encompassing, fathomless, measureless etc.

Lastly, the fifth division of the sky is called the *Suryakash* or that portion of the sky that surrounds the celestial Sun. It is therefore as radiant and splendorous as the sun itself, and it is almost impossible to see it with naked eyes. The brightest object in the heavens, the Sun, is present here, and as is well known this Sun is a metaphor for

a number of things, such as life as well as the light of knowledge, wisdom, enlightenment and erudition, and therefore for the supreme transcendental Brahm. In fact this Brahm possesses all the virtues displayed by the sky, and therefore the latter is usually used as a metaphor for Brahm, though this Brahm's virtues are not limited to the ones displayed by the sky which forms only a fraction of all the virtues possessed by Brahm.

In this context, there are a number of Upanishads in the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition that describes these skies.

For instance, Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, Brahmin 4, canto 1, verse no.1-4, says that these five subtle skies are the following—(1) Akash—the vacant space above the earth that has no light of its own, and it is dark and neutral from within and without; (2) Parakash—the space that burns with a fire like that of hell from within and without; (3) Mahakash—that space which is radiant with a divine glow that effuses from within it and permeates everywhere within its jurisdiction; (4) Suryakash—the space of the solar system; it is aglow with the splendour and radiance of the sun; and (5) Paramakash—that space which is brilliantly illuminated, all pervading, all encompassing and full of bliss and felicity.

According to Advai Tarak Upanishad, verse no. 7 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, there are five divisions of the sky are they are the following— (1) the sky at the time of sun rise—viz, the sun with a rounded, brilliantly splendid disc, having the fierceness and radiance like that of the fiercely burning fire, is able to achieve a similarly exalted stature. He becomes an image of that 'Akash' or the sky itself where the sun is seen. (2) The next sky that is described now is the dark sky before the sun rises, the pre-dawn sky. It is filled with twinkling stars that give it its soft light. This sky is called the 'Paramakash'. (3) The third subtle sky is called 'Mahakash' and it is dazzling like the fire of Kaal or the fire of dooms day. (4) The fourth sky is called 'Tattwakash' or the sky that surrounds the essential and ultimate Truth. This sky is considered as the best subtle space and is endowed with a brilliant light. This sky forms the outer periphery of the next sky. (5) Finally, the fifth subtle sky is called the 'Suryakash' and it is brilliant and splendid as if there were millions of suns in it.

When these hypothetical divisions are used as metaphors to describe Brahm, they acquire a mystical interpretation. For example, with relevance the five forms of skies as described in Advai Tarak Upanishad, the interpretation is as follows-- A person who has wisdom and erudition to perceive Brahm as having the stupendous glory, radiance, splendour and energy as that possessed by the sun, the potentials and powers of fire, the life creating, sustaining and annihilating powers possessed both by the sun and the fire, and having the attributes of the sky—such as being fathomless, measureless, vast, subtlest of the five elements of creation, incorruptible, inherently spotless in spite of the presence of so many impurities, omnipresent, all-pervading, all-encompassing, eternal and infinite etc.—becomes enlightened and exalted in his mental stature. Such a man stands out amongst his compatriots and peers, and is honoured and lauded for his wisdom and enlightenment. This is a metaphoric way of saying that he becomes one like the sky element called *Akash*, and he remains firm in his convictions about Brahm and steadfastly established with the attributes of the sky. He is deemed to be as exalted and honourable as Brahm having the attributes of the sky element.

There is another interpretation to this verse. By realising Brahm, the ascetic acquires a divine halo around him which resembles the bright disc of the sun as it is seen during the day in the sky. His enlightenment and wisdom glow and emanate light which is enjoyed by others; they benefit from his presence amongst them.

Though the *Paramakash* representing the night sky appears to be dark and blank, it is actually not completely dark as the stars lend their light to it. The ascetic who is enlightened and realised represents the *Paramakash* because he seems to be bland, blank and disinterested in anything, but this is only a superficial view because darkness of the sky here does not mean ignorance or delusion but of remaining

oblivious to all the corrupting influences of the world that might taint an ascetic's mind and heart. His apparently bland and blank heart and mind are twinkling with numerous gems of wisdom which are highlighted only when the dazzle of the sun symbolising the various charms of the world are eliminated. This metaphor of the stars in the background of the dark sky is a brilliant depiction of the vast possibilities and potentials that unfold themselves before a Brahm realised person. This person has a clean slate like the canopy of the dark sky, but the vast treasury of wisdom and enlightenment that he has is likened to the uncountable stars in the dark canopy of the night sky.

The ascetic acquires such mystical powers as represented by the *Mahakash*, and he can even cause destruction and death if he so wishes.

This *Tattwakash* is the sky that surrounds the transcendental and supreme Truth in creation, which is Brahm, and forms the peripheral sky around the central core. The self-illuminated Brahm is the source of all light in creation just like the celestial sun which is self-illuminated and which lights up the length and breadth of the sky of the solar system. If an ordinary sun has this potential and power, then one can imagine and expect innumerable times more from that authority that has created this sun in the first place and has given it its powers and potentials. After all, even modern science has established that our sun is not the only sun in the universe, and there is uncountable number of suns scattered in the bowl of the cosmos, some still in the nascent stage while others on the verge of extinction. So it is easy to visualise that Brahm which is at the core of this stupendous cosmic cauldron if we were to take only a physical stand on Brahm. From the metaphysical view point, this Brahm is the supreme authority in creation and the Soul of it. It is Brahm that drives this dynamo known as the creation. Therefore the sky or space where it is located is also glowing with the light that emanates from it much like the sky around the celestial sun. When the ascetic has realised Brahm, his inner self also glows with the divine light of self enlightenment, and it becomes as radiant and glorious as the sky around Brahm, because this Brahm is present in his very own self. The whole body of such a realised ascetic becomes radiant and glorious like this sky.

Finally we have the *Suryakash* or that sky that is in the immediate vicinity and in the presence of that stupendous fount of divine energy known as Brahm. This sky forms the inner ring or layer that immediately surrounds Brahm, and therefore it is natural that it is more dazzlingly bright than the other skies that are not so close, and it has a brightness that resembles the blinding light of millions of suns just like the immediate space around the celestial sun. This immediate sky of the sun just cannot be seen by a naked eye, it is impossible to do so, because it would burn the eyes, whereas it is possible to see the sky at a distance from the sun. Similarly, the ascetic's inner core is dazzlingly bright with the light of self-realisation and enlightenment. All other lights, or all other knowledge and all other ways of attaining Brahm pale into insignificance when this light is witnessed by the ascetic in his own bosom.

The skies have also been described in Trishiki Brahmin Upanishad, 1/5-8 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition.

According to Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 4, Brahmin 1, verse no. 1-6, the Akash or the sky/space element is the Pratistha or established fame and glory of Brahm. It is a well established tenet of Vedanta that Brahm is synonymous with the Akash and is uniformly diffused throughout the sky so much so that it is impossible to segregate them much like it is impossible to separate salt after it is dissolved in water. The unique qualities of Brahm and Akash are similar as follows—they are infinite, eternal, uncorrupt, pristine pure, all-pervading, all-encompassing, omnipresent etc. The sky element is the nearest analogue to Brahm because it is the subtlest of the five elements in creation. Everything in creation came into being in the bowl of the sky, lives in this bowl and would perish in it, but this sky would be there even after that. All these unique attributes of the sky are like the grand attributes of Brahm on display, making the Akash the Pratistha of Brahm.

Please also refer to 1/5/12; 2/1/5; 2/3/2-5; 2/5/10; 3/7/8.12; 3/8/3-11; 3/9/13 of Brihad Aranyak Upanishad.

The concept of the Sky has also been elaborately described in Chandogya Upanishad, canto 7, section 12 of the Sam Veda.]

Valli 3, Anuvak 7

[This Anuvak outlines the edict that one should not insult or criticise or contemptibly treat Anna or food. Food is to be shown great respect because without it no life is sustainable; it forms the basis of life. In fact, food is the basic ‘Pran’ or life bearing Principal in the body of all living beings—for no one can hope to survive without food.]

1. One should make a vow not to criticise or contemptibly treat Anna or food¹. Pran is Anna, and the body is the consumer of this form of food². Both are dependant upon each other³.

Since the gross body called the ‘Anna Maye Kosh’—or the food sheath as it is formed from what the creature eats—in which the pure self of the creature called its Atma lives, and since Pran also lives in it in the form of its ‘vital life’ and the various ‘vital winds’ which enables the body to survive, perform its different functions, and live a fruitful life, it can be safely said that ‘Pran lives inside Pran’⁴.

A wise aspirant who is erudite and sagacious enough to understand this unique concept is firmly convinced of its veracity, and therefore he respects food and its eclectic divine virtues of life-creation and life-sustenance which are the unique powers exclusively possessed by Brahm. Consequently, he is able to acquire the ability to digest food⁵, and become prosperous and famed. He is well off with abundant livestock and offspring, and gets a good name and respect in the world (1).

[Note—¹This tenet of *respecting food* for its life sustaining properties is very relevant today also as it was many centuries ago when the Upanishads were composed as the world now faces an acute and unprecedented food crisis. As with other edicts of the Upanishads, directions given by erudite seers and sages ages ago are timeless ones, and they are evergreen principles no matter which time zone or geographical area they are applied to. Food is not to be wasted, and it ought to be shared with everyone even as the Atma and Pran are no single person’s fiefdom. This is borne out by the next observation in this verse that Anna is Pran. Pran is another word for ‘wind or air’ element, and wind or air cannot be restricted in the barn of the rich hoarder.

²Pran is a synonym of ‘life’ and of the ‘vital winds’ that sustain life in the *body* of a living creature. A body consumes fresh air in the form of breath rich in oxygen ; it inhales fresh air and expels impurities laden air rich in carbon dioxide and other gases much like a chimney in a factory. At the same time, it also uses the other forms of the same air element present inside it to keep going normally. This is a metaphoric way of saying that the body ‘consumes’ Pran.

The various vital winds called Pran present in the body are the following--(1) Pran, the wind element, as breath, that is exhaled as well as inhaled, and which is responsible for infusing and sustaining life in the body; it is considered the chief wind in the whole setup because without life no other wind would be of any significance to the creature; (2) Apan, the wind that passes down the intestines and is responsible for digestion of the food taken by the creature and its excretion through the anus and urinary organs (kidneys); (3) Saman, the wind that is responsible for equal distribution of nourishment throughout the body, as well as in circulation of blood;

(4) Udaan, the wind that helps the body to rise and move about, it also helps the body to expel toxic waste gases in the body through the nostrils and mouth in the form of exhalation and cough; and (5) Vyan, the wind that helps in maintaining equilibrium and pressure within the body, and it also controls the functioning of the other winds.

Besides the above, there are five subsidiary winds which act more like assistants to the chief Prans. They are--(1) Naag—this junior wind which helps in exhaling breath and belching; (2) Kurma—this subsidiary wind helps the eyelids to open and shut; (3) Krikar—this creates the sensation of hunger; (4) Devdutta—this creates sleep; and (5) Dhananjay—it prevents decay and deformation of the body immediately after death for some time.

According to Subalo Upanishad, canto 9, verse no.1-14 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, these ten winds have the following functions—(1) Pran—this controls eyes and the faculty of sight (verse 1); (2) Apaana—this controls ears and the faculty of hearing (verse 2); (3) Vyan—this controls nose and the faculty of smell (verse 3); (4) Udaan—this controls the tongue and the faculty of taste (verse 4); (5) Saman—this controls the skin and the faculty of touch (verse 5); (6) Vairambh—this controls speech (verse 6); (7) Mukhya—this controls the hands (verse 7); (8) Antarayaam—this controls the legs (verse 8); (9) Prabhanjan—this controls the anus (verse 9); (10) Kurma—this controls the genitals (verse 10); (11) Shyen—this controls the Mana or the thoughts and emotions (verse 11); (12) Krishna—this controls the discrimination, intellect and wisdom (verse 12); (13) Shwet—this controls Ahankar or the notion of ego, pride, arrogance, vanity etc. (verse 13); (14) Naag—this controls the ‘Chitta’ or the faculty of concentration, memory, sub-conscious, reasoning (verse 14).

³The *body cannot survive without Pran* because Pran means breath as well as the other vital winds that sustain the body from the inside and help it to carry on with its functions. If one stops breathing for instance, one would immediately suffocate to death. The *Pran needs the body* to dwell and have its importance displayed because it is the ability of the ordinary air element to keep the otherwise dead and inane body alive and active that it is so lauded and revered in this world. Had the wind or air element failed to do so, who would have bothered to honour them, for no one pays heed to things which are not of direct utility to him. Air is universally present everywhere, but one honours it in the ‘form of Pran’ and not in any other form as far as life on this earth is concerned. And this honour is available to Pran as long as there are creatures with a body, for otherwise it won’t be respected by dead bodies, or by a machine that does not need Pran and therefore it would not need to pay its tribute to it.

In brief, the honour and respect available to Pran and its utility is only till the time there are living creatures having a body that needs to breathe and that depends upon the vital airs to function. This is a symbiotic relationship between the Pran and the body of the creature.

⁴There is another way of looking at this concept of *Pran living in Pran*. Food has an inherent virtue of sustaining life, and life is the basic factor that lends value to food. Both are inter-dependent. Thus we can say that ‘life (Pran) lives in life (its life sustaining properties), and vice versa (i.e. life sustaining properties are inherent and integral to Pran)’.

⁵When one begins to treat Anna or food as a divine blessing for the living world and a personification of Brahm in the form of the essential nutrients that manifest themselves as the life-giving vitality, stamina, vigour and energy present in food, called the ‘Pran of Anna’, he begins to pay great respect to Pran and Anna that is usually reserved for some revered deity. So he stops indulging in overeating as well as gobbling up junk food for the purposes of satisfying his taste buds, and instead eats with care and wisdom only those things which are nutritious for the body, which are auspiciously acquired and which are sanctioned by the scriptures.

Food is to be eaten with the holy and eclectic view that it is like an offering to the sacred fire burning inside the body so that the different Gods who have taken up

residence inside the body in a symbolic manner are given their due nutrition and paid tributes for sustaining the body and keeping it fit enough so that the supreme Atma representing Brahm can live comfortably in it. The fact that food is not a medium to satisfy the desires of the sense organs for indulgence but a means of sustaining the abode of the Atma (i.e. the body) has been explained in Chandogya, 3/17/1-2. It says explicitly that those who treat food with the respect due to some holy entity go to an exalted higher abode, while those who treat it as a means of enjoyment of the senses go to a lowly world. Therefore, food is to be worshipped as a symbol of the supreme Brahm's astounding virtues of sustaining and nourishing this world.]

Valli 3, Anuvak 8

[This Anuvak lauds the importance of 'water' and its life giving and sustaining properties which are no less important than that of food. In this respect, water is Brahm personified.]

1. One should never show disrespect to Anna (food)—this is the great doctrine pertaining to food. Verily, 'Apaha' or water is Anna¹. 'Jyoti' (the self-illuminated consciousness present in the body as its vital life force) is the entity which enjoys the food, and it is for it that the food is meant and eaten².

Jyoti (light in the form of heat and energy as well as signs of life) is intrinsically present in water, and vice versa³. Hence, both are inter-dependent—life and heat depends upon water, and water depends upon them at the same time⁴.

A wise aspirant who is erudite and sagacious enough to understand this unique concept is firmly convinced of its veracity, and therefore he respects food and water equally and honours them for their eclectic divine virtues. Consequently, he is able to acquire the ability to digest food with the aid of water, and become prosperous and famed. He is well off with abundant livestock and offspring, and gets a good name and respect in the world⁵ (1).

[Note—¹This observation is very easy to understand. *Water* is the essential ingredient and component in the entire process by which food is made available in the first place, and then used by the body of the creature. It must be noted here that food needs water to grow, to be cooked, to be eaten, to be digested by the body with the help of digestive enzymes, to be circulated in liquid form as blood and then absorbed in the body through this fluid medium, and finally the toxic matters are eliminated in the form of urine and semi-fluid excreta. Even mucous and flesh that act as buffers and cushioning matters in the body are made of water as their chief ingredients. In fact, the major part of the body's weight consists of water.

Water is synonym with life as is evident from the fact that rains and monsoons are welcomed with cheers and festivities in all parts of the world, because without rains there would be drought and no crop to provide with food, and this would result in famine. When scientists search for signs of life in the universe, they search for traces of water molecules as these are sure shot signs of life no matter how distant in time it might be.

The importance of *Apaha* or water is emphasised in many other Upanishads, such as Chandogya of Sam Veda tradition—2/4, 5/16, 6/5/2, 6/6/3, 6/8/6, 7/10 etc., and in Brihad Aranyak of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition—2/1/8, 2/5/2, 3/7/4, 3/9/16 etc.

That is why water is regarded a 'God' known as Apaha. There are many connotations to this word. Let us see briefly what Apaha refers to.

(a) *Aapo* or *Apaha* refers to the water as flowing in a river, as clouds and as any fluid. It has been deified in the Rig Veda, 1/23/16-22. He is the patron God of 'water

on the move' or flowing water, such as rivers, rain, clouds etc. There are four Sukts devoted to him in Rig Veda—7/47; 7/49; 10/9; and 10/14. 'Aapo' is synonymous with Pran or life giving vitality; the essential vibrations of life; the rhythm and essential functions pertaining to life (Shathpath Brahmin, 3/8/2/4).

Apaha, the water element personified as a God, appears in the Vedas as follows—Rig Veda—1/23/16-22; 4/58; 7/47, 49; 10/9; Yajur Veda—2/34; 4/12; Atharva Veda—1/4-6; 18/3/56.

(b) *Parjanya*—This is the water element in the form of life-sustaining rain which falls down upon the earth from the sky in a symbolic way to seed life and then support it on earth. It appears in the Rig Veda, 1/164/51. This God is responsible for rains and life on the earth; he is regarded as one of the forms of the Wind God (Atharva Veda, 4/15/1).

(c) *Varun* is the Water God—he appears first in the Rig Veda, 1/25; 2/28. He is the patron God of water (Gopath Brahmin, 1/1/7). He is regarded as the king amongst the Gods (Taittiriya Sanhita, 3/1/2/7). He is the lord of all the Bhuvans or abodes (Rig Veda, 5/85/3). He is regarded as the patron God of the night (Atharva Veda, 9/3/18). Broadly speaking, this Varun is offered prayers and honoured in the Vedas as follows-- Rig Veda—1/25; 2/28; 5/85; 7/86-89; 8/41; 10/124/5, 7, 8; Sam Veda—589; Yajur Veda—4/31; 10/7; Atharva Veda—5/1-2; 20/92.

²The food that the creature eats is meant to keep the fire of life burning inside the body. Fire gives light, and this light is a metaphor for the divine effulgence emanating from the pure consciousness in the form of the Atma or soul residing inside the body of the creature in whose service the body and all other components of it are employed.

³Even in mythological lore, Lord Vishnu, the Viraat Purush in his cosmic gross form, reclines on surface of the Kshir-sagar, which is the celestial ocean of milk, on a bed made of the coiled body of the Shesh Nath, the legendary serpent.

The fact that water has inherent abilities to foster life shows that it must have some inborn 'heat and energy' called *Tej* in it, without which no life can be either conceived or sustained. It is indeed possible to have *Tej* in water as is proved by the fact that water of hot water springs is boiling hot while in the deep recesses of the ocean and the seas it is warm. This explains the concept of 'water having *Tej* in it'.

Now, we come to the next proposition—'water is present in *Tej*'. This can be understood when we see the functioning of the body of any warm-blooded creature. Water forms the major part of the weight of the body of such creature, and water has the natural tendency to extinguish fire and is inherently cold to touch. So apparently these two things—warmth which comes with the presence of the fire element on the one hand, and coldness which implies that this fire is not there—cannot co-exist. But the fact that they do in the warm body proves the point that 'water and *Tej* can co-exist' to sustain life.

This applies also to food. Water is needed to cook food, it is needed to eat it, digest it, absorb it and eliminate it, but it does not rob the inherent energy and warmth present in the food nor does it hinder the food from delivering its energy and heat to the creature in order to sustain its body.

⁴This concept of 'life and heat that depends upon water, and water depending upon them at the same time' is very much similar to the case of Pran as explained in Anuvak 7. If there was no water, no food would be useful for the man because of obvious reasons—right from its growth as crop to its cooking, eating, digestion and elimination from the body. At each step water is needed. *Tej* in its metaphor of Fire would scorch the earth and snuff out all forms of life if there was no water to counter its ferocity.

⁵This verse highlights the importance of conserving water. It is to be shown the same respect that one shows for food. In fact, food and water can be regarded as the twin legs on which the entire edifice representing the living creatures in this creation stands.]

Valli 3, Anuvak 9

[This Anuvak narrates the importance of Prithivi or earth and Akash or sky as sustainers of life in this visible creation.]

1. One should increase or enhance the production of Anna or food by understanding its importance vis-à-vis life in this creation¹. This is an important edict. Prithivi (earth) is a treasury of Anna (because the earth never exhausts of producing food), while the Akash (sky) is the one which consumes it (because the food grows in the space above the surface of the earth and the other elements present in the sky, such as the fire, wind and air help the food to be cooked, eaten and consumed by the body of the creature, leaving behind only residual matter which cannot be regarded as 'food' in its existing form)².

Verily, the earth has the sky element present in it as its integral part, and the sky also encloses the earth from all the sides³.

In a symbolic way, the Anna (represented by the gross body of the creature consisting chiefly of the earth element) is established in Anna (the physical earth upon which the whole living world lives and finds its abode)⁴.

A wise aspirant who is erudite and sagacious enough to understand this unique concept is firmly convinced of its veracity, and therefore he respects food as a manifestation of the supreme transcendental life-giving and life-sustaining Authority known as Brahm, complete with its unique and eclectic divine virtues. Consequently, he is able to acquire sufficient food, the ability to digest that food, and become prosperous and famed. He is well off with abundant livestock and offspring, and gets a good name and respect in the world (as an erudite, sagacious, learned, wise and enlightened man) (1).

[Note—¹Inhancement of the importance of food implies increase in its production and judicious use. It also means spreading awareness about food and employing better techniques for its production and harvesting, its proper cooking and nutritious value etc.

²The earth element is the one which forms the major component of the gross body of the living organism. This gross body is called the Anna Maye Kosh or the food sheath which encloses the Akash or the subtle sky representing the space inside the body in which the vital airs that are present in the body live. It is in one of such subtle spaces, called the Hridaya Akash that the pure consciousness known as the Atma lives. Pran or breath also lives in the space inside the body, e.g. in the lungs and its tubes. All other forms of vital winds in the body, such as Apaana, Samaana, Udaana, Vyan etc. live in the subtle space present in the body between the cells and tissues. Therefore, both the earth element represented by the gross body and its organs and tissues as well as the sky element represented by the different subtle spaces present inside the body co-exist. They have a defacto symbiotic relationship. The body would collapse and lose its texture and shape had it not been for the subtle sky inside it that is filled with air and acts as a buffer or cushion or bolster preventing it from doing so.

Even as an iron smith's bellow consumes air, this body consumes Pran representing 'age and life' of a creature. As time passes, the body representing earth element goes on getting progressively weaker and older, and finally dies. An ironsmith's bellows and the breath of the creature's body both need air to keep the fire burning—the former keeps the furnace fire burning while the latter keeps the fire of life burning inside the body of the creature. This 'air' is used as a symbol of the

sky element because the entire space of the sky is infused and filled with the air element. So we can say that symbolically the sky (as air) consumes earth (as the body) because the air stokes the latent fire in the body which would, in due course of time, consume the same body for which it was kept ignited. That is why the body gets aged and decrepit as time progresses.

Besides the points noted above, earth is a symbol of life because all forms of life live on earth. All the creatures draw their nourishment from earth and exploit it to meet their needs. In this way they symbolically consume the earth. The creature lives because it has Pran in its body; hence it is the sky harbouring this Pran in the form of the air element that is symbolically consuming the earth.

³The statement that the *earth and sky both enclose each other* is true when we consider the fact that the earth is not a solid piece of impregnable rock but porous and has deep as well as wide chasms, gulfs, gorges, crevices and holes in which air and space can easily be imagined to reside. Similarly, it is very obvious that the earth is surrounded by the sky because the earth dangles in the open space of the cosmos.

This fact has been very beautifully explained in the Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, 3/8/4, 7-8 in which sage Yagyavalkya answers hermitress named Gargi and satisfies her.

⁴This stanza might also mean that the *earth is established in the sky* as the latter harbours the former. Or, that the *sky is established in the earth* as is evident in the presence of air and space in the numerous crevices and countless holes present in the porous structure of the earth's soil.]

Valli 3, Anuvak 10

[This Anuvak stresses the importance of welcoming a guest and offering him food as a means of worshipping Brahm, and the rewards of such noble deeds. It is to be noted here that warm hospitality is a long tradition in India since the days of the Upanishads, and for which the country is world renowned. This Anuvak has six verses.]

1. One should never refuse shelter to anyone who has come seeking it. The guest should always be welcome with open heart and arms (with great humility and simplicity of heart, and without having conceit or any vested interest in doing so). This is an edict of the scriptures. In order to serve the guest and feed him, the person should endeavour to acquire as much food as possible from all available source (but guarding against obtaining food by employing any unrighteous and inauspicious means—because that would be a sinful deed).

If the guest is served properly cooked food by the host in a cheerful, affectionate and respectful manner, with great honour as reserved for God (i.e. if the service to the guest is not done as a burden, with fretting and fuming at having to serve him), then the host is blessed with the same opportunity of being served properly cooked food with due honour, cheer and affection when the time comes. [That is, if one serves the guest as he would serve his God then this noble gesture would stand him in good stead, and this blessing would ensure that wherever he goes he would be welcomed, properly looked after, and fed.]

If the guest is served food by the host but with a lesser degree of cheerfulness, affection and respect, then the host is also served in the same manner in some future date (by his own kinsmen when he sits down to eat with them or he happens to be visiting them in future). [That is, if a man serves his guest with less respect than what

he should have shown to him then one day the curse would boomerang upon on him and he would be shown the same degree of disrespect by others.]

On the contrary, if the guest is served food with disdain and disrespect, then the same fate awaits the host (1).

2. A wise person who understands this gives due respect to his guest.

The supreme Brahm is to be revered and honoured with firmness of faith and conviction as having the following eclectic attributes.

That Supreme Being is present in Vani or the faculty of speech and the spoken word in the form of its ability to give protection; in the Pran (breath) and Apaana (the wind that moves down the intestine and helps in digestion and elimination of waste from the body) in their abilities to give life and protection respectively; in the form of the abilities of the hand to do deeds and perform so many tasks that it does; in the form of the ability of the legs to move swiftly from place to place; and the ability of the excretory organs to eliminate waste from the body. This is the worship of the Supreme Being vis-à-vis a human being.

Now the symbolic form of worship of that Supreme Being in the various divine forces of Nature which are responsible for running the wheel of creation smoothly is being described. He is present as the element of satisfaction and fulfillment in the ability of rain to quench thirst and provide solace and succour to the parched creature; in the form of stupendous strength and majestic punch as well as the great powers and potentials that are characteristically present in electric; (2).

3. In the form of worldly prosperity and fame associated with the possession of animals (livestock, cattle, horses, elephants etc., because in earlier times the possession of a huge animal yard was a measure of a man's financial standing as a large brood of animals implied his financial ability to maintain them); in the form of the light present in the stars; in the form of sons and other kinsmen (as this established his authority and a large follower-ship); in the form of virility and intense hidden pleasure (of sexual union) residing in the genitals; and in the form of the eclectic divine virtues that are unique to the sky and form its integral character.

'This Brahm or the Supreme Being is the foundation and support of all that exists; he is the cause and revelation of everything that exists; he is the one who supports and protects everything in existence'—one should worship and honour Brahm with this firm conviction. This helps the worshipper to get established himself. In other words, the worshipper gets blessed and a divine flow of holiness overflows him to completely soak him with its divinity and holiness.

'This Supreme Being known as Brahm is 'Maha' (i.e. he is great, magnificent, majestic, exalted and supreme)'—the aspirant should worship Brahm with this firm conviction. This divine belief results in his being rewarded with the blessing of 'Maha' himself, i.e. he too becomes great, magnificent, exalted, majestic and high amongst his peers.

'This Supreme Being known as Brahm has revealed himself as the 'Mana' (i.e. he has revealed himself as the mind and the heart with their unique, astounding and stupendous powers and potentials)'—the aspirant should worship Brahm with this firm conviction. This divine belief results in his being rewarded with the blessing of having a wise and under-control mind and heart (3).

4. 'This Supreme Being known as Brahm has revealed himself in the eclectic and sublime quality of humility and simplicity, known as 'Namha'. At the same time, he

is worthy of being paid respects and revered by bowing most respectfully before him'. One should worship and respect Brahm in this auspicious way. The result is that the aspirant is himself shown great respect by others and they bow before him. All desires and aspirations bow before him, i.e. he is able to successfully accomplish his wishes and fulfill his desires.

'This eclectic, divine, holy, sublime, magnificent, astounding, enigmatic and mystical almighty Authority is Brahm and no one else'—one should worship it with this conviction and firm faith. This helps him to become firmer in his conviction and beliefs, as well as get established as a Brahm-realised wise and enlightened man.

'This is the Authority known as 'Parimar' (literally one who eats everything in creation, even such powerful five entities in Nature as electric, rain, moon, sun and fire which finally collapse into it at the time of their own end when the visible world comes to an end at the time of conclusion of one cycle of creation and destruction)'—one should worship and honour Brahm in this form with a firm conviction. This results in the death of all his enemies, including his nephews (i.e. his own family members) who might have malice and ill-will against him, who might keep enmity with him, who might be ill-disposed and jealous towards him, and might be conspiring for his harm and creating unnecessary problems for him.

Verily, he who is present in this Purush (the individual creature) is the one who is also present in Aditya, the celestial Sun¹ (4).

[Note—¹The fact that the *Sun* is a visible, the most glorious and splendid manifestation of Brahm is repeatedly endorsed by the Upanishads. When the persistent disciple might have asked the teacher that he must show him one example of the glorious and magnificent powers and form of Brahm because he is finding it too difficult to believe something which is so abstract as Brahm, the teacher thought out a way and must have told him to look up and see the Sun as Brahm personified. At this, the disciple exclaimed—'Ah! I just cannot see Brahm. It is very bright, dazzling, splendid and blinding. It is impossible to see the Sun and not become blind.' The teacher then explained—'Look, dear! Just because you can't see the sun in spite of its obvious presence, you can't deny it. Even if you are bold enough to gaze at it, you would become blind and then you wouldn't be able to see the Sun the second time. So don't deny the obvious just for the sake of argument. Even as you cannot see the Sun with your physical eyes though you are fully aware of its presence and can't deny it because the daylight that surrounds and drenches you is an indirect proof of the presence of Sun in the sky, likewise you cannot deny the presence of Brahm when you see the latter revealed in the form of the astounding variety of life and its huge kaleidoscopic canvas of colours visible all around you. In fact, you are yourself a living example of Brahm in all his majestic virtues and attributes.'

The Sun is the most clear, most powerful and the greatest evidence of the presence of Brahm in all its brilliant splendour and radiance. The fact that the Sun is a manifestation of Brahm has been asserted in Chandogya—1/6/3,5-6, 1/10/7, 2/9, 2/14, 2/24/12-14, 3/1-11 (Madhu Vidya), 3/18, 5/13, 6/4/2 etc., and in Brihad Aranyak—2/1/2, 2/5/5 (Madhu Vidya), 3/7/9, 3/9/5, 5/15 etc.]

5. A wise, erudite, self-realised and enlightened aspirant who has understood the essence of what is Brahm is filled with an overwhelming surge of ecstasy and exultation which is not definable; it is to be experienced and witnessed not cannot be described in words.

Such a person sees Brahm in the form of pure consciousness called the living Atma in all the different aspects of creation individually—right from the external gross body called the Anna Maye Kosh or the food sheath, he gradually progresses inwards to see the Atma as the overriding factor of life called the 'pure consciousness'

which is present in the Pran Maye Kosh or the vital air sheath, the Mano Maye Kosh or the mental sheath, and the Vigyan Maye Kosh or the intellect sheath. Finally, he reaches the fount of eternal beatitude and felicity known as Anand Maye Kosh or the bliss sheath within which this Brahm stays enshrined as the person's own Atma which is his true 'self' and pure cosmic Consciousness personified.

This transition from the grossest to the subtlest forms of existence fills him with unbound happiness and bliss; it makes him fulfilled. Naturally therefore he is exhilarated and ecstatic because he would have found a treasury of eternal spiritual richness which is rare and not available to ordinary and less fortunate people.

He acquires mystical authority, powers and potentials. He becomes as divine as his pure 'self', i.e. he becomes one like his Atma or Brahm. Hence, he becomes as blissful, as contented, as happy, as powerful, as potent and as revered as the Atma or Brahm.

Endowed with these mystical powers, he can fulfill all his desires and assume any form he wishes¹.

Then he is so much astonished at his discovery that he loses all inhibitions and merrily roams about, singing like a lark; he sings cheerfully in ecstasy and merriment as if he was singing the melodious hymns of the Sam Veda known as 'Sam'. Even his seemingly meaningless soulful moaning would be Sam (just like the instance of dogs howling but actually singing the hymns in their own way as mentioned in Chandogya Upanishad, 1/10-11).

Thus, he exclaims with overwhelming ecstasy—'Ha 3 Vu Ha 3 Vu Ha 3 Vu'² (5).

[Note—¹By saying 'he can fulfill all his desires' it is meant that now he need not search for happiness and bliss in worldly things, for he has laid his hands on a treasury of such virtues. Similarly, by saying 'he assumes any form he wants' it is meant that now he need not stick to his formal restrictions of being a householder or Brahmachari or a Sanyasi etc. and observe strict codes of conduct vis-à-vis the world. He need not even observe codes of dressing for the formal world. In other words, he would be so submerged in his blissful existence that such mundane matters do not bother him the least. He might even go naked without any qualms; he might act as if he was a king now and a beggar the next moment—so lost he is in his state of self-realisation and its consequential state of eclectic blissfulness.

²These are meaningless words, but they imply that he need not sing the glory of the supreme Lord in well defined articulate words having definitive meaning like expert Brahmins well versed in the Vedas. His spiritual ecstasy and outburst of spontaneous exultation itself is a prayer as much as is his moaning which also resembles the singing of the Sam Veda as done during formal singing by priests at a fire sacrifice just like the case in which the soulful howl of the dogs was deemed to be a prayer as described in Chandogya Upanishad, 1/10-11. The numeral '3' indicates the different meters or notes of music by which he sings; it might also mean that he repeats these letters or syllables as many times. This last observation is endorsed by the next verse where the ecstatic person repeats each fact that he has realised and understood three times to affirm the fact that what he says is indeed the truth. The words 'Vu Ha' are equivalent to saying 'Eureka! I've found; I've discovered! Hurray! Oh yes, oh yes! Hurray!!']

6. The realised person exclaims in exultation, 'I am Anna (or food); I am indeed Anna; I am Anna¹. I am Annaad (the one who eats and enjoys the food); I am indeed Annaad; I am Annaad². I am Shlok-Krit (one who brings about coordination between the food and the one who eats it); I am indeed Shlok-Krit; I am Shlok-Krit³.

I am the one who is the Truth (the eternal Brahm) that was present even before the first born Hiranyagarbha⁴ came into being at the very beginning of the start of this visible gross creation. I am the Viraa⁵ who preceded the other Gods in creation. I am the center from where the fount of Amrit or the ambrosia of eternity and bliss springs forth (i.e. I am the Consciousness, the Atma of the world)⁶.

He who gives me to those who lack access to me is actually protecting me⁷. On the contrary, those who are indulgent in food, I devour them in the form of food itself⁸.

I conquer the entire world⁹. My eternal light (i.e. the Atma's pure consciousness and its enlightenment; the light of wisdom, truthful knowledge, erudition, enlightenment and awareness of the eternal and universal Truth) is as glorious and splendorous as the brilliant and dazzling light of the Sun.

Verily, this is the Upanishad (i.e. these are the great spiritual and metaphysical tenets and doctrines enunciated and elucidated in this Upanishad; this is the 'truth' proclaimed and affirmed by this Upanishad).

A person who understands what has been taught here acquires the same stature and abilities as declared herein; he attains the supreme stature of Brahm realisation (6).

[Note—¹The word *Anna* literally means food, but here it implies the essential life bearing sublime and subtle virtues and qualities present in the gross form of the physical food that are being lauded, because the gross aspects of food is useless for the creature and is eliminated by way of excreta and urine from the body after its 'life' in the form of vital nutrients have been extracted by the body for its use.

Therefore, the wise and self-realised man is suddenly aware of the fact that he is not the perishable gross body which he had hitherto been regarding as his self, but the Atma which is pure consciousness and the worthy essence of his gross body. So, he virtually extracts this essence called the Atma and discards the gross body.

There is another interpretation of this stanza. It means that the person realises that he is simply a toy that is being enjoyed by the supreme Brahm as part of his playful creation.

²At the same time, the man realises that he is also the one who is enjoying this world much in the same manner as Brahm does. Why is it so? Because he realises that he is a personification of Brahm. As such, he is the one who enjoys all that exists in this creation. In fact, all of it is meant for his enjoyment. But does it mean he is given a blank cheque or license to do what he pleases, even commit adultery for instance. No, not at all, for such pervert and sinful deeds do not even cross his mind and it is incredulous to even imagine them from a man of his high spiritual stature.

The main idea in this verse is to stress the level of spiritual exultation when one realises the Truth of his own self.

³This third observation emphasises that the person living in this world is the one who produces food, is the one who cooks food, is the one for whom food is meant, is the one who eats food, is the one who benefits and enjoys food, is the one who excretes food (as waste which is converted into manure and other organic forms of food), and is the one who gets converted into food when the body dies (by decaying and breaking up into the primary ingredients from which this body was constructed in the beginning). It's such a unique phenomenon that the self-realised man is awe struck and astonished by its magnificent cosmic scale.

His astonishment is revealed in his repeating each statement three times.

The word *Sholka* also means the sacred verses of the scriptures. So this observation that 'I am Shloka' also implies that the enlightened man understands that he personifies and exemplifies the grand tenets and doctrines of the scriptures. So he must be most fortunate one in creation, and that he must use this golden opportunity to attain his final emancipation and salvation in this body of a human being. Besides

this, he must ensure that he leads a life which is exemplary and conforms to the tenets and doctrines of the scriptures. This would automatically ensure that his life becomes auspicious, righteous and noble of the highest order.

⁴*Hiranyagarbha* is the macrocosmic subtle body of creation. It is from Hiranyagarbha that the subtle body of the creatures came into being.

⁵The *Viraat* is the macrocosmic gross body of creation. It is from Viraat that the gross body of the creatures came into being.

⁶The *Amrit* refers to the Atma present in the gross body.

⁷In other words, when the ‘truth’ about the Atma, referred to as *me* here because it is the ‘true self’ of the creature, is preached to others who are unaware of it so that they too become enlightened, it is like preserving its divine and holy value for posterity. It is like keeping the lamp of knowledge burning, or the torch carried forward on its onward journey to the next generation.

⁸In other words, those who do not understand the subtle and sublime meaning of the esoteric statements ‘I am Anna’ etc. as made in this verse, and start recklessly enjoying the sensual pleasures and indulgence in food and appeasing the senses, verily I would kill them. Such men get so many diseases pertaining to wrong eating habits and wrong food that it is tantamount to food killing them. Here, ‘the food doing the killing’ means that truthful wisdom which is the characteristic hallmark of the enlightened Atma abandons them, and they become ignorant fools who are stupid enough to do the most hateful of things and indulge in the most despicable of deeds, thereby leading to their natural destruction. Refer Chandogya Upanishad, 3/17/1-2.

This stanza also means that one should first feed others, such as his guests and those who are starving, before eating himself. This noble way of eating has its auspicious affects on the Spirit.

⁹This statement refers to the universal truth that everything that exists would ultimately end and collapse into the entity that would last after its cessation, i.e. in the Supreme Being known as Brahm.]

-----Shanti Paath-----

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Chapter 3

Brahm Upanishad/Brahmo-panishad

Dedicated exclusively to the exposition of the divine and eclectic form and virtues of the supreme transcendental Being known as Brahm—the almighty, majestic, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, all-pervading and all-encompassing Authority in creation who is both the origin as well as the end of what exists, who is the cause and the effect of everything in existence, and who is so enigmatic and esoteric that the even Vedas, the eternal repositories of divine and truthful knowledge, had to yield while trying to describe Brahm by saying ‘Neti Neti’ or ‘not this, not this’ or ‘not this not that’—this Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition also goes on to describe the paths by which such a stupendous and astounding Brahm can be realised by a sincere seeker.

There are a total of twenty three verses in this Upanishad. It describes, inter alia, the four legs of Brahm, the latter’s eternity and imperishability, the true meaning

of emancipation and salvation, Brahm's three symbolic forms represented by the three intertwined strands of the sacred Yagyopavit—the thread worn by Hindus across their chest—along with its great metaphysical and spiritual value and significance, and the symbolism of the tuft of hair on the head. This Upanishad goes on to describe the importance and significance of Tapa (austerity, penance and sufferance of hardships) and Satya (steadfastness in 'truth') in the path of Brahm realisation.

It also succinctly outlines the four states of consciousness and the presence of the Atma in each of them.

Finally, it concludes that Atma, the pure consciousness, and Brahm, the supreme transcendental Divinity are synonymous with each other. Brahm remains dissolved in this creation just like butter being integrally present in fat-rich curd, oil in the sesame seed, and the fire being latently but inseparably present in the firewood.

-----Shanti Paath-----

ॐ सह नावतु । सह नौ भुनक्तु । सह वीर्यं करवावहै । तेजसि नावधीतमस्तु । मा विद्विषावहै ।
-----ॐ शान्तिः । शान्तिः । शान्तिः ।!!!

The meaning of this Shanti Paath is given in appendix no. 1.

1. There are four place in the body of the Purush (literally a 'man' who is a visible manifestation of Brahm, the divine, supreme and transcendental Being whose macrocosmic gross body is known as the Viraat Purush, and the latter has revealed himself as the individual living being, the man, also known as 'Purush' after his parent, the Viraat) where the pure consciousness representing the divine Being lives. These four places are the navel, the heart, the throat and the Brahm-Randhra¹.

At all these four places, the supreme Brahm, with its glorious divine virtues symbolically represented by its four legs, is present². That is, these are the four sites where the divine Being, in all his cosmic divine splendour, radiance, grandeur and majesty, lives in the body of the individual creature and displays his astounding powers as the pure consciousness, which is also known as the Atma³.

In the same vein, Brahm as the Atma has also been envisioned to exist in the four states in which consciousness lives--viz. the Jagrat state called the 'waking state of consciousness', the Swapna state called the 'dreaming state of consciousness', the Shushupta state called the 'deep sleep state of consciousness', and the Turiya state called the 'blissful state of consciousness'⁴.

Each of these of four states of existence of the creature (i.e. of the consciousness residing in the creature as it's pure and true 'self' known as its Atma) are symbolic revelations of one of the four divine aspects or 'legs' of Brahm. This is the micro level revelation of Brahm in the form of the individual creature.

The same Brahm also shines and makes its self-illuminated presence felt at the cosmic level as Brahma the creator, as Vishnu the sustainer, caretaker and protector, as Shiva the concluder, and as Akshar literally meaning the imperishable Lord of creation (known as 'Ishawar'). These four revelations of the Supreme Being (Brahm) stands for the four states in which Consciousness exists—viz. Brahma represents the waking state called the Jagrat state of consciousness, Vishnu represents the dreaming state called the Swapna state of consciousness, Shiva represents the Shushupta state of

consciousness, and Akshar (pronounced as ‘Akchar’) represents the Turiya state of consciousness. [This fourth state is called ‘Akchar’ because it represents the cosmic Atma or Brahm that is inherently imperishable, infinite and eternal, and hence called ‘Akchar Brahm’. The word Akchar also means a letter, and therefore it refers to the divine ethereal word OM which is used as a synonym for Brahm.]⁵

The glorious Aditya or the Sun shining brilliantly in the sky is a visible manifestation of Vishnu (who is none but the Viraat Purush—the cosmic gross body of Brahm and from whom the rest of the creation, including the creator Brahma and the concluder Shiva, have come into being)⁶.

The supreme Lord or Ishwar (Brahm) has no physical body with either the subtle organs such as the Mana (thinking mind and emotional heart), or the gross physical organs such as the ears, the legs and the hands (because Brahm has no physical attributes and physical forms). Brahm is a divine entity that is an embodiment of light and illumination emanating from cosmic Consciousness, also known as the Atma⁷ (1).

[Note—¹These are the *four sites* where the four important *Chakras*, or the whirling circles of cosmic energy inside the body of the creature, are located. It is believed that these Chakras have trapped divine mystical energy which can be unleashed by means of Yoga, and once released they enable the aspirant acquire mystical powers that are rare and very potential. These four Chakras are called respectively the Nabhi Chakra, the Hridaya Chakra, the Kanth Chakra and the Brahm Randhra Chakra.

Meanwhile, the *Brahm Randhra* is the hair-like slit present at the top of the skull from where Brahm entered the body of the individual man at the time of creation, and then took up its residence in the man’s mind-intellect complex from where Brahm controlled the entire chariot represented by the body of the individual man as well as the all other creatures in a similar way, thereby exercising an overall control over the entire creation which ran the risk of going off track and meeting an accident if there was no authority to control and regulate it. It is believed that at the time of death, the Pran or life sustaining vital winds in the body of a realised and attained ascetic leaves the body through this slit to merge with the ‘elements’ outside.

²The *four legs or pedestals of Brahm* have been elaborately described in Chandogya Upanishad of Sam Veda tradition in its Canto 3, Section 18, and Canto 4, Section 5-8. It would be pertinent here to recapitulate these sections very briefly to see which are those four symbolic legs or pedestals on which Brahm and his magnificence rests.

Canto 3, Section 18 of Chandogya Upanishad describes the so-called symbolic *four legs or pedestals of Brahm* as follows:--

“Verse no. 2 states that Brahm, when investigated according to the ‘Adhyatmic’ philosophy of Vedanta, is said to have four pedestals or feet, such as the faculty of speech, the Pran or the vital wind force that sustains life in the creature’s body (as the breath and other vital winds), the faculty of sight located in the eyes, and as faculty of hearing located in the ears. Similarly, Brahm according to the ‘Adhidaivic’ school of thought has four pedestals or feet such as Fire (Agni), Wind (Vayu), Sun (Aditya) and the different directions (Disha). So, these are the two views of Brahm based on these two schools of thought or philosophy.

Verse no. 3 says that speech or voice is the 4th leg of Brahm who is revealed in the form of the ‘Mana’, or mind and heart of the creature. This speech or voice is glorious and radiant with the scintillating light or brilliant illumination effusing from the ‘fire’ element. An aspirant who knows or realises this fact becomes blessed with good fame and glory, magnificence, splendour and radiance that is associated with Brahm and known as his ‘Tej’.

Verse no. 4 says that the ‘Pran’ is Brahm’s 4th leg or pedestal. It is energised or infused with the light and vitality of life by the mind as well as by the ‘air or wind’

element which is Brahm's 4th leg according to 'Adhidaivic' philosophy. A person who knows or realises this fact is blessed with good fame and name, glory and magnificence, radiance and splendour laced with the stupendous powers of the mind and the vitality and agility of air which are manifestations of Brahm.

Verse no. 5 says that the 'eyes' are the symbolic 4th leg or pedestal of Brahm (who is invisibly, subtly, unperceivable present in the eyes in the form of the innate ability of the eyes to 'see'). It is glorious, illuminated and radiant with the splendourous glow and brilliance emanating from 'Aditya' (Sun) which has its symbolic presence in the eyes and which represents Brahm according to the Adhidaivic School of philosophy. An aspirant who knows and realises this fact is blessed with good fame, name, majesty, splendour, radiance and stupendous glory which resembles that of the Sun and which is associated with Brahm.

Verse no. 6 says that the 'ears' are the 4th leg or pedestal of Brahm who is in the form of the mind and heart or 'Mana' of a man. It is activated by the inputs from the various directions which are Brahm's 4th pedestal at the Adhidaivic level. A person, who knows and realises this fact become endowed with good fame, glory, majesty, powers and wisdom associated with Brahm.

It is to be noted here that all these aspects of the divinity of Brahm have been called 'the 4th leg' of Brahm, implying that all of them are equally important and significant, and the counting can be done from any of these four legs to see how Brahm has been established in this world and to get an idea of his greatness and magnificence.

Similarly, Canto 4, Section 5-8 of Chandogya also describes the symbolic four legs or pedestals of Brahm, albeit with a different language. Let us now see what it says:--

The 1st leg of Brahm (canto 4, section 5, verse no. 2)-- The four directions of the compass —east, west, north and south (the four cardinal points) —represent one leg of Brahm who is known and defined by the name of 'light', and who is 'self illuminated'.

The 2nd leg of Brahm (canto 4, section 6, verse no. 3)--The second leg of Brahm has the following connotations—the 1st aspect is earth, the 2nd is Antariksha (the sky or space above the earth), the 3rd is Duloka (heavens), and the 4th is the ocean (here referring to the vast inter galactic space or the space beyond the limits of the known universe as well as the ocean on earth which covers 3/4th of the surface of earth, and represents that celestial ocean).

The 3rd leg of Brahm (canto 4, section 7, verse no. 3)--The four aspects of the 3rd leg or pedestal of Brahm are the following —the fire, the sun, the moon and the electric.

The 4th leg of Brahm (canto 4, section 8, verse no. 3)—'The Pran (vital wind which sustains life; breath), eyes, ears and Mana (heart, mind and intellect complex)—these are the four aspects or divisions or forms or manifestations of the 4th leg of Brahm.

There is another way of interpreting this stanza. The Viraat Purush is represented by the sacrificial horse (Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 1, Brahmin 1). A horse has four legs. Here the term 'leg' is a metaphor for the four pedestals upon which the entire edifice of creation rests. These four legs represent the four aspects of the divine cosmic glory of the Supreme Being. It is on these four legs that the magnificent sacrificial horse stands in the mid of the sacrificial venue for the rest of the assembly to see and pay its obeisance to it—thereby symbolising the fact that in order to appreciate the glories and magnificence of the supreme transcendental Brahm one has to have a holistic view of the Divinity.

The four vital places in the body cited in this Upanishad, viz. the navel, the heart, the throat and the Brahm Randhra, mark the four places where Brahm has planted one of its four symbolic legs to establish itself in the body of the creature. These four sites are the locations of the four vital Chakras or the whirling dynamic cosmic energy

centers located inside the body. They are the Nabhi Chakra, the Hridaya Chakra, the Kantha Chakra, and the Vyom Chakra. The Upanishads dealing with Yoga assert that the subtle energy that is trapped in these Chakras has to be unleashed by a spiritual aspirant in order to realise Brahm, or know Brahm or become Brahm-realised. Unlocking of the trapped energy of these four great centers of the body would unleash the dynamic spiritual energy that is equivalent to making the aspirant similarly empowered as Brahm.

Even from the practical standpoint, these four sites have biological importance. The Naadis or ducts that represent the nerves present in the body are said to have their origin in the central cluster of Naadis present in the region of the navel (Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 14-15). The Naadis that represent the veins or arteries in the body have their nodal point in the heart because the heart is the pumping center of the body's blood and controls circulation (Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 6, verse no. 4). The throat control breath, and is therefore the site of Pran without which no life is ever feasible. Finally, the brain which is the site of the mind and intellect is located in the head where the Brahm Randhra resides, and it is more than evident that without brain the body would be no better than a vegetable or any other member of the plant kingdom. Thus we deduce that this statement that Brahm is present in the body with its four legs located at these four sites is a metaphoric way of acknowledging the inviolable and undeniable importance of these four locations in the creature's body. These four places mark the four symbolic legs by which the 'consciousness' present inside the otherwise gross and inane body makes itself felt as 'conscious life' in this world. These four sites are indispensable for the Atma to live in the world and interact with it. These are therefore the symbols of the presence of Brahm inside the body of the creature.

³It would be noted here that the mystical *Brahm*, who has been described here to have the four legs representing the entire creation with all its diverse virtues and unique qualities, resides in the creature's own self. In other words, Brahm is to be found internally and not externally, and therefore there is a need for self-realisation if one really wishes to come face-to-face with the supreme Lord of creation. Brahm is no 'ordinary Being', but one who is an all-inclusive and all-incorporating divine entity having four types of subtle and sublime forms that are symbolically called his 'four legs' because they establish his divinity and holiness as well as his supremacy and unquestioned authority in the entire creation, right from its conception till its conclusion. Wonder of wonders is that such an astounding and stupendous found or spring of divinity, holiness and spiritual powers lives in the individual's own body but still the person seems to be drowned in sorrows and miseries associated with this body as well as the world in which he lives. It is such an ironic situation that whilst the diamond is in one's own closed palms, he goes on begging for alms (i.e. seeking happiness, contentedness, peace and bliss) from door to door!

⁴These four states of existence of consciousness are briefly the following: the *waking state* is one in which the creature is awake in this world and interacts with it, his sense organs of perception remaining active and his brain receiving stimuli through them originating from the external world. In the *dreaming state*, the mind remains active while the body sleeps and inactive externally. During this state the mind has a free run of its imagination and lives in a world of dreams, doing things that it would like to do while awake but unable to do so for a variety of reasons. The *deep sleep state* is the state when even the mind rests, and there is complete calmness. This is a transient state because the mind reverts back to its old world and relives its old life within a short span of time. On the contrary, the Turiya state is a perpetual state of blissfulness when the mind remains oblivious of the external world even though the person seems to be wide awake and going about his duties in a normal way. This is a state attained by ascetics and sages who practice regular meditation and contemplation, and it results in their permanent peace and blissful demeanors.

⁵These four concepts are easy to follow. *Brahma* the creator is synonymous with all the activities associated with the creation of this world—all the hustle and bustle of daily life pertaining to creation and their accompanying successes and failures, their joys and sorrows, the physical activity necessitated for creating new wealth and propagating creation by creating offspring etc. are all signs of the creative activity of Brahma. Since any physical production, its enhancement and its destruction that pertains to this visible gross world of material objects needs the involvement of the body, the *Jagrat state* or the waking state is associated with Brahma. In other words, the *Jagrat state* is a state in which the supreme Brahm assumes the role assigned to Brahma in order to carry forward the process of creation according to the laws and rules of Nature laid down by him at the beginning of creation. This is also why Brahma is also considered to be the forefather of the entire visible world which the person can see and observe while awake.

Next comes the *Swapna state* or the dreaming state which stands for the supreme Brahm's manifestation as *Vishnu* the sustainer and protector. The fact that during the dreaming state a man can sometimes imagine of things that portend what holds in the future and it is often found that problems that seem insurmountable while awake are solved during dreams are evident proof that the consciousness works during this phase to protect the creature from future dangers and provide an answer to many of the questions that have been vexing it. Many great discoveries have been made while the discoverer was sleeping and 'dreamt' of certain things that was simply beyond conception at that time. Brahma could create, but development and up gradation of what was created was the job of Vishnu. That is why it is said that 'the way to great achievement is to dream big and then implement those dreams into practice'. Besides this point, the body needs complete physical rest to recuperate its lost energy and it is not possible to dream while one is actively involved in this world, so the importance of sleep when one can dream is a metaphoric way of saying that Brahm, in his revelation as Vishnu, 'protects' the creation when the creature sleeps and dreams. That is why dream is regarded as a sign of sleep when the body is completely at rest as opposed to a sleep when one is in physical discomfort and tosses and turns about the whole night. This is also why the Purans have depicted Vishnu as perpetually reclining in a state of sleep on the surface of the celestial ocean of milk called the *Kshirsagar*.

The third state of *Shushupta* or deep sleep is when the mind is also asleep. This state is like meditation of the Atma while the body is sleeping, and it similar to the meditation practiced when the body is awake. Since deep meditation makes both the body and the mind calm and rested, this state of consciousness is especially invigorating for the spirit. Even as the person remains oblivious of all kinds of external impressions and even of severe physical pain during meditation, this *Shushupta* state produces absolute calm and tranquility which is like the one obtained when one dies. All his worldly worries are exhausted and shut off; he remains in a blissful state of meditation during sleep. These two reasons—one, his blissfulness and remaining completely calm as obtained during sessions of deep meditation and contemplation, and second, this state resembling the calmness and peace obtained at the time of death—makes it a revelation of Brahm's form as *Shiva or Rudra* because this God is a synonym of perpetual meditation and blissfulness as well as the one who concludes this creation. This is why Shiva has been traditionally depicted by the scriptures (Purans) in a perpetual trance-like state of *Samadhi*, doing meditation on a constant basis, and in a perpetual blissful state, remaining naked like an ascetic and with no care in the world. He is also regarded as the 'concluder' symbolised by the fact that during this state of *Shushupta*, the creature has exhausted all its desires and aspirations as well as all its pleasures and miseries—i.e. every cause of worldly turmoil has been 'concluded'.

Finally, we come to the fourth state called *Turiya* or the state of perpetual bliss. This is the state that goes beyond the above three states, and it is achievable when the

consciousness does not revert back to the earlier states. Then, obviously only one state remains, and the creature does not have to oscillate between these three states every now and then. Since this state gives permanence and stability to blissfulness and peacefulness, it is called *Akchar*—something which is imperishable and eternal.

⁶The fact that the *Sun* is a manifestation of the Viraat Purush and the eye of the creation has been repeatedly stressed in almost all the Upanishads. For example, Chandogya 1/6/3,5,6; 1/10/7; 2/9; 2/14; 2/24/12-14; 3/1-11; 3/18; 5/13; 6/4/2 etc.; and Brihad Aranyak 2/1/2; 2/5/5; 3/7/9; 3/9/5; 5/15 etc.

At the time of creation, the Sun God had taken up his residence in the eye of the creature to illuminate the world for him at his individual level just like the celestial Sun lights up the world at the macro level of creation. The Sun is like the bulb of the headlight, represented by the eye, of a car which is represented by the body. The headlamp would be useless if the bulb did not have its presence there. It is the bulb that illuminates the dark world outside for the car to move on. This bulb of the car's headlamp is like the celestial Sun for the world at large. The former is at a micro level while the latter is at the macro level. This metaphor would explain the importance of the saying that the *Sun resides in the eye*. At the time of creation, the Sun-God was ordered by Viraat Purush to be established in the eye of a man. So, whereas the worship of Brahm in the eye is his Adhyatmic form of worship, worshipping him in the Sun is the Adhidaivic form—Aeitero-panishad, 1/2/4.

'Aditya' or the Sun God appears in the Vedas as follows—Rig Veda-- 1/41/4-6; 2/27; 8/47/14-18; 10/185; Sam Veda—395; 397; Yajur Veda—23/5; 34/54; Atharva Veda—5/3/9-10; 16/3.]

2. [The realisation that the supreme transcendental Brahm that exists throughout this creation in an invisible form and in an universal manner, being dissolved and dispersed in it uniformly and having no special attributes of its own but acquires those of the form in which it exists, and that whatever that exists in this visible or invisible world as well as the animate or inanimate world is nothing else but one or the other manifestation of the same universal Brahm, makes a wise man realise the truth of the statement that--]

This *Loka* or world should not be viewed in the shape and form it apparently appears to be in, but as a vivid manifestation of the supreme transcendental Brahm or the cosmic Consciousness in that form. The truthful form and nature of this world is not what it appears to be from its exterior, but the consciousness known as its Atma or 'essence' that pervades and pulsates throughout its texture in a uniform and universal manner¹. Similarly, it is Brahm that exists in the form of numerous *Devas* or Gods in this creation, having countless numbers and diverse forms, having numerous attributes, qualities, authority and powers, performing so many varied activities, and controlling different functions of the world. But it must be remembered that all these Gods derive their authority, strength, abilities and power from Brahm, for they have no existence sans Brahm. Therefore, these Gods should not be viewed independently as some superior authority of creation but merely as personifications of Brahm revealed in their specific forms to carry out specific functions of creation (which is like delegation of powers and authority in modern management)².

Likewise, Brahm has revealed itself in the form of the eternal body of knowledge known as the *Vedas*. That is, the Vedas are manifestations of the supreme Brahm inasmuch as they embody the eclectic virtue of knowledge, wisdom and erudition that are an integral part of the divine Consciousness and its distinguishing component. The creation is driven by knowledge which is synonymous with light and

illumination as well as intelligent life, for the opposite of it is ignorance symbolising darkness that represents death³.

The *Yagya* or fire sacrifices do not remain as mere rituals and obligations ordained by religion, but as personifications of the mystical divinity known as Brahm. The sacred fire to which the offerings are made is a representative of the cosmic fire element that represents the stupendous and astounding powers and potentials of Brahm. The fire is the dynamic energy of Brahm revealed. The offerings are meant for the Gods, and it has been already pointed out earlier that every God is nothing but a manifestation of Brahm. So in effect, the offerings are being made to Brahm in all its myriad forms⁴.

In the same vein, a mother and father do not remain merely bodies which have produced the offspring as a result of their union, but as *Shakti* (cosmic Mother Nature) and *Purush* (the Viraat Purush; Brahm in its creative mode) respectively personified⁵.

All other humans and relationships that exist in this world—such as a *Snusha* (i.e. the daughter-in-law), a *Chandal* (a low caste man), and a *Paulkas* (or a Bhil who is a tribal) etc.—do not remain as such but become Brahm personified⁶.

A *Sraman* or a *Sanyasi* (i.e. a monk, a mendicant or reclusive hermit, a friar who has renounced this world and roams around in search of the ultimate Truth, subsisting upon begged food while remaining totally detached from this world and its attractions and material objects) as well as a *Tapaswi* (one who does severe Tapa or penances and keeps stern vows of austerities, one who endures sufferance and hardship for some noble and auspicious aim) do not remain simply as *Sraman* or *Tapaswi*, but they become embodiments of Brahm⁷.

There is no dichotomy or any kind of confusion in what has been asserted here because Brahm is always one and non-dual.

Brahm is an embodiment of *Nirvana*—i.e. the final emancipation and salvation of the creature and his soul. Brahm is a fount of light, and is self-illuminated (i.e. it is a fount of Truth and knowledge) (2).

[Note--¹That is, when one has realised or understood that the same truthful, indivisible, immutable, universal entity known as Brahm—which is only one and not two—exists in myriad of ways, having countless number of variations and diverse forms in which this visible as well as invisible world makes its appearance, one concludes that what is seen or perceived by him as the world is actually Brahm in all these forms and not anything else. In other words, when everything boils down to its fundamental form in this world, only the non-duality known as Brahm or the conscious Atma remains and not the colourful world of astounding diversity and variations with its myriad charms and magnificent contours that is erroneously regarded as Brahm.

²This is because all these Gods are one or the other manifestations of the same truthful, indivisible, immutable, universal entity known as Brahm—which is only one and not two—which has taken up so many forms and names that the Gods have just to carry out the myriad activities of this creation. Essentially, all the Gods are revelations of one non-dual Brahm; these Gods are the same Brahm functioning in their myriad forms, and all of them reveal one or the other aspects of the supreme divinity known as Brahm.

³That is, the Vedas do not appear simply to be books or holy scriptures but as personifications of Divinity and Universal Spirit known as Brahm which is the wellspring of all the eclectic and auspicious knowledge that has come into being in this creation. There are four Vedas—viz. the Rig, the Sam, the Yajur and the Atharva—symbolising the four legs of Brahm as described in verse no. 1 above. Since any creature needs all its four legs to stand and walk properly, all these four Vedas should be thoroughly understood to decipher the secrets of Brahm. Merely

reading or studying one of them is insufficient in revealing the esoteric nature of Brahm much like it is impossible to know about the horse by learning to describe one of its legs. In fact, even if one is able to know all the four Vedas one would not be able to know Brahm in its entirety because these Vedas are the external manifestations of Brahm in the form of words, and to know the reality of Brahm one must understand the secret message of the Vedas even as one must know the meaning of any word to understand its importance and usage, and merely memorizing the word and its spelling or full sentences where it is often used to assert that one is acquainted with the particular word is a highly hilarious and stupid act.

⁴That is, the holy fire and the process of offering oblations to it at a Yagya assumes a completely different connotation when one understands that the 'fire' is one of the most potent and obvious revelations of the stupendous powers possessed by Brahm; it is in fact a manifestation of the supreme transcendental Authority of creation, displaying Brahm's greatness and all-consuming cosmic form. That is why the Sun, the celestial cauldron of fire, is deemed as the vivid revelation of Brahm. When offerings are made to this fire, it is deemed that the creature is offering itself at the feet of its parent Brahm and burning its own impurities to attain the shine emanating from the same Brahm residing in its own bosom.

⁵With this view, one begins to show the level of respect and honour to one's parents that one usually reserves for one's holy deity. The physical *father* is a personification of the supreme Father in heaven, while the physical *mother* is a personification of the divine Shakti without whose help Brahm would not have created this world. In other words, the creature's father and mother represent the cosmic Purush and Shakti respectively.

⁶This is because the Atma that resides in all these bodies is the same consciousness that personifies Brahm. Therefore, when the external façade is removed, what remains is Atma or Brahm. Since the Atma of a Daughter-in-law, a Chandal or a Bhil is one and the same, there is no fundamental difference between them.

⁷A Sraman or a Sanyasi is an embodiment of Brahm because, inter alia, he has overcome all his attachments with this perishable world, realised its falsehoods, remains submerged in self contemplation and meditating upon the supreme Truth embodied in his Atma, regards the body as a temporary dwelling for his 'true self' (i.e. his Atma) before it finally finds its emancipation and salvation, and sees the same universal Spirit all around him, remaining in a state of perpetual peace and bliss which are hallmarks of the eclectic state of Brahm-realisation. Similarly, a Tapaswi is a personification of Brahm because Tapa itself personifies Brahm—refer Taittiriyo-panishad, 3/4/5-8. Therefore, a person who practices Tapa is deemed to be soaked in divinity typical of Brahm.]

3. Even the most exalted and powerful Gods, the mystics and other holy sages and pious saints called 'Rishis', as well as the ethereal and powerful Spirit of dead ancestors called 'Pittars', are unable to exercise their sway or influence over that Authority that is superior to them in all respects. That imperishable and eternal Brahm can be known and realised only by the medium of truthful knowledge, because Brahm is a personification of the best of knowledge in existence, and knowledge can only be accessed by relevant knowledge only (3).

[Note—This concept can be understood when we take a more practical example. Suppose a student takes history as a subject at graduation level, then it is practical and prudent on his part to pursue post graduation in history only and complete his doctorate in history as well rather than any other subject—for switching subjects at random would be disastrous and a most impractical approach for his career, even if at all it is theoretically possible. Similarly, one has to reach the pinnacle of spiritual attainment and Brahm realisation by following the correct path as laid down in the

guide-books on this field, i.e. the scriptures. One cannot hope to study physics by reading history books or joining an arts college instead of a science college for example.]

4. It is in the heart that all the Gods have their symbolic residence, it is in the heart that the *Pran* lives (as the heart's rhythmic beating signifies the presence of 'life' in it), and it is in the heart that the glorious self-illuminated fount of light known as 'consciousness' resides as the *Atma*. All these three forms are subtle and sublime revelations of Brahman. That is, Brahman resides in the heart of the individual creature in these three eclectic divine forms.

This fact is symbolised by the three strands of thread used to make the 'Trivisutra' or the sacred thread¹ worn by learned people. This sacred thread made up of three intertwined strands of thread is a symbol of the fact that though these above mentioned units of Brahman's revelations appear to be independent of one another, but they are so inexplicably and inseparably linked or intertwined with each other that if one were to say that Brahman resides in the heart of the creature, the rest of the manifestations of Brahman are deemed to be included in this single statement. This is the considered view of those who are learned and wise about Brahman.

Indeed, this Brahman lives in the form of consciousness in the heart of the individual creature as his *Atma* (4).

[Note—¹The *sacred thread* worn by Hindus diagonally across the chest consists of three intertwined strands of the sacred thread, each strand signifying one aspect of divinity described in this verse—i.e. the *Gods* symbolising the eclectic virtues and divine forces of Nature that control the functioning of all the organs of the body, the *Pran* symbolising something that is holy and worthy of worship because it is a synonym of life, and the light emanating from the self-illuminated *Atma* which is pure consciousness. These three units form the basis of 'life' in the body of the creature.

There is another way of looking at this concept. The *Gods* represent the supreme Brahman's cosmic powers that regulate and control this creation, and since the creature is a visible and gross manifestation of the same Brahman, the statement that the Gods reside in the heart implies that Brahman has revealed itself in the form of the individual creature, complete with all its glorious potentials and divine powers for which Brahman is so famous and unique. Similarly, the vital winds of various names that reside inside the body are collectively called *Pran*. They collectively help the body, representing the macrocosmic Brahman in a microcosmic form, to carry on with all its designated functions at the micro level of existence so that these bits and pieces of the cosmic mosaic complete the whole picture that the supreme creator had envisioned. And finally, the *Atma* is the pure consciousness itself without which the entire setup would lose its meaning. The *Atma* is the Emperor at the helm of affairs. All these three individual entities combine to form this creation; none is separable from the other if the creation has to exist in the way it does. The sacred thread also has three strands and all of them are equally important if the thread is to be called 'sacred'. Therefore, this sacred thread is used to constantly remind the wearer of the grand metaphysical truth about his own 'truthful self' as well as about the rest of creation. If he does not pay heed to it, then it is to his own peril. Knowledge has to be voluntarily obtained and used; it cannot be forced down anybody's gullet like medicine.

This sacred thread is called *Trivisutra* because it consists of three strands of thread as much as because of the fact that it is a symbol of these three sublime and subtle forms of Brahman as described in this verse—i.e. of the Gods, *Pran* and *Atma*. The sacred thread is also called *Yagyopavit* (see verse no. 5 below) meaning that which purifies during the performance of a Yagya (fire sacrifice), or something that is purified during a Yagya. The sacred thread is given to an initiated person during a fire

sacrifice, with the sacred fire as a witness and to symbolise that the person who wears this thread is deemed to be purified by the blessing of Brahm which constantly resides in his heart. The thread no longer remains a thread but becomes ‘sacred’; it is ‘purified and sanctified’ during a Yagya—and hence it is called a ‘Yagyo (fire sacrifice) + Pavit (purified; purifying)’.

The sacred thread is also known by the name of *Brahm Sutra* (refer verse no. 6-11 below) signifying that it is the esoteric ‘sutra’ or formulae to understand the secrets of Brahm; it is the ‘thread’ that binds the individual creature to the wholesome divinity of creation known as Brahm as well as to the grand and majestic Truth of creation of which that individual is only a miniscule part.]

5. The sacred thread known as Yagyopavit made its appearance along with the emergence of Prajatpati, the creator of all mortal creatures (along with the other parts of his body). This Yagyopavit blesses one with a long life. Oh people! Being aware of this fact, you should wear the Yagyopavit. Let this Yagyopavit provide you with immense spiritual strength and energy (5).

[Note—The strength and energy mentioned here pertain to that of the ‘spirit’, because a person is said to be in ‘high spirits’ when he has attained success in any endeavour. Further, it is said that one should not ‘lose one’s spirit’ (and not ‘one’s bodily strength or energy’) when faced with adversities. In other words, it is the strength and energy of the ‘spirit’ that is the driving force of all successes in this world; even the body is under the control of the powers of the ‘spirit’. So in brief, the *Yagyopavit* provides the wearer the natural blessing that comes with being nearer to the source of all energies and strengths in this creation, i.e. being near to Brahm. This simple and humble three-piece thread becomes a ‘garland of victory’ around the neck of the wearer, as it were. It acts as a shield against all inauspicious and evil spirits from attacking the wearer; it is like keeping the dynamo of the body charged with the energy effusing from the reassuring knowledge that the supreme Authority of creation and its Lord known as Brahm is protecting the wearer of this sacred thread by remaining constantly with him.]

6. Those who have attained a certain level of spiritual elevation and enlightenment based on realisation of the ‘true self’ and of Brahm should shave off their head along with the tuft of hair usually worn on the top of the head as well as this sacred thread (at the time of taking the vows of *Sanyas* which is the last stage in the life of a wise man when he renounces all worldly formalities and is deemed to be sufficiently spiritually enlightened that he need not bear external signs such as the tuft of hair or even the sacred thread to remind him of the presence of Brahm in him or his spiritually evolved stature)¹.

At the time when sincere realisation of the irrefutable metaphysical truth that this sacred thread does indeed represent Brahm, the Supreme Being in all his magnificence and glory, and that this Brahm resides in the heart of the aspirant himself (as explicitly declared in verse no. 4 of this Upanishad), the latter finds no need of it (the sacred thread) anymore as he now sees Brahm as being firmly ensconced and honorably enshrined in his own (temple-like) heart, and he is so steadily focused and firmly rooted in this conviction that he has no need for any external signs to remind him of this fact.

So he discards the external sign of Brahm represented by the sacred thread which he has been hitherto wearing on his body ‘over’ his heart, and instead places this thread representing Brahm nearer to his heart by symbolically enshrining it ‘inside’ the heart itself. [That is, Brahm has come closer to him, so to say, with the rise in the degree of his enlightenment when he begins to see the futility of external

formalities, and instead peeps inside the secret chambers of his own self to see the radiant light emanating from Brahm present inside his own self.] (6).

[Note—¹*Sanyas*: There are many stages in the life of a person who becomes a mendicant, or friar, or monk or a renunciate hermit. In the preliminary stages of Sanyas it is alright to wear the tuft of hair and the sacred thread, but as the aspirant progresses in his spiritual pursuit he should discard external signs of divinity and holiness as being superfluous and non-essential because he is deemed to have reached a level of erudition and enlightenment that he ought to see Brahm even without some external prop or medium such as this sacred thread. In those Upanishads which deal with this theme, it has been explicitly stated that in the higher states of Sanyas, there is no need of any formalities to be observed by the aspirant, and this includes the wearing of the *tuft of hair* and the *sacred thread*. The *shearing of the head* is of course obligatory even at the beginning of Sanyas, or at the time of taking the vows of Sanyas, and the head is kept clean of hairs at all stages of Sanyas because a Sanyasi is not supposed to accept anything that he has once discarded. The same thing applies to the sacred thread.]

7. This sacred thread is like a key or formulae to the secret of Brahm; it helps to solve the mystery of Brahm (and where this eclectic divinity resides). That is why it is called a ‘Sutra’, meaning a formulae or key or maxim (much like the ones we have in mathematics or physics that help one solve complex mathematical equations or problems in physics).

This Sutra points to the supreme stature of spiritual enlightenment that the person should aspire to attain. A Brahmin (i.e. a learned and wise person) who has understood this Sutra is able to understand the meaning of the Vedas (just like a student who has mastered the formulas is able to solve the most complex of problems in mathematics or physics). In other words, such a man is called truly wise, learned, sagacious, erudite and skilled in the knowledge contained in the scriptures (such as the Vedas) which teach about only one Truth and one supreme entity known as Brahm, albeit in different languages and employing different terminology, metaphors and analogues (7).

8. Even as the beads of a garland or a rosary are threaded together by the means of the thread which helps to keep these independent and scattered units (beads) together into one composite entity known as the garland or rosary which has its own independent identity much different from its individual units, this entire world consisting of an infinite and uncountable number of independent units, having myriad characteristics, attributes, qualities and virtues, are united and held together into one single whole known as the ‘world or creation’ because they are unified and kept in place by this one universally unifying factor known as Brahm.

That is why Brahm is called a ‘Sutra’, i.e. the ‘thread’ which keeps the creation in place in one piece, unifies its scattered pieces and binds them together into one whole, giving it its unique identity and character but mysteriously remaining hidden from view like the thread of the garland or the rosary that is not visible as it remains hidden from view behind the beads. The Brahm is also called the Sutra because it is the ‘formulae or key’ to understand the mystery of what this creation is all about; it is the ‘maxim’ stressed by the Vedas; it is the ‘code’ to unravel the secrets of creation and the ‘truth’ behind it.

Therefore, those who are expert in the great fundamental tenets of the Vedas as well as those who are firm in the path of Yoga (meditation and contemplation) should enshrine this Brahm—representing the key to spiritual enlightenment and

realisation of the ultimate Truth—carefully in the heart (much like a rich man keeps the key to his treasury safely in his breast pocket, or a worshipper keeps the deity enshrined in the inner chambers of his worship room) (8).

9. A wise and erudite man who is enlightened enough to realise that the main function of the sacred thread is to bring about a union between the individual creature and the supreme Brahm, to make a man realise the grand truth about his own self and the rest of creation, to establish truth over falsehoods, and to establish a uniformity between formal knowledge of Brahm gained by studying the scriptures and its practical experiment by self awakening or self realisation when the eternal radiance of Brahm-realisation shines and illuminates the inner self of the wise man—when this is brought about, then at that time he should discard the sacred thread because it becomes redundant.

In fact, understanding what is Brahm, realising Brahm's truthful form and nature is tantamount to understanding the true meaning of the 'Sutra' (the sacred thread). That is why it is also called 'Brahm Sutra'.

That is also why a person who symbolically wears this divine and holy form of Brahm as the Sutra (sacred thread), called the 'Brahm Sutra', is said to be truly Brahm-realised and vested with the divine radiance, splendour, magnificence and glory of Brahm. He effuses a divine glow and radiates the light of pure consciousness all around him because Brahm is pure consciousness and brilliantly and radiantly splendorous (just like the Sun in the sky). Indeed, this realisation makes the man immune to all forms of decay and degradation while protecting him from all types of impurities and taints so prevalent in this perishable and impure world. [This is because pure consciousness can neither be made impure nor be demoted in any way.] (9).

10. Those who have sincerely accepted the divine, eclectic and truthful knowledge pertaining to this symbolic sacred thread called the Sutra or Yagyopavit as representing the key to the great tenets of Brahm realisation are deemed to have enshrined the supreme transcendental Brahm in their own hearts.

Such persons who have understood the symbolism and the hidden meaning behind this sacred thread and why it should be worn are the ones who have actually comprehended its true importance and significance. Such persons are the ones who have truthfully and intelligently worn the sacred thread; such persons are the ones who really benefit from wearing the sacred thread. [For the rest of the people, it is merely a worldly religious formality which would lead them spiritually nowhere. It is like the case of a student mugging up answers in mathematics or the sciences to pass exams, but his mark-sheet would no way reveal his ignorance of the subject. Such a student might land a plump job initially, but he is destined to miserably fail in life because his basics are absolutely weak and ramshackle.] (10).

11. Those wise and exalted persons who accept and acknowledge that acquisition of Gyan (truthful knowledge and awareness of reality) is like the symbolic wearing of the 'Shikha' (tuft of hair) on the head worn by learned Brahmins, those who have firm faith and unwavering conviction in the strength and potential of Gyan (to provide spiritual attainment as well as emancipation and salvation to the creature), and treat Gyan as being equivalent to the Yagyopavit (the sacred thread)—such persons are made pure and holy by Gyan (11).

[Note—This is because acquisition of *Gyan* implies that such persons have understood the formula that unravels the secrets leading to the realisation of the supreme Truth known as Brahman. After all, the wearing of the Shikha and the Yagyopavit are also intended for this very purpose, and if the aim of realising the Truth is not achieved then the very purpose of wearing them is defeated. They simply become superfluous symbols for misleading the world into believing that the man who sports them is learned and wise. Such persons are imposters who are cheating the world as much as they are cheating themselves.]

12. For those wise and enlightened persons who treat the radiant light emanating from Gyan (truthful knowledge and awareness of reality) as being equivalent to the erect flame of the burning fire or like the erect flame surrounding the wick of a burning candle, there is no other entity known as ‘Shikha’¹.

Indeed, such wise, erudite, learned and enlightened persons who have the Shikha of Gyan with them (i.e. who have the flame of knowledge burning brightly within them) are deemed to be the ones who are wearing the tuft of hair also called the ‘Shikha’. [This is because they have understood the true meaning and significance of having that tuft on the head—for this tuft is a symbol of Brahman-realisation, a sign of their high level of wisdom and erudition which marks their exalted place in society.]

Such persons are recognised as truly wise, learned and enlightened. They are not imposters who have sported this Shikha to fool the world to meet their narrow vested interests for obtaining material gain and false honour. [The knowledge of imposters is just perfunctory and superfluous, and they are hollow from the inside.]

On the contrary, those persons who keep the external tuft of hair known as the ‘Shikha’ but are lacking in actual knowledge called ‘Gyan’ cannot be called wearing this sacred symbol (the Shikha) in the true sense of the word² (12).

[Note—¹Here there is a playing on the word *Shikha*, because it means both the tuft of hair worn on the head by a religious Hindu as well as the erect flame of a burning candle. The light of knowledge or Gyan is compared to the flame because not only does it remove the darkness of ignorance that might be shrouding the person but also burns all the impurities that may be present in any form that might tarnish the purity of his ‘self’ and his Atma. The Shikha is always erect, signifying its noble stature and high credentials which at once places the wearer on a high moral and spiritual ground. Similarly, the person who has Gyan is always shown the greatest of respect by the world wherever he goes. Gyan heralds and ensures his high standing in the realm of wise and enlightened men.

²It should be noted that the Upanishads forbid deceit, conceit and pretensions of all kinds, and lay great stress on truthfulness and honesty. They emphasize that one should honestly acquire knowledge that is truthful and devoid of all fallacious conceptions and deceit more than anything else. In this context one would realise that the ritualistic wearing of the Shikha or the Yagyopavit are futile exercises if the real meaning in their wearing is not fully understood and put into practice.]

13. Brahmins and others who are eligible to participate in formal religious sacrifices are ordained to wear this sacred thread called the Brahman Sutra because it is a necessary formal accoutrement for such religious ceremonies (13).

[Note—These symbols identify the priests and other special persons who are playing an active role in a fire sacrifice like the case where volunteers wear special badges during state functions to help others to identify them in the crowd. It is also like the doctor wearing his apron and the lawyer his coat and tie to help them be easily located and be distinguished in the crowded hospital or court. The fire sacrifice and the external symbol of the Shikha are needed in the earlier stages of spiritual life of

an aspirant, but as he progresses ahead and reaches a certain degree of maturity in his spiritual attainment they are to be dispensed with as being superfluous and unnecessary.]

14. For those wise and learned persons who wear both the Shikha (tuft of hair) and the Upavit (the sacred thread; the Brahm Sutra; the Yagyopavit) as a symbol of their high degree of metaphysical learning, spiritual standing and level of Brahm-awareness (instead of just a ritualistic wearing because of their chance birth as a upper class Brahmin, though they have no in-depth knowledge of the esoteric and mystical secrets pertaining to the supreme Truth known as Brahm as well as its stupendous and magnificent importance and significance) are the ones who are worthy wearers of these twin symbols of Brahm. Such persons are deemed to be the truthfully learned ones who have acquired the grand and eclectic knowledge pertaining to Brahm and to the pure conscious Atma representing that Brahm.

This fact is asserted and repeatedly reiterated by those who are expert in this field (14).

[Note—This verse essentially says that true Brahmins are those who are well-versed in the knowledge that centers around the profound doctrines of metaphysics and spiritualism not only because they are assigned the job of being moral guides and preceptors for the rest of the society since ancient times and should be themselves competent enough in this field to act as teachers for others but also for their own auspicious life which should be exemplary and like a beacon for the rest to emulate. Pretension is tantamount to cheating and deceit which are not expected from people who are torch-bearers of high standards of morality and ethics in the society. That is why real ‘Brahmins’ are the ones who know about ‘Brahm’ from whom they have derived their name in the first place; if they do not know about their own origin, their parent and their root, if they are callous and ignorant of the basic ground which has given them their respectable position in society, then they should not be looked upon as worthy men deserving honour and respect.

Compared to them, those people who are not fortunate enough to be born as a Brahmin but are truly learned about the mysteries of Brahm are to be actually lauded and revered as true representatives of Brahm. In other words, it is the knowledge and awareness of Brahm and the high degree of such enlightenment that makes a man a Brahmin. Simply being born as a Brahmin would not entitle him for this honour.]

15. This Yagyopavit is most holy and auspicious, and a provider of holiness and auspiciousness. That is why only those who are holy and auspicious, those who have an element of divinity and spiritualism flowing in them, those who are learned and wise are the ones who are deemed to eligible wearers of this Yagyopavit¹. Such persons are embodiments of Yagya (the holy and auspicious fire sacrifice) itself. [That is, such persons are as holy, purified and auspicious as the sacred fire lit in the fire sacrifice.] Such persons are called ‘Yajjya’ or the ones who perform a fire sacrifice. [That is, such people are regarded as religious persons who adhere to the religious tenets and lead a pious and auspicious life. As part of this life they perform sacred fire sacrifices to honour the Gods collectively as representatives of the supreme Brahm.] (15).

[Note—¹Just like no impurity can come near the fire, no unholy man or those who have corrupt mind and body can wear this symbol of the fire sacrifice. It is precisely for this reason the ‘sacred thread’ is so called because it is as sacred as the ‘sacred’ fire. It is also precisely for this reason it is called a ‘Yagyopavit’—one that is as pure and purifying as the fire sacrifice. It is not that this thread would burn any one; it is just to stress the point so repeatedly emphasised in this Upanishad that this

Yagyopavit is a symbol of the holiest of the holy and the most powerful of entities in creation, so how can lowly and fallen men go near such an exalted entity that is a brand ambassador of Brahm, the supreme Emperor of creation? Is it possible for men to play with fire?]

16. There is only one universal supreme Lord who is secretly present or enshrined in all the living beings, called the Bhuts, in this creation. He is all-pervading and omnipresent, diffused uniformly throughout this creation. He is the pure conscious Atma present in all the creatures. He is the one who controls everything that anyone does. He is the final destiny and abode for all the creatures as well as the very foundation and basis upon which all them rest. He is the universal witness of everything and for everyone. He is an embodiment of pure consciousness. He is most holy, immaculate and pristine pure. And he has no attributes or qualities that can confine him within certain definitions and parameters; he cannot be defined and even be imagined as he is beyond such considerations and beyond definable attributes (16).

17. That Supreme Being is unique, non-dual and only one. He is the controller and regulator of all that exists in this creation. [Or, everything and everyone in this creation are under his control and command as he is the supreme Authority in this creation.] He is the Atma or soul of all living beings, and has revealed his own self in as many forms as there are creatures in this creation. Those wise, learned and self-realised persons who perceive this eclectic divine essence of creation within themselves, those who are wise and enlightened enough to understand that the supreme transcendental Authority and power of creation known as Brahm resides in their own self as their pure conscious Atma, find eternal and truthful peace, tranquility, beatitude and felicity. No other person can have access to it (17).

18. The invisible and virtually imperceptible supreme transcendental Brahm present inside one's own self should be realised, experienced and witnessed by means of meditation and contemplation. It is like kindling the fire that is universally present everywhere in a dormant and hidden form but needs vigorous rubbing of the 'Arani' (the two-piece wooden drill used to light the sacrificial fire in the pit of the fire-sacrifice) to make its presence spontaneously felt during the fire sacrifice.

For this symbolic rubbing to kindle the glorious fire of Brahm-realisation, an aspirant should use the Atma (the pure consciousness present inside the bosom of the aspirant; here referring to the vital winds that are present inside the body) as the lower end of the drill, and Pranav (or OM, the ethereal form of Brahm represented by this monosyllable divine word) as the upper end of the drill. The symbolic 'rubbing' involves the practice of meditation and contemplation using the concentration power of the mind and the dynamic but subtle energy of the body harnessed by controlling the vital winds. For this purpose, the ethereal word OM is employed as a Mantra or a mystical formula to do meditation with, and the focus of this spiritual enterprise is the pure conscious Atma. The result is that the hitherto secret and esoteric Atma that was imperceptible and unknown till now begins to make its presence felt as a divine glow of spiritual energy emanating from the cosmic Consciousness present in the subtle space of the aspirant's heart. He is able to experience it first hand in the state of Dhyan or intense concentration which is also called the state of Samadhi. [Since this Atma is Brahm personified, the spiritual aspirant is able to experience Brahm during the state of Dhyan or Samadhi.] (18).

[Note—During the fire sacrifice, the sacred fire is lit by rubbing two pieces of wood, called *Arani*, to generate sufficient heat which sets the firewood alight. To help light

this fire, air is blown towards the point where the Arani touches the firewood. This analogy is used to indicate that Brahm-realisation is like a holy fire sacrifice, and as potent and effective. For this purpose, various methods used in meditation are the symbolic vigorous rubbing, the air needed to kindle the fire of self-realisation is OM because this word is symbolic of the air element universally present as ether in the universe, and the blowing is done by concentrating or focusing the energy of the vital winds called Pran present inside the body. Intense concentration of mind is needed for success in any enterprise, especially those that require special mental skills and intelligent application of knowledge. It would be noted here that one such method of meditation for self-realisation is Pranayam or breath control by which ascetics endeavour to kindle the energy trapped in the Kundalini which is a coiled spiral of dynamic cosmic energy located at the base of the spine, and once its energy is unleashed the aspirant can easily experience the same mystical powers and potentials that are usually understood as being synonymous with Brahm-realisation.]

19. Even as oil is inherently present in the sesame seed as its integral part, fat or butter is intrinsically present as an integral part of curd, water is an indistinguishable and inseparable component of a spring or a fountain, and the fire is latently but integrally present in the firewood, the pure consciousness is also present inside the bosom of all living beings as their Atma. [In other words, though the Atma is not physically seen and easily perceptible, it is undeniably present in each single living creature just like the instances cited above.]

This truthful Atma can only be perceived and experienced only by the means of 'Satya', or truthfulness and sincerity (just like a mirror is needed to reflect a truthful image of anything)¹, and 'Tapa', or diligent practice of penance, austerity, rigorous discipline and self control (because great effort is needed to reach great goals) (19).

[Note—¹To conceptualize how the Atma needs the instrument of 'truth' or *Satya* to be witnessed, one can use this example of the mirror. When anyone wishes to see how he looks, no amount of descriptive words, even the whole dictionary spelt out to him by an expert in the language would enable him to understand this fundamental question in his mind—i.e. how do I look? A humble and simple mirror would do the trick that thousand words couldn't do. This is exactly what is meant here. Since the Atma is the eclectic, divine, holy and supreme Truth personified, the only way to understand what it is, is to see it in the light of truthful knowledge that comes with diligently and intelligently studying the scriptures, interpreting them correctly, practicing their instructions, and refining and fine-tuning each effort to focus it to the ultimate target of Truth-realisation. It is a very difficult job, and that is why it is like doing severe *Tapa*. Even a serious student knows how much effort goes in excelling in exams and getting to reach one's cherished dream in life. But once it is achieved, there is exultation coming naturally with achievement of one's goal and success in an enterprise that unleashes a fount of unbound happiness.

Refer Shwetashwatar Upanishad, Chapter no. 5 of this volume, in its Canto 1, verse no. 15.]

20. Just like a spider weaves a web and then gobbles up its own creation, the living being too oscillates between the two states of consciousness called Jagrat or the waking state, and the Swapna or dreaming state (20).

[Note—The consciousness exists in this world at two planes or levels—one is called the gross level and the other is called the subtle level. These two planes of its existence are called the Jagrat or waking state of consciousness, and the Swapna or dreaming state of consciousness respectively.

During the waking state, the Atma or the 'self' lives in the gross world through the medium of the gross organs of the body consisting of the organs of perception (eye that sees, ears that hear, tongue that tastes, nose that smells and skin that feels) and the organs of action (hands that receive and does deeds, legs that move and go to places, mouth that eats and speaks, genitals that reproduce and excretory organs that eliminate). The Atma is awake from the perspective of the world because it is interactive with it, perceives its stimuli and responds to them.

The second stage is when the gross body has become defunct and non-active, and in this case the Atma lives in the world governed only by the mind-intellect complex, the heart, the numerous Naadis or ducts such as the nerves and veins etc. which are collectively called the subtle body. Here the sub-conscious mind comes into play, and it conjures up a world of its own which is a subtle world of dreams. It is called a 'dream' because it has no physical presence and no gross organs are involved. The upside of this dream world is that it is not subjected to the limitations imposed by the gross organs of the body and can be many times more fascinating, diverse and grand than the physical world where the gross organs of the body come into play. This is because the mind's reach has no end and the dreams are the creations of the sub-conscious mind.

In both the cases the mind is active, but on a different plane. In the case of the waking state it is limited by the ability and reach of the physical organs, while in the dreaming state it is left to its own accord and abilities. So the creature oscillates between these two worlds when the Atma relies upon the mind to perceive the world. He either lives in the physical gross world in his waking state or the subtle world in his dreaming state. When in the waking state, he forgets about the world of dreams, and when in the dreaming state he forgets about the world of waking state. They cannot exist simultaneously. When dreaming, he withdraws the tentacle-like organs of perception and action from the world, and when awake these organs are spread out.

From the above discussion it naturally follows that if the mind is taken out of the picture, the Atma would transit to a next higher plane of existence which transcends these two states. Hence, the third state is the deep sleep state or the Sushupta state of consciousness where the mind is completely defunct and inactive. Since the mind is absent, the world also ceases to remain in any of the two forms discussed herein above. In this third state the Atma or the consciousness exists in its pristine form in the blissful state surrounded by the Bliss Sheath. Usually for an ordinary creature, this third state is transient and soon he reverts back to the earlier two stages.

But if this third stage becomes perpetual, he is said to live in the fourth state called Turiya or the transcendental state of blissfulness. This is a very typical stage of existence inasmuch as that when a creature is able to reach it, he appears to be active in this world, he goes about his normal duties and appears to be awake as during a normal Jagrat state, but internally he is asleep to the external world in the sense that his mind does not register any incoming stimuli from the external world. Such a person would do deeds but not remember what he is doing or has done a moment ago. He would not recollect anything. Such a man is deemed to be free from deeds and their consequences though outwardly his body is involved in doing deeds. Such a man is said to be in a perpetual state of Samadhi.]

21. The Atma known by the name of Vaishwanar during the Jagrat or waking state of consciousness symbolically resides in the eye¹.

The Atma known by the name of Taijas during the Swapna or dreaming state of consciousness symbolically resides in the throat².

The Atma known by the name of Pragya (i.e. the consciousness in its primary enlightened form having awareness and knowledge, erudition and wisdom) during the Sushupta or deep sleep state of consciousness symbolically resides in the heart³.

Finally, the Atma is known by the name of Turiya when it transcends these

three states of existence and lives in the divine and eclectic spot in the body called the Brahm-Randhra⁴. (21).

[Note--¹The word *Vaishwanar* has many connotations as follows—(i) It is the fire used in sacrificial rituals. (ii) The microcosmic pure consciousness that resides inside the body of the creature, providing it with life, vitality and energy which helps it to digest food. (iii) Vedanta says that it is the pure consciousness that is a fraction of the Supreme Consciousness, and it resides in the body of the creature even as the Supreme Consciousness resides in the macrocosmic vast body of Nature or creation. It is representative of the supreme, transcendental entity that is the Lord and the primary cause and the governing authority of the whole creation. (iv) Since the creatures have myriad forms, it has as many forms as the creatures themselves, incorporating all of them in it. Hence, it is also called ‘Viraat Purush’ (which means the vast, colossus, all incorporating, all-pervading, almighty form of the microcosmic Atma of the creature as well as the macrocosmic Atma of the creation; it is measureless, infinite and eternal). This is the subtle form of ‘Vaishwanar’. (v) The gross manifestations of this ‘Vaishwanar’ is the ‘Annamaya Kosh’ or the food sheath which is one of the five sheaths enclosing the Atma of the creature. This is because, as the Vaishwanar Agni (fire), it helps in digestion of food. (vi) Its state of existence is defined as the ‘waking state of consciousness’. (vii) The word also means—relating to or belonging to all men, omnipresent, known and worshipped everywhere, universal, general, common, complete, immutable, full in number, a collective noun for all the Gods, one who is all commanding and almighty.

The word Vaishwanar refers to the universal fire element because the fire provides the light with which the creature sees the world. The fire removes darkness and illuminates the realm with its light. In this context, the Sun is the eye of Brahm in the sky because it is through this Sun and its fire that the world is lighted and energized. The faculty of sight in the eye of the creature is thus a symbolic presence of this Vaishwanar at the macro level of creation.

The Atma is called a Vaishwanar because the man becomes aware of the world when he sees it with his own eyes. This is why it is called the ‘waking’ state of consciousness. The presence of the consciousness known as the Vaishwanar in the eye is a metaphor for this waking state because when a man ‘sees’ anything only when he is awake and not while he sleeps.

²This is because the man remains mentally active while dreaming even though his physical body is inactive, and this is symbolised by saying that his consciousness resides in his throat. It has been observed that a dreaming man is sometimes so engrossed and involved in the world of his dreams, experiencing emotions and sentiments so intensely that often he might whisper or make guttural sounds during sleep. There are instances when a man even talks aloud in his dream. Snoring is another manifestation of the presence of consciousness in the throat. When a man wakes up from his dreams, the only way he can describe what he has ‘seen and witnessed’ during his dream is by the use of words, and this implies the use of voice which has its seat in the throat.

³This is because the man’s Atma has its primary divine abode in his heart. Even when the man does not dream, i.e. even when his sub-conscious mind ceases to function, his heart continues to beat uniformly and incessantly. Had it not been so, the person would have died. The proof that the Atma—which is the pure consciousness symbolising the vital spark of life present inside the otherwise lifeless gross body of the creature and the only factor that can be definitively called ‘the life-giving entity’ in the body—residing in the heart as an embodiment of such glorious virtues as enlightenment, knowledge, wisdom, awareness, erudition and such other eclectic virtues that are the hallmarks of consciousness lies in the fact that when this man wakes up, he immediately connects with the external world even in a fraction of a second, recollecting instantly what he had been doing, what he had learnt before

sleeping, and so on and so forth. If the Atma had lacked the attribute of 'Pragya' as described here, the person would not have been able to recollect what his name was, what he had been doing before going to sleep, what he had learnt earlier, etc. So it is said that the Atma exhibits all the eclectic and sublime virtues which come under the broad definition of Pragya.

⁴The Brahm-Randhra is the hair-like slit on the top of the head from where the supreme Brahm had entered the body of the man at the time of creation, and it is the spot from which the Pran or vital winds of an ascetic (a Yogi) escapes from his body at the time of his death, while he is meditating at that time, to merge with the elements in Nature and become one with them. During the life time of the ascetic, he concentrates his life-forces by the virtue of various Yoga techniques at this spot, which results in his attaining extreme sense of blissfulness and peace. A truly realised and seasoned ascetic can continue to live in this perpetual state of beatitude and felicity even while he manages to do all his routine deeds in this world.

These four states of consciousness also appear in Kaivalya Upanishad in verse no. 12-14. Elsewhere, this concept has been elaborately described in Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, 1/1/17-20, 2/1/16-20, and 4/3/9-38, and in Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 11.]

22. This Atma is such an esoteric, enigmatic and mystical entity that it cannot be described in words by the faculty of speech. It cannot be reached or accessed by the ten organs of the body (five organs of perception—eyes, nose, ears, tongue and skin; and five organs of action—legs, hands, mouth, excretory and reproductive) and the Mana (mind). [That is, the Atma is impossible to describe and equally impossible to know by employing any of the organs of the body independently or jointly. It can be only experienced as self-realisation and its accompanying spurt of profound and eternal sense of bliss and peace.] (22).

23. That Atma which is universally and uniformly present in the entire creation just like butter or fat is inherently present in fat-rich curd, forming its integral part, can be known and accessed by self-realisation and doing Tapa. (Refer verse no. 19.).

Verily, this Atma is Brahm personified, and its realisation is the supreme state of existence for the creature that is enunciated and elucidated by the Upanishads.

This is what this Upanishad says about the divine Atma and the supreme transcendental Brahm (23).

-----Shanti Paath-----

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Chapter 4

Kaivalya Upanishad/Kaivalyo-panishad

This Upanishad has been revealed as a conversation between sage Aashwalaayan and Brahma who is the creator and the most wise and learned patriarch in this creation. The sage approached him and enquired about that supreme spiritual stature known as 'Kaivalya' which refers to attaining the eclectic spiritual state of Brahm-realisation and experiencing the cosmic Consciousness as the divine Atma present inside one's own bosom. The word 'Kaivalya' refers to something that is unique, one of its kind, un-paralleled and non-dual, and since Brahm and Atma are characterised by these eclectic and majestic virtues their holistic realisation or their enlightened awareness

and spiritual access is known as ‘Kaivalya’, because there is nothing to match their blessedness and nothing superior to this realisation. It is complete benediction and fulfillment for the creature. The eclectic knowledge about the mysteries of Brahm is called ‘Brahm Vidya’.

Brahma explained the divine virtues that are absolutely essential to reach that auspicious and exalted state when an aspirant can positively experience and witness the indefinable majestic state of Brahm-realisation as well as self-realisation when the pure conscious Atma, which is however synonymous with Brahm, shines through his entire being just like the Sun breaking through the dense bank of clouds to illuminate the entire world. This knowledge is akin to the brilliantly burning fire which has the potential to burn all impurities present in the bosom of the creature that pertain to this deluding, perishable and artificial world, and make him enlightened about the pristine knowledge pertaining to the supreme Truth which is most majestic and magnificent.

This profound awareness creates a sense of extreme benediction and fulfillment, profound peace and tranquility, and a state of intense benediction and felicity for the aspirant. He begins to see the world with the eyes of a realised and wise man who has risen above selfishness and narrow views of the world; he begins to see the world with equanimity and compassion, and observes the same divine Being revealing himself in everything around him. At the same time, he experiences a divine halo of enlightenment emanating from his own bosom, completely drenching him and his surroundings.

This, Brahma explained in the twenty six verses that comprise this Upanishad, is truly unique, unparalleled and magnificent, and hence the knowledge that enables the aspirant to acquire this potential is called *Kaivalya*—literally one of its kind. The word also refers to the ‘uniqueness’ of the object of all forms of worship, the eclectic virtues and sublime qualities that this divine and indefinable Authority who is invisible, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient and almighty in creation, known with the generalized term ‘Supreme Being’, exhibits. This Supreme Being created everything and everyone, and then took up residence in each one of them, controlling the entire creation from within, and then concludes it when it finally decides to do so. This Supreme Being is all-pervading, all-encompassing, all-incorporating and all-inclusive. Such ‘uniqueness’ makes it one of its kind—i.e. it is *Kaivalya*.

-----Shanti Paath-----

ॐ_सह_नाववतु_।_सह_नौ_भुनक्तु_।_सह_वीर्यं_करवावहै_।_तेजस्वि_नावधीतमस्तु_।_मा_विद्विषावहै_।
-----ॐ_शान्तिः_।_शान्तिः_!!शान्तिः_!!!_

The meaning of this Shanti Paath is given in appendix no. 1.

1. The great sage Aashwalaayan took some Samidha¹ and went to Lord Parmeshti (Brahma, the creator and the wisest patriarch in creation) with great respect. He said, ‘Oh Lord! Please preach me about Brahm-Vidya (the eclectic, divine and sublime knowledge pertaining to the supreme transcendental Being of creation who is known as Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness, and its counterpart known as the pure conscious and divine Atma). This most profound, magnificent and esoteric knowledge is always pursued and constantly studied by pious and holy sages and seers (to unravel its

astounding secrets and majestic potentials). It is most secret, mysterious, esoteric and enigmatic, being difficult to access, decipher and understand.

Nevertheless, this Brahm-Vidya has magnificent mystical powers as it can bestow the wise and enlightened ones, who are expert in it, with freedom from all their sins and their evil consequences, resulting in their ability to find access to the Supreme Being², (1).

[Note—¹*Samidha* refers to some offering meant for the fire sacrifice. It was a usual practice to approach some wise man with the purpose of enquiry and acquisition of knowledge with some gift, and this gift was not material wealth but as an offering to the fire sacrifice because of three reasons. One, a wise man was not supposed to be yearning for some sort of gold or silver gift, for had he been such he wouldn't qualify to be approached with some spiritual and metaphysical query. Second, this token gift indicated that the seeking of knowledge and imparting of such knowledge was just like the performance of some sacred religious fire sacrifice, and had the same spiritual value. So the teacher couldn't refuse to answer the query as this would amount to refusal in participating in a fire sacrifice which would be tantamount to sacrilege and unrighteous deed on the part of the teacher. This obligation ensured that the query was certain to be answered. Hence, all sincere seekers approached their teachers with this *Samidha* in hand. And finally the third reason is that it showed sincerity and eagerness on the part of the questioner and seeker of knowledge to find out the correct answer to his queries.

²This stanza shows that the supreme Lord can be accessed only by those who have purged all their sins. This cleansing is possible only ('*Kaivalya*') by pursuing the holy path of Brahm Vidya. When a person willingly steps upon any chosen path he ensures that all its principles are strictly obeyed in order to achieve complete success in it and the desired goal is reached without any hindrance. This goal here is to realise Brahm, to understand the Absolute Truth of creation. Therefore the aspirant would naturally follow the tenets of auspiciousness and righteousness to the hilt so that this objective can be realised and fulfilled. This implies that he would move away from the path of inauspiciousness and unrighteousness which is the negative path called the path of sin and evil. Instead, he would follow the path that generates positive energy and creates a divine halo of goodness around him. As time passes, all his accumulated sins and their evil consequences are washed off and he becomes pure and cleansed of spiritual scum. This helps the shine of the consciousness to come to the fore much like the case when the light of the lantern shines brightly if the glass covering the flame is cleaned. This eclectic state of spiritual awareness and enlightenment is called 'self-realisation' or 'Brahm-realisation' because the 'true self' is the pure consciousness called the *Atma*, and the latter is nothing but Brahm personified.]

2. Brahma began his discourse, saying—'Oh Aashwalaayan! You should try to understand that eclectic knowledge which is the best and extremely magnificent awareness pertaining to the divine Supreme Being by inculcating the auspicious virtues of *Shradha* (having faith, conviction, reverence and veneration), *Bhakti* (sincere devotion and submission for the object of worship), *Dhyan* (constant contemplation and remembrance; focusing of the mind on the object of pursuit), and practice of *Yoga* (meditation and contemplation; diligent effort to bring about a union between the individual soul and the universal Soul of the creation by harnessing all the hidden powers and energy of the body and mind to achieve the aim of spiritual enlightenment and attainment of mystical potentials). [In other words, Brahm-realisation is possible by employing these great and most effective instruments of spiritual enlightenment more than any other means.] (2).

3. That supreme state of Brahm-realisation (or having access to the Supreme Being) is not possible by either doing any kind of deed, or by the help of sons (or other kin and relatives), nor by using wealth and prosperity as an instrument to achieve this auspicious aim (such as giving of huge donations or making charities etc., including holding of large religious ceremonies)¹.

Wise, erudite, expert and enlightened men have accessed that fount of Amrit (the divine ambrosia of eternal beatitude and felicity) by the means of 'Tyag'—or by practicing the eclectic virtue of renunciation, detachment, dispassion and non-involvement.

That divine and sublime Brahm is established in an esoteric and mystical heaven which is beyond the physical heaven of the sky. In other words, when one talks of 'Brahm Loka' where Brahm is supposed to reside, it is not the physical heaven located in some far end of the cosmos that is being referred to. Rather, it is the symbolic ethereal self-illuminated abode located in the secret and deepest recesses of the mind and intellect where the glory of Brahm shines brilliantly. [That is, Brahm's presence can be experienced and witnessed within one's own self and not by a telescope peering into the darkest corners of the fathomless cosmos. Brahm-Loka is not somewhere 'there' in the remote sky or heaven high up in the cosmos, but 'here' in one's own bosom, in his own 'self'. This 'self' is the Atma residing in the subtle space of the person's heart. If a man fails to see Brahm-Loka within himself, he would never find it anywhere else. This fact has been expressly mentioned in Atma Bodha Upanishad or Atmabodho-panishad of Rig Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse no. 2 and the entire Canto 2.]

Only realised and acclaimed Yogis (ascetics who have mastered the art of meditation and contemplation) can have access to this divine abode of Brahm. [This idea has also been expressed in Katho-panishad, 1/2/12, 20.) (3).

[Note—¹This idea that merely doing good deeds, or spending huge amounts of money on religious functions, or thinking that the son or any other member of the extended family can help one to reach the divine and eclectic state of Brahm-realisation would not lead to attaining the supreme Lord in anyway whatsoever is a very significant observation. It has also been reiterated in a slightly different language in Katha-walli Upanishad, 1/2/10, 23 which is Chapter no. 1 of this volume.

Let us examine why these three instances cited here cannot help one to achieve success in Brahm realisation. Suppose a man is sick, then he has to take the medicine himself and it is not the son who takes the pills, he has to approach the doctor personally so that the latter can examine the patient first hand and not through a lengthy narrative described by the patient's son, and only spending money can never give him excellent health, though it provides a helping hand, if the patient himself is not diligent and careful about his own health. Food has to be eaten personally to derive energy from it, and food eaten by others is of no consequence. Similarly, one has to study himself to acquire knowledge, and anybody else cannot replace the 'personal' factor in studying and acquisition of knowledge as much as surrounding oneself with costly books that money can buy add only a cosmetic value to his study room or library without in anyway enhancing his degree of wisdom, learning and erudition.

In other words, this 'Brahm-realisation' and 'self-realisation' is a very personal affair and it cannot be done by a son on behalf of the father, and neither can money buy it. Good deeds do have their effects, but ultimately they tend to make a man depend upon them and make him attached to them. It is to be noted here that deeds are done by the external body which is gross and not the real and pure and truthful 'self' of the aspirant. His true 'self' is his Atma which is absolutely separate from the body. So, how can the deed done by a different entity (the body) benefit the 'self' (the

Atma). Then, does it mean that one should not do even good, auspicious or righteous deeds? No, not at all; this is not the intention here. Since the gross body is the habitat of the sublime and subtle Atma during its sojourn in this world, the cleaner and purer the body is, the more conducive the atmosphere it creates for the Atma of the creature to pursue its spiritual endeavours. Otherwise, the environment would be like a stinking, dirty and filthy house which would rob the incumbent Atma of all its peace.

But ultimately peace comes from within and not from outside. So the Atma has to rely upon its own self to reach the eternal fountain of bliss and tranquility known as Brahm all by its own efforts and not by efforts made by others, such as the individual's own body or by the efforts made by the son for the welfare of his living father or his dead father—such as doing rituals for the benefit of his Spirit after his physical death.

Using money as a means of reaching Brahm, such as by doing charities, holding money-intensive fire sacrifices and giving huge donations, is also not possible for another simple reason. Money and material wealth are worldly assets and not spiritual assets. One is stupid if he tries to ignite the Sun with a match-stick. Brahm-realisation is as eternally splendid and brilliant as the dazzling light of the Sun, while the glitter of gold representing world assets and material wealth is like the light of the candle in the sunlight. Besides this, material wealth of this perishable world is a synonym of Maya or delusions pertaining to this artificial world, entrapping the creature by its illusive charm, while Brahm and self realisation are divine and truthful by nature. How can darkness exist where there is light of knowledge; or how can one expect something that has its origin in the perishable and deluding world to lead him to the place that is imperishable and truthful! In other words, how can 'Maya' represented by the illusive charms of the material wealth and delusions of grandeur and achievement that it produces ever provide eternal peace and happiness in its wake? When the foundation is itself weak and rickety, how can one expect stability and permanence by relying upon it?]

4. Those wise, erudite and enlightened persons who have firmly decided to find the Absolute Truth of existence by studying about it in the Upanishads, by hearing about it and discussing about it, by contemplating upon it and experiencing it first hand to remove any trace of doubt that might arise in their mind about its authenticity—such people first clean their inner self of all worldly impurities and negativity associated with this delusory world by following the path of Brahm Vidya (as describes in earlier verses), and then they follow it up with 'Sanyas Yoga'¹ to achieve final success in their spiritual goal.

With this eclectic achievement they would have accessed the divine ambrosia or Amrit of eternal bliss, happiness and joy. Being submerged and soaked in this ambrosia, they become one like it because constant contact with it would completely mould their inherent character and nature.

By and by when the time comes they obtain final liberation and deliverance from this world by achieving emancipation and salvation for their soul. They will find the ultimate rest for themselves from where there is no return to the world of miseries and torments. That is, once they have become Brahm-realised by following the path of Brahm Vidya coupled with Sanyas Yoga, they would find final freedom from the fetters of ignorance and delusions which had trapped them in this cycle of birth and death in the first place (4).

[Note—¹The phrase *Sanyas Yoga* has two components—viz. Sanyas and Yoga. The word Sanyas essentially means to detach oneself from all worldly attachments and involvement with delusions and artificiality that trap the creature and shackle him in fetters pertaining to this delusory world. The word Yoga on the other hand means to establish a link between two entities—here referring to link between the individual

‘self’ called the Atma and the supreme ‘Self’ called Brahm. That is, Sanyas Yoga entails that the follower would first take the path of Sanyas to detach himself from all artificiality and ignorance-based delusory perceptions by first finding out what the truth is by studying the scriptures, by hearing about it and by discussing about it. Then when he is firmly convinced about the Absolute Truth he would employ the medium of Yoga to achieve self-realisation and Brahm-realisation.

Refer Katho-panishad, 2/3/9, 14-19.]

5. [This verse briefly describes how meditation should be done by a Sanyasi, i.e. a person who has taken the vows of Sanyas by renouncing all his links with this material world of artificiality so that he can concentrate his mind upon the true ‘self’ called the pure conscious Atma which is a representative of Brahm present inside his own body.]

One should clean one’s self by taking a bath etc. and then sit comfortably and peacefully in the sitting posture called ‘Sukhasan’¹ in a calm, quiet, secluded and serene place. Then the body is straightened so that the spine, the neck and the head are in a straight line. The fidgeting nature of the organs of the body is to be controlled purposefully. Then one should symbolically bow before one’s Guru or moral preceptor to pay respect to him (5).

[Note—¹Upanishads on Yoga describe this *Sukhasan* posture as the one which gives bodily comfort to the practitioner instead of sitting in some grotesque posture which would constantly divert the mind to the uneasiness faced by the body. The word ‘Sukhasan’ has two parts—viz. ‘Sukh’ meaning comfort, and ‘Asan’ meaning a sitting posture. Refer Shwetashwetar Upanishad, 2/8 which is Chapter 5 of this volume.]

6. [Verses 6 and 7 describe the deity upon whom an ascetic meditates while sitting in the Sukhasan as mentioned in verse no. 5.]

The ascetic should constantly meditate upon the divine entity that is present in his lotus-like heart as his pure conscious Atma. This divine entity has numerous eclectic virtues. For instance, it has no trace of Raja Guna or any other kind of impurity or taint in it. [The Raja Guna is the second type of Guna which creates the tendency to remain engrossed in this world and its upkeep.]

It is most pure, uncorrupt and immaculate.

It is free from all forms of sorrows, distresses, miseries, agonies and pains that are associated with the mortal creature and the deluding world in which he lives.

It is so stupendous and magnificent that it is beyond the purview of the mind and intellect to think about it and comprehend it; it is not a subject for clinical thought and analysis.

It is an un-manifest, most enigmatic and esoteric entity that is very sublime and subtle, having no definable attributes and qualifications, though it is a universal truth and absolute reality.

It is infinite, endless, measureless and fathomless in dimension and import, in importance and significance.

It is Lord Shiva personified—i.e. it personifies all the eclectic virtues that the word Shiva exemplifies. That is, it is most auspicious, beautiful, peaceful, wise, enlightened and self-realised; it is an embodiment of renunciation and detachment par-excellence; and it is a provider of well-being and benediction to all the creatures like Lord Shiva himself.

It is most calm, tranquil, serene and peaceful.

It is a personification of Amrit which is the ambrosia of eternity as well as of beatitude and felicity.

It is the cause for the entire creation coming into being, being its supreme Lord called Brahm (6).

[Note—All the major Upanishads describe this Atma in more or less the same terms.]

7. This divine eclectic entity called the Atma has no Tama Guna tainting it. [Tama Guna is the lowest of the three qualities and is marked by evil tendencies.]

It is no beginning, middle or end—i.e. it is infinite, immutable, indivisible and universal, being the same everywhere and in all dimensions of time and space.

It is one of its kind, being non-dual and unique.

It is honoured by the epithet of Vibhu—one who is almighty, omnipotent, supreme, vast and colossal.

It is a personification of Chidanand—i.e. it is eternal consciousness and bliss personified.

It is Param Adbhut—i.e. it is most strange, enigmatic, fascinating, mystical, magnificent and stupendous.

This divine Being (Shiva), who is the supreme Lord of creation, is accompanied by Uma (Goddess Parvati, the primary Mother of creation revealed as Mother Nature from whose womb the entire creation is said to have taken birth) to help him to carry on with his divine wish. He has manifested himself as the Lord who is known as Parmeshwar (the supreme Lord of all), Prabhu (Lord and Master), Trilochan (the three-eyed one), and Neelkanth (the Lord with a blue-tinged throat). This Lord has calm, serene, tranquil and peaceful demeanors.

This Lord (here referring to Shiva who is Brahm personified) is the principal from whom all the primary elements of creation as well as the creatures were born.

He is the only witness to everything that had come into being in the past, that exists in the present, and that would come into being in the future and even beyond the future.

His auspicious and self-illuminated august presence overcomes, eliminates and banishes all forms of 'Avidya' which stand for all negative traits and inauspicious notions marked by ignorance and delusions that otherwise normally taint everything that exists in this creation.

Verily, wise ascetics and enlightened sages meditate and contemplate upon this glorious divine Being who is radiant and self-illuminated (7).

8. That Supreme Being is manifested as Brahma the creator, Shiva the concluder, Indra who is the king of Gods as well as the presiding deity that symbolically controls all the organs of the individual creature as the chief patron God of these organs, and he is also the imperishable, transcendental and supreme Brahm himself. He is Vishnu the sustainer and protector of creation, he is Pran (the vital life forces in creation; the vital winds), he is the ferocious dooms-day fire called Kalagni, and he has also revealed himself as the soothing Moon¹ (8).

[Note—¹It would be noted here that every factor, every force in Nature and every unit of creation have been called a revelation of Brahm. Even the opposite factors of Nature such as the ferocious and scorching fire called the Kalagni and its opponent factor of Nature called the Moon which has a soothing effect are its manifestations. Brahm is the creator Brahma on one the hand and the destructor Shiva on the other hand. In between, it sustains and protects as Vishnu. It is at once the king of Gods at the macro level as well as the controller of all individual organs of the body at the micro level in his role as Indra. It has injected life in the body of the individual

creature as the vital wind called Pran present inside the body at the micro level of creation, and at the same time it pervades in the entire length and breadth of creation as the omnipresent and almighty wind element which is also called the cosmic Pran at the macro level of creation.

These unique abilities and virtues of Brahm which are paradoxical in nature but which enables the supreme Authority of creation to do the impossible and make each enterprise successful and wish fulfilled are the qualities that entitle Brahm to be honoured by the epithet of 'Kaivalya'—i.e. one who is one of its kind, unique and unparalleled.]

9. What has been in the past and what would be in the future—everything is a revelation of Brahm (and part of that Supreme Being's divine cosmic play). When a living being has accessed this most holy, divine and eclectic Truth that is Absolute (i.e. when he has realised the irrefutable truthfulness of the statements about Brahm as expounded in this Upanishad), he is able to overcome the hurdle of death and attains Mukti. In other words, he obtains freedom from the fear of death. He finds liberation from the endless cycle of birth and death by attaining eternal freedom for his 'self'. This is also known as emancipation and salvation of his 'self' or his Atma¹ (9).

[Note—¹A wise and enlightened man who is self-realised and Brahm-realised understands the facts mentioned in these verses. He sees Brahm in the entire creation, thereby obtaining peace and happiness at finding the ultimate and absolute 'truth' which everyone tries but fail to search out. Once the fact is known to him, he also realises that his body as well as the world and its material objects are one or the other form of the same divine Being known as Brahm. This super-natural Authority known as Brahm controls every moment and every movement of the creature as well as the world in which he lives; there is nothing that one can do or not do without the wish of this overriding supreme Authority. So one stops fretting and fuming at failures, and exulting and celebrating at success. Obviously, this approach gives a sense of profound equanimity and calmness, a sense of uniformity and universality to a person's behavioral patterns and outlook towards life and its problems. He becomes stable, steady, uniform, tranquil, calm and peaceful; he becomes at ease with himself and his surroundings.

Further, since he realises that he is actually Brahm personified as his own true 'self' called the Atma, that this Atma is uniform, immutable, indivisible, non-dual, universal, omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent, and that the entire creation is a revelation of Brahm who is the real Lord and Master of it, he concludes that he himself is the de-facto Lord and Master of all that exists. Everything is his; they are meant for him; he enjoys everything and nothing remains that he has not obtained and enjoyed. Therefore, he is fully contented and satisfied; he feels fulfilled with no desires and wishes left to be accomplished. So when he dies, he need not take another birth in order to finish his unfilled tasks!

Again, since such a wise and self-realised man does not get involved in any of the deeds done by the body—a fact obvious when we consider that one of the very first requirements for Brahm-realisation is taking the vow of Sanyas as mentioned in verse no. 3 and 4 whereby he is expected to completely renounce everything and sever all his involvements with them—thereby ensuring that he does not have to suffer any consequences of such deeds. Therefore, the other cause of taking birth—that of having to undergo punishment for bad deeds done in the previous life or for enjoying the rewards of good deeds done in that life—do not arise.

The combined effect is final liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death. Only when there is no future birth would there be no chance of having to die.]

10. A person who has become enlightened enough to see his Atma (the pure conscious soul; the spirit; the true self) as the same Atma that is present in all the creatures of this creation, and therefore perceives his own self as an image of all the creatures in this world—only such enlightened seekers are eligible and competent enough to have access to the supreme Brahm, the supreme Soul and cosmic Consciousness of creation, and thereby become ‘Brahm-realised’¹.

He cannot have access to this supreme transcendental Brahm by any other means² (10).

[Note—¹The primary requirement to become Brahm-realised is to have a holistic and all-inclusive view of creation. A wise man must understand that Truth is always one and never two. Truth is an undisputed non-dual, immutable and indivisible entity. If Brahm is that Absolute Truth as asserted by all the scriptures then it goes without saying that it possesses these eclectic virtues that distinguish Truth from non-Truth. This Brahm is also the cosmic Consciousness called the Atma. It is this Atma or consciousness that injects life in the otherwise lifeless and inert body of the creature. Therefore, everything that has come into being from this cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm must have the same universal principal of life factor in it, and this factor is called the Atma. Thus, all the creatures are basically ‘Atma’ in their true and fundamental form. It is like the case of ornaments of gold which have their intrinsic value because of the content of gold present in them more than anything. No matter what shape this gold is given, all ornaments would be called ‘golden’ and nothing else.

²This seemingly innocuous statement is remarkable indeed. It reiterates what has been said in verse no. 3 above that no wealth, no son and no deed can enable and entitle one to have access to Brahm. The supreme Truth has to be realised by one’s own self; no external factors can make this possible. And the fundamental requirement is the conviction in the tenet that whatever that exists is Brahm personified, including one’s own ‘self’ as much as the other ‘self’ represented by the numerous creatures in the creation. This is the non-dual principle of Brahm.

What more does one need to be taught in the principles of universal Brotherhood! Truly, if we were to meticulously implement the teachings of the Upanishads in our lives today, this world torn asunder by strife and jealousy would have been a true heaven upon earth as when we pray ‘Oh Lord, let thy kingdom come, let there be heaven on earth, let there be peace and happiness everywhere’. But the irony is that we pray only through the tongue and not the heart, for had it been so we would not have to go far in search of that illusive heaven, for it here and now! This is the divine message of the Upanishads—‘find the ultimate and absolute Truth in your own self instead of searching it anywhere outside in futility’.]

11. Wise men treat their Atma, i.e. their pure conscious self, as the lower end of the ‘Arani’ (the wooden drill used to kindle the sacred fire during the fire sacrifice) and Pranav (the invisible and omnipresent supreme entity of creation represented by the ethereal divine sound OM) as the upper end of this Arani to kindle the fire of Brahm-and-self realisation by vigorously practicing meditation and contemplation upon the Truth and pursuing the knowledge pertaining to it¹. This helps them to burn all worldly fetters that shackle them to this deluding and entrapping world of falsehoods along with all evil consequences of any sin they might have done inadvertently (11).

[Note—¹This concept has been explained in detail in Brahmo-panishad, verse no. 18 and the note appended to it in Chapter no. 3 of this volume.]

12. It is the same universal consciousness known as the Atma which has assumed the role of a deluded creature. In this role it becomes subservient to Maya or the power of

creating delusions that is as integral to creation as the opposite power of enlightenment that cuts through this Maya¹.

Once the Atma has assumed the role of a deluded creature overcome by ignorance, it is known as the 'Jiva-Atma'. In this role it assumes that the body—which however is gross and perishable by nature as opposed to the subtle, sublime and imperishable nature of the pure form of the Atma—is its 'real self'. This is the basic misconception and error that he makes; this is the fundamental mistake which becomes the cause of all other misconceptions and delusions.

With this fundamental erroneous premise, the Jiva-Atma begins to do all sorts of deeds and get involved in them. [This is because the deeds are done by the physical body, and when under false impressions the Atma thinks that its 'self' is the body, it is natural that it gets linked to and involved with those deeds.] It enjoys the company of a woman and eats and drinks as well during its waking state called the Jagrat state of consciousness. It gets satisfaction with such service and enjoys them (12).

[Note—¹This stanza establishes that both the good and the bad co-exist in this creation. Both the opposite qualities are necessary to maintain the balance or equilibrium in creation so that the wheel cycle of creation continues to rotate. For instance, if there was no Maya or delusions and attractions towards falsehoods and material world of sense objects then all the creatures would become wise and enlightened, resulting in their non-involvement with this world and its activities. Then what would happen—there would be no generation of wealth and there would be no material progress; there would be no discoveries because people would be self-contented and satisfied with whatever they have; there would be no desire to propagate and procreate because these activities create passions and lust; etc. On the other hand, if there was no such concept as wisdom and enlightenment, no auspiciousness and righteousness, then the world would sink into the cauldron of vices and evil which in their turn would scorch the world to ashes and the creatures would beat each other to pulp even for the most unimportant of issues.

Besides the influence of Maya upon the world and the creatures that live in it there are other factors that help to maintain this balance and aid in the continuance of the turning of the wheel of creation and destruction in a perpetual manner—such as the presence of the three Gunas which are the inherent qualities present in all the creatures in more or less quantity that determine each creature's character, temperament, behaviour, nature and personality. These three Gunas are Sata, Raja and Tama. The Sata is the best of the three qualities and creates a propensity for goodness and auspiciousness. The Raja creates a desire for the world and to remain involved in its progress, development, protection and sustenance. The Tama is the lowest of the three and creates negative tendencies such as the propensity for committing sins and misdemeanors. They also help to maintain a balance much like the presence of Maya.

From the perspective of the Atma, the Maya and the Gunas appear to affect it for the simple reason that the Atma lives in the gross body of the creature which is affected by them though the Atma itself is totally detached and independent from all them. It is like the case of the flame of a lantern that is surrounded by a tainted glass which would affect not only how the flame appears to be but also how it gives its light.

Thus, the same Atma appears to be differently hued in different creatures.]

13. During the dreaming state of consciousness called the Swapna state, the same Jiva-Atma constructs its own world of fantasy in which it lives in the same way as it had done when it was in the earlier state of Jagrat (waking). This imaginary world gives the Jiva-Atma the same sorrow and happiness that it had been experiencing

while awake. [In other words, it thinks that the world of dreams is for real. This very notion is sufficient to prove that it is hallucinating.]

In the deep sleep state of consciousness called the Sushupta state, all the delusions created by Maya¹ and its characteristic Tama Guna² are dispelled and expunged, resulting in real peace and tranquility for the Jiva-Atma³ (13).

[Note—¹Maya is a word which has two parts, Ma + Ya. The first half means a 'mother; a progenitor; something that creates', while the other half refers to the 'notion of doubt, of either this or that; the notion marked by uncertainty'. The word 'Ma' also means 'to measure, mark off, by any standard; to show, to exhibit, to display; to infer, to conclude; to be formed, built, made of'. Therefore, the composite word Maya refers to a situation which harbours or creates uncertainties, where it is uncertain whether what is said or understood or seen or witnessed or experienced is actually the truth or not. It is virtually the 'mother of all confusions, doubts and perplexities'. It therefore refers to something or some situation which creates or produces perplexities, doubts and confusions, something that is not real; that which is deluding, illusionary, deceptive, mirage-like and deceitful, and is caused by the ignorance about its truth and reality; something that has no substance or pith; displays no certainty and leads to wrong inference. The term Maya is used to define this entire complex phenomenon at once. Hence, Maya is a synonym used for all that is deceptive, faulty, false, deluding, ignorance-based, illusionary, imposturing, deceitful, invisible and super-natural in the sense that it defies all logic and understanding; all that which has no reality or substance inspite of appearing to be for real; all that is hollow and lacks gravity though appearing to be solid and dense. It creates hallucinations in a creature's mind leading him to believe that what he sees is the truth. It is the deluding and magical powers of the supreme transcendental Lord that hides the reality and creates an imaginary world of deceptions and misconceptions.

Maya is the indescribable and inconceivable cosmic dynamic power that Brahm employs to create delusions.

Maya has three basic constituent qualities. Hence it is called *Trigunmayi* (त्रिगुणमयि), i.e. one which has the three Gunas or qualities. These three Gunas or qualities are—Sata, Raja and Tama. 'Sata' is the most auspicious, virtuous and noblest quality in a man and raises him to a high moral and spiritual pedestal. It marks predominance of righteousness and the highest standards of spirituals and mental evolvement leading to high thoughts, noble actions and righteous behaviour. 'Raja' is the medium quality in a person, and it is marked by worldly passions, desires, yearnings and greed. It makes a man more worldly than spiritual. 'Tama' is the third and most lowly of the three qualities and is used as a synonym for darkness and evil. Obviously, 'Tama' means ignorance, delusions and all the forces or qualities that are evil, mean, lowly, miserly, wicked and base. They pull down a man from high pedestal and virtually dump him in the dust yard of creation to rust and decay.

These *three qualities* together, in various permutations and combinations, decide the innate nature of a man. The greater presence of 'Sata' makes a man nobler as compared to a high ratio of 'Tama' which makes him wicked, pervert and evil. Various proportions of these qualities will therefore produce innumerable varieties of creatures having different temperaments, thought processes, behaviours, demeanors and mental setup in this world.

When a man understands any 'Truth' after rigorously examining the 'truthfulness' of that truth, when he has established the veracity of facts, he believes in it more firmly and more convincingly. No matter what other people tell him about the truth being not the correct or the whole truth, he would not listen to them, simply because he has verified the facts for himself, he has witnessed the truth himself, he has logically eliminated all falsehoods to deduce that what he knows is the 'truthful Truth'. His Truth is based on rigid and solid foundation; he is unwavering and steady in it. If he is steadfast and convinced in his knowledge, no matter how much

ignorance and delusions (Maya) try to push him away from the absolute 'Truth', he will remain steadfast and unwavering in it. There will be no doubts and confusions in his mind.

The basic idea here is that Maya is like a transparent coloured sheet which covers the supreme 'truth' in the creation. Since it is transparent, it assumes the attributes of the 'truth' that it covers, because for all practical purposes an ordinary man is unable to see that veil because of its transparency. But at the same time, being tinged by different Gunas, the view of the 'truth' as seen through the veil of Maya gets tainted or distorted consonantly. This is a simple way of understanding what is called 'illusion and Maya vis-à-vis the Truth and Reality'. Maya nevertheless hides the truthfulness of the Truth, and instead lends its own attributes and characteristics to that Truth known as the 'Nirgun Brahm' by the Upanishads when the latter is observed through this veil, while at the same time assuming the glorious attributes of Brahm itself. So ignorant fools think that the Maya is the real thing, whereas they are actually seeing the 'veiled truth' as observed through this covering of Maya, because the actual 'truth' is hidden from view by this transparent sheet which has lent it its own colour and hue to it. As a result, that Nirgun appears to have some attributes, and it thereby becomes 'Sagun', or the one with attributes and characteristics, by the interference of Maya.

²Tama Guna—There are three basic character traits in all the creatures, and they are called Guna. The character of all the living beings in the entire creation is dependent upon three primary qualities called Sata, Raja and Tama. Sata is the best of the three and marked by a propensity for auspiciousness, probity, propriety, piety, holiness and righteousness. The second quality is Raja and it makes a man more attracted to this material world and its charms and less spiritually inclined. The third quality is the meanest of the three and leads to the inclinations for committing sins and all sorts of demeanours. The varying quantity and intensity of these three in any given individual would decide his specific character and how he is inclined to deal with the world and a given circumstance.

The three characteristic qualities inherently present in the creature, in different ratios, are the three thought textures which bombard the mind. These three thought textures are manifestations of the 'Vrittis and Vasanas' (inherent tendencies or desires) of the creature which mire its pure conscious Atma or soul as a covering or veil. These three basic qualities or *Gunas* which are inherent in all the living beings determine their nature, habits, temperaments and inclinations which in turn decide the behaviour, personality and outlook of each individual in this world.

The three Gunas that determine the individual character of the creature, that determine his 'individuality' as compared to the general character of the group to which that individual belongs, are like the *isotopes* in chemistry. The isotope refers to the phenomenon wherein one of two or more atoms of the same chemical element that contain the same number of protons but different numbers of neutrons in their nuclei and therefore have the same atomic number and chemical properties but different mass numbers and physical properties. For example, two brothers have the same genes and the same inheritance, but the presence of the three Gunas in different ratios between them changes their personality and thought processes. One may be a highly righteous man while the other might be just the opposite. Their parents are the same, their upbringing is the same, they have attended the same school and ate the same food, but there is a deep chasm when it comes to their character as individuals.

(a) *Sata Guna* is the quality which is regarded as the best quality present in a creature and it is marked by a predominance of auspiciousness, righteousness, virtuousness and noble qualities. It is marked by such high standards of ethical existence that have, as their characteristic features, such qualities as coolness of head, peace, contentedness, humility, devotion, wisdom, mercy, compassion, creativity, selflessness, service, righteousness, virtuousness, holiness and nobility of thought and action etc. As is evident, these qualities are the best qualities that one can have in

him; they have a spiritual dimension to them; they are spiritually uplifting and give a divine halo to those who practice them. This quality creates an inherent affinity in a creature towards things in life which are of high moral value and uplifting for the soul rather than things which are demoting and denigrating for the spirit.

The Sata Guna or quality is the veil covering the soul like a smoke covering the fire. A slight breeze will remove this smoke. Similarly a little bit of prayer and meditation will remove the Satwic desires; its removal requires the least effort. It is the foremost and the best amongst the three characteristics of a creature such as good and positive virtuous such as righteousness, creativity, noble deeds and thoughts, the positive qualities of service, benevolence, mercy, devotion, wisdom, holiness, piety etc.

(b) *Raja Guna* is the medium quality marked by a greater percentage of worldly passions, desires and attachments and their natural offshoots in a creature. It covers such qualities as worldly yearnings, passions, a stormy nature, agitated behaviour, ambitions, desires, selfishness, expansionist tendencies, desire to sustain etc. All these pertain to this materialistic world, and they create an inherent affinity in a creature towards the material world of sense objects and their enjoyments rather than the world of spiritualism. In other words, those creatures who have this quality as a dominant trait are more inclined towards the world as compared to those creatures who have the Sata quality in a greater density. Such qualities give worldly fame and prosperity. If these qualities are judiciously mixed with the Satwic qualities, then they provide the person the better of the two worlds, both in terms of worldly fame as well as spiritual well being.

The Rajsic quality or Guna can be compared to dust on a mirror. In this case some dusting and rubbing is needed to clean the mirror; a greater effort is needed as compared to the case with Satwic quality. Rajsic tendencies are the second best quality which produces worldly desires, ambitions, passions, selfishness, various obsessions, desire to sustain and expand etc.

(c) *Tama Guna* is the third quality which is the meanest and basest of the three types of qualities in a creature. It is marked by evilness, perversions and sinfulness. It is the most degrading, denigrating and contemptible of the three characteristics in a person, leading him to such negative traits as sins, vices, perversions, greed, avarice, haughtiness, pride, lust, attachments, yearnings, intoxication, wild behaviour, promiscuity, evils, utter disregard for anything which is righteous, ethical and noble etc. This quality creates an inherent affinity in a creature towards things which are very mean and lowly, which are totally sensual and pertain to the immediate gratification of the sense urges without any thought to what would be their consequences in the long run. In brief, behaviour which is utterly immoral, denigrating and depraving for the creature, marked by grossness, crassness and recklessness of demeanors. It is the lowest and meanest of the three qualities leading to a person's downfall, ignominy and ruin.

The Tamsic quality or Guna covering the soul is like a fetus in the womb covered by the embryonic membrane—they cannot be removed easily and require diligence, effort, dedicated and careful handling requiring time and patience. It is the basest and the lowliest of the three characteristics, the worst type to possess, and is marked by such negative traits as sin, evil, perversions, immorality, vices, misdemeanors, anger, inertia, delusions, deception, gloom, ignorance et al.

Since each individual is like an independent piece of mosaic that completes the entire picture in conjunction with other such pieces, this individual creature's nature and character helps to determine the overall shape of the creation. These Gunas keep the creation in a state of constant change, because numerous creatures die every moment and new ones are born. The Supreme Being has to be constantly on the alert because of this flux.

The various permutations and combinations of these three qualities create a particular 'nature' of an individual giving him his individuality and his special

characters which are unique to him; they determine his temperament, behaviour, thought process et al.

³All the negativity that is associated with the Tama Guna which is synonymous with Maya are dispensed with in the third state of existence of consciousness called the Sushupta state. This is because in this state both the gross body consisting of the organs of action and perception as well as the subtle body consisting of the mind-intellect complex have become defunct. Only the pure consciousness exists in the causal body, surrounded by the bliss sheath. As the name suggests anything that gives 'bliss' must be free from agitations and negativity. Therefore, the Atma must be free from all agitations and negativity associated with either the Maya or the Gunas that are limited to the body. These two only taint the outer sheaths that surround the Atma, and not its own true nature and form much like the case of the fire which always remains immaculate and pure inspite of all sorts of impurities and rubbish being thrown into it. These impurities might affect the colour of the fire for some time, they might even produce smoke for a while and appear to affect the brightness of the fire, but as soon as these impurities are reduced to ashes the brightness and splendour of the fire reemerges with its original glory. If we cite the example of the Sun we find that there are 'spots' on the Sun's disc, but upon closer examination we find that these spots are in its atmosphere and not in its core which is a cauldron of brilliantly burning fire. Similarly, whatever spots that might appear on the Atma are all superfluous and caused by the fact that this Atma lives in a gross body having numerous taints, but they never affect its original core form as Consciousness.]

14. After sometime, the Jiva-Atma reverts back to the state of consciousness from which it had gone to this deep sleep state of being free from all delusions because it is being constantly buffeted by the hangover and the rebounding affect of the deeds done by it during its earlier state of awareness of the world when it was in the waking state of consciousness, as well as the accumulated burden of pre-conditioned erroneous notions of its self as being the body instead of the pure consciousness which it had inherited from its previous lives.

The combined effect is that the Jiva-Atma once again wakes up into this world and plunges head-on in doing deeds and getting involved in them in its attempt to find peace and happiness, forgetting in the melee that just a while ago it had indeed found that peace and happiness in its deep sleep state called the Sushupta state of existence.

In this way, the Jiva-Atma exists in three places or planes during these three states of its existence. These three places are like the three bodies in which it resides during these three phases or planes of its existence. They are called the gross body which relates to its waking state, the subtle body which relates to its dreaming state, and the causal body which relates to its deep sleep state¹.

It is because the creature's Atma erroneously and fallaciously assumes that it has three lives, and not one stable uniform existence, that he is subjected to all forms of perplexities and confusions. It is this basic fault of perception that is at the root cause of all the mysteries and strange confusions that the creature encounters.

The consciousness that is the 'cause' of all this maverick world of delusions is itself free from all delusion². It is in its self a fountain of bliss and happiness; it is wise and wholesome; it is undiluted and uniform enlightenment.

In the final analysis, when the seeker of Absolute Truth personified by Brahm realises this fact, all the three levels or bodies in which the Atma was assumed to be present collapse and merge themselves into one unit which has no fractured existence and no separate characters. That is, for a self-realised man, the only body that matters is the one that harbours the Atma and which is the causal body as it is the one which is the 'cause' of all that exists (14).

[Note—¹The three states of existence of the Atma and the three relevant bodies have been explained with the aid of diagrams at the end of this volume. Elsewhere, they have explained in Brahmo-panishad, verse no. 1, 20-21, Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, one of the largest Upanishads, in 1/1/17-20, 2/1/16-20, 4/3/9-38, etc.

The erroneous perception of the Jiva Atma that it exists in these planes instead of one non-dual state that is universal, immutable and constant is at the root of all its problems. Had the creature realised that its 'true self' is the pure consciousness and not the body it would not have been buffeted by so many notions and perceptions that add to its confusions, leading to perplexities and consternation. The realised Jiva Atma would not be tossed between happiness and joys on the one hand, and miseries and sorrows on the other hand.

²Anything that has life can act and dream, for a dead entity does neither of these two things. This fact itself proves that there must be something that is the 'cause' of creating all this illusion just like there must be a magician who creates all sorts of illusions on stage during a show. This hidden entity, like the magician, is the pure consciousness ensconced in the 'causal body' of the creature as its Atma. This is precisely why the abode of the pure consciousness is called 'casual' because it is the 'cause' of all that exists, including the magical world of delusions.]

15. It is from this (the pure conscious Atma residing in the causal body) that everything come into being. It is from it that Pran (life forces in the body), Mana (thoughts and emotions; the mind) and all the gross organs of the body along with their perceptions come into being. [This is the microcosmic form of the Atma of the creature or the Jiva Atma having a body.] It is from it that the primary elements of creation called the Bhuts such as the sky, the air/wind, the fire/energy, the water and the earth that supports and bears the entire living world are born. [This is the macrocosmic form of the Atma as Brahm.] (15).

16. That supreme transcendental absolute Brahm which is the pure conscious Atma of all the living creatures, that Brahm which is the fundamental basis of the entire world revolving around the principle theory of 'cause and affect', that Brahm which is most miniscule and atomic (i.e. which is extremely subtle and sublime, most imperceptible and most difficult to ascertain with certainty), that Brahm which is eternal, ever-present, infinite and most ancient—verily, that essential and fundamental entity in creation which is the foundation, the pillar, the support, the dwelling, the cause as well as the affect, the origin as well as the end of whatever that exists in this creation, both the visible as well as the invisible, is known as Brahm. That Brahm is you; you are it¹ (16).

[Note—¹This assertion is called the *Mahavakya* or the Great Truth proclaimed in the Upanishads. There are four Mahavakyas, or the great universal sayings, declarations, commandments, tenets, or the axioms and maxims of the Vedas which are absolute truths and sum up the essence of their teachings with the reference to the Supreme Being known as Brahm. They are as follows—(i) 'Brahm Is Consciousness' (Pragnanam Brahm) appears in Aiteriya Upanishad of the Rig Veda. It means that Atma/consciousness, which gives life to the material layers consisting of the five sheaths of the creature, is the same as the Supreme Reality/Truth behind the entire universe/creation called by the name of Brahm; (ii) 'That Thou Art' (Tat Twam Asi) is found in the Chandogya Upanishad of the Sam Veda. It means that the infinite, all-pervading, omniscient Supreme Truth/Reality is the consciousness or pure self in you. It is also called a statement of advice to the seekers in as much as it contains advice addressed to the seeker that the supreme reality is the self within him; (iii) 'This Self Is Brahm' (Ayam Atma Brahm) is found in the Mandukya Upanishad in the Atharva Veda. It means that the Atma which is self illuminated and the Supreme Reality/Truth

are one and the same (i.e. identical); (iv) I Am Brahm (Aham Brahm Asmi) is found in the Brihadaranyak Upanishad of the Yajur Veda. It proclaims that the conscious principle/element in an individual is nothing other than the total consciousness. This is the statement made by the seeker after attaining self realisation.

There are a number of other Upanishads that describe these great sayings of the Vedas. Some of them are the following:--

(a) According to Paingalo-panishad, 3/2 of the Shukla Yajur Veda, they are the following—(a) ‘Tattwamasi’—that art thou, or ‘that truthful essence is you’; (b) ‘Twam-Tadasi’—you are that; (c) ‘Twam-Brahmasi’—thou art Brahm; and (d) ‘Aham-Brahmasi’—I am Brahm.

(b) According to Mandal Brahmino-panishad, of the Shukla Yajur Veda, they are the following—(a) ‘That is me’, or ‘that is I’ is mentioned in Brahmin 2, section 2, verse no. 5; (b) ‘I am Tej or I am energy personified’, ‘I am Pragna or personified knowledge’, ‘I am one and immutable’, ‘I am pure and non-dual Brahm’—these are mentioned in Brahmin 2, section 4, verse no. 4; (c) ‘I am the eternal and immaculate Parmatma’, ‘I am that essence’, ‘you are me’, ‘I am you’ are mentioned in Brahmin 3, section 1, verse no. 6; (d) ‘I am Brahm’ appears in Brahmin 3, section 2, verse no. 1; and finally (e) ‘You are me’ appears in Brahmin 3, section 2, verse no. 2.

(c) According to Shuka Rahasayo-panishad, 21/1-4 of Krishna Yajur Veda, they are the following—(1) OM salutations! Enlightenment and knowledge is Brahm and vice versa; (2) OM salutations! I am that Brahm; (3) OM salutations! Verily, that is you; (4) OM salutations! This Atma is Brahm.

Other Upanishads that highlight the fundamental tenets of the Vedas are Atmabodho-panishad and Atmo-panishad amongst others.]

17. ‘This world reflected in the three states of existence in which the consciousness appears to exist is nothing but the same, immutable and non-dual supreme transcendental Brahm reflected in all these forms, and one of those forms is ‘me’. Since Brahm and I are one and indistinguishable, it follows that I am also Brahm personified’. This profound realisation enables the enlightened creature to find liberation and deliverance from all fetters that tie it in shackles (of ignorance and delusions) (17).

18. There is something that is more quaint and extraordinary, that is most remarkable and exceptional, that is most stupendous and astounding and very dissimilar to what exists as the ‘Bhokta’ (one who enjoys or consumes), the ‘Bhogyā’ (one that is the object of enjoyment and consumption), and ‘Bhog’ (the process of enjoying or suffering or consuming) in all these three states of existence of the deluded consciousness (i.e. the waking state, the dreaming state, and the deep sleep state). That ‘something’ which is distinct and more magnificent than the rest is known as ‘Sada-Shiva’—i.e. one that is eternally beautiful, eternally truthful, eternally wise and enlightened, and eternally peaceful and blissful. This astonishing and fascinating entity is the witness to all, i.e. it just watches the trio of Bhokta, Bhogyā and Bhog as a neutral observer, but nothing can be hidden from this observer however. This entity is Consciousness personified (18).

19. ‘I am that supreme transcendental Brahm personified. Everything that exists has its origin in me (because Brahm is the cause of the origin of everything, and I am a living embodiment of Brahm—refer verse no. 16), everything is established in me (because I am the fundamental support and foundation and basis of all that exists in my manifestation as the macrocosmic Brahm—refer verse no. 17), and it is in me that

everything collapses and vanishes at the time of its conclusion (because everything merges, at the time of conclusion, into Brahm from where they had originated at the time of creation—refer verse no. 14).

Verily, that non-dual, supreme and transcendental Brahm, the cosmic Soul and pure cosmic and universal Consciousness is none other than ‘me’ (19).

[Note—On the face of it these statements smack of arrogance, pride, haughtiness, hypocrisy and egotism. But it is not so because these are pronounced by a self-realised holy man who has distanced himself from all worldly praises and has renounced all his connections with this materialistic world. Therefore there is no question of making such haughty statement for self-praise in order to gain some material benefit. Rather, it’s a spontaneous outburst of exultation at discovery of the grand Truth, much like Archimedes, the legendary Greek inventor and mathematician, running out of his bath, half naked, shouting ‘Eureka’ when he discovered the famous laws of buoyancy named ‘the Archimedes Principle’ after him.]

20. ‘I (the Atma) am smaller than the atom (as the conscious ‘self’ of the individual creature). Similarly, I am larger than the largest entity in existence personified (i.e. I am the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic gross body of Brahm). The entire colourful and varied world is but my form or revelation. I am the most ancient and primary Purush (i.e. I am the Prajapati Brahma, the creator, from whom the rest of the creation came into being). I am indeed Ishwar (i.e. I am the Lord of the world as well as the Gods). I am the golden hued Hiranyagarbha personified (i.e. I am the macrocosmic subtle body of Brahm from which even the first and primary gross form of the creation as the Viraat had emerged at the very initial phases of this creation). Indeed, I am an embodiment of Shiva (i.e. I am truthful, eternal, beautiful, placid, self-realised, meditative, wise and enlightened like Lord Shiva)’ (20).

21. ‘That Brahm which is constantly on the move though it has no physical limbs, that Brahm which is beyond the scope of comprehension and thought, and that Brahm which is almighty and omnipotent, being an embodiment of all forms of energy, strength, authority, potentials and powers that exist in this creation—indeed that Brahm is ‘me’. I see everything even without any physical eye, and I hear everything even without the aid of the physical ear. In spite of my being distinct from the subtle body consisting of the mind and intellect complex, I still know everything because I am by nature omniscient and all-knowing. But the astonishing irony is that no one knows about ‘me’ (i.e. my true form). Verily, I am always in my true form as the pure consciousness and the holy Atma’ (21).

22. ‘I am the one who is to be known by the study of all the scriptures, such as the Vedas and Vedanta (the Upanishads). I am the one who has created the knowledge contained in the scriptures as well as the object of their study.’ (22).

23. ‘Auspicious or inauspicious deeds, righteous or unrighteous deeds, good or bad deeds—none of them have any affect upon me, they do not taint me, for I am immune to such mundane considerations and beyond their affects. I never decay, get old and decrepit and die, and neither do I have any birth—for I am eternal, infinite and imperishable. I have no gross body and none of its organs such as the gross organs of perception (ears, nose, eyes, tongue and skin) and the organs of action (legs, hands, mouth, genitals and excretory), and neither do I have the subtle body consisting of the mind-intellect complex. None of the five primary elements of creation—such as the

earth, water, fire, air and sky—have any relevance for me or define me in the remotest’ (23).

[Note—Refer verse no. 6-8. The Atma is synonymous with Brahm—both are Absolute, Truth and Reality personified in this creation; both are Consciousness personified, the Atma at the level of the individual creature and Brahm at the cosmic level. The creation is so stupendous and varied as pointed out in verse no. 7-9 above that it is impossible to build a comprehensive picture—see also verse no. 24 below.]

24. Any wise, self-realised and enlightened person who becomes conscious of the presence of this stupendous, most magnificent and mystical entity known as Brahm and grasps the profound but most esoteric truth of this supreme transcendental entity—an entity that is most esoteric, enigmatic and mystical, an entity that is immaculate, pristine, spotless and untainted, an entity that is non-dual and one of its only kind, an entity that is the only neutral witness of everything that exists, and that is none but Truth personified—such a person is able to have access to that entity and becomes as pure and exalted as that supreme essence itself¹ (24).

[Note--¹In other words, a person who has intelligently comprehended what this Upanishad says and believes in, a person who practices its doctrines with firm faith and conviction—such a person is able to appreciate its ‘truth’ as well as the importance and impact of this ‘truth’. When one keeps company of ‘truth’ it is naturally expected that ‘non-truth’ would not come near him. That is, he would be freed from all falsehoods and delusions based on ignorance of ‘truth’ about something which is not so apparent, not so tangible, not so visible, and not within the reach of the senses, but is nevertheless irrefutable and unequivocal. Therefore, when one becomes ‘self-realised’ one also become ‘Brahm-realised’ because both the terms are synonymous with each other.]

25. A person who worship this ‘Shat-Rudra’, i.e. who pursues the Truth which is most beautiful, eternal, holy, auspicious, blissful and divine, becomes as pure as the sacred fire, as swift and agile as the wind or air element, and is deemed to have accepted virtuousness and piety, holiness and divinity, blissfulness and contentedness as an inseparable part of his character.

He is absolved of such horrible sins as killing of a Brahmin, drinking wine and stealing gold¹. In fact, such persons are freed from such mundane considerations as having to undergo punishment for bad deeds or getting to enjoy the rewards of good deeds².

Such an enlightened person obtains the exalted state of being freed from all fetters. Such persons who have risen above the mundane and untied their shackles should read this Upanishad on a regular basis. He should remember and contemplate upon its profound tenets regularly (25).

[Note—¹This stanza should be interpreted in the proper way and not distorted to mean that it gives a license for committing such sins in the belief that they would be forgiven if one worships this or that deity, or reads this or that scripture. The plain intention is that if one sincerely wishes to atone for one’s sins then it is not that there is no way out for him. If a man sincerely regrets and realises his mistakes and wants to amend himself, by all means he should be given a chance. But a sincere realisation of having committed an error entails that it is not repeated; therefore the repentance also is sincere without expressly saying so. This Upanishad’s assertion about forgiveness is meant for such sincere aspirants and not for deceitful imposters who wish to escape from the sufferings that come with punishments for their sins in the garb of repentance and plea for forgiveness.

²This observation answers why the sins mentioned here are pardoned. It is because he had committed them when he had not realised that he should not be doing them because he is not basically a sinful soul but a pure and holy entity, and doing anything ignominious do not behoove his exalted stature. And once this auspicious thought finds foothold in his mind, he would automatically shun all such activities that come under the broad category of sin and evil. Another interesting observation is this—a self-realised man comes to understand that the body that does all the deeds is not at all his truthful identity, because it is his pure conscious Atma which is absolutely distinct from the body. The Atma simply lives in the body like a tenant in a house; the house does not belong to him unless of course he ‘illegally’ usurps it. The erroneous idea of the Atma when it is under the influence of delusions that the body is its ‘self’ (as mentioned in verse no. 12 of this Upanishad) is like illegally usurping the house under wrong advice of unscrupulous elements who wish to grab it. The righteous man would not pay heed to such nefarious designs of bad advisors and think for himself that grabbing someone’s property is an unrighteous act and counterproductive; why should he betray the landlord who has given him shelter? This righteous way of thinking would prevent him from falling prey to temptations. In the present context, this is like ‘thinking for one’s own self as to what is true and what is false vis-à-vis the world and the self.]

26. This constant study and contemplation helps him to acquire special knowledge and higher degree of erudition and enlightenment that would pave the path for his overcoming the obstacles created by this colossus world of delusions and all sorts of ignorance which are like a huge ocean most difficult to cross. When a person grasps the importance and significance of this Upanishad and the profound knowledge it contains, he is able to easily access the supreme stature known as ‘Kaivalya’ as described herein. Indeed, he is able to find that supreme stature of ‘Kaivalya’ (26).

-----Shanti Paath-----

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Chapter 5

Shwetashwatar Upanishad/Shwetashwataro-panishad

This is one of those Upanishads which are exclusively dedicated to the theme of Brahm and repeatedly stress the importance of realising this grand quintessential Absolute Truth of existence. It is to be noted that this Upanishad espouses the philosophy of Sankhya Shastra and Sankhya Yoga, and elucidates their fundamental principles.

It was first revealed to the great sage-cum-seer named Shwetashwatar (6/21), and hence it bears his name.

Canto 1 describes succinctly about the Atma, the pure conscious ‘self’ both at the individual level of the creature as well as the universal level of the cosmos or creation. There are two beautiful analogies of the *wheel* and the *river* to explain the fundamental principles.

Canto 2 is dedicated to the praise of the Sun as a giver of life and a visible manifestation of the supreme Brahm. It goes on to describe the basic steps in Yoga (meditation exercises).

Cantos 3 to 6 are fully dedicated to enumerate the long eclectic list of the divine virtues and qualities of the Supreme Being. It also outlines the principles of *Sankhya Shastra* and *Sankhya Yoga*, as has been explicitly stated in 6/1-3 and 6/13. This school of spiritual philosophy was first propounded by sage Kapil to whom this profound knowledge was revealed by the supreme Brahm himself (5/2).

The metaphor of *two birds* sitting on a tree has been beautifully employed to describe the relationship between the Jivatma (the creature) and the Parmatma (the Supreme Being, the Lord of creation) in Canto 4, verse nos. 6-7.

The cycle of birth and death has been called the giant *Brahm-Chakra* or the wheel rotated by the supreme Brahm (6/1-2), and the cycle of deeds and their unavoidable consequences as the great *Karma Chakra* (6/3). The process of evolution has been also outlined in Canto 5, verse nos. 10-12.

In short, this unique Upanishad brings profound ‘truths’ of creation and existence to the fore in a very effective and succinct manner. Each observation about the divinity and supremacy of Brahm as well as about what is the irrefutable Truth is emphasised by way of repetition to drive home the point that what is being said is indeed the Truth.

We should note here that the basic tenets of the Upanishads have a striking similarity to the religio-philosophical beliefs of the great Christian saint named *Thomas Aquinas*. An entire set of religious doctrines based on his philosophy of the soul, human knowledge and God is known as *Thomism*. St Thomas was born 1224/25 A.D. and died 7 March, 1274. He was a leading philosopher and theologian of the Catholic Church and taught at the University of Paris. He was a prolific writer and penned about eighty great books on the subject of theology and philosophical aspects of religion. One of his great works is *Summa Theologica* which he wrote between 1265-73, and was his last major treatise on religious philosophy. His profound doctrine is known as *Thomism*. This is a philosophical and theological system developed by him which has great similarity with the philosophy of the Upanishads. Briefly it states that ‘the human soul is immortal and a unique subsistent form, that all human knowledge is based on sensory perceptions that are experienced by him but it also depends upon the mind’s reflective capacity, and that all creature’s have a natural tendency to love God that can be perfected and elevated by grace and application’.

In the context of our present reading, we should use the word ‘application’ as the practical method of Yoga and other means adopted by an aspirant to realise the supreme truth of the soul by focusing the mind exclusively on it, and the ‘God’ referred by Thomas is the supreme transcendental Brahm of the Upanishads. The rest of the things automatically fall into their right place.

-----Shanti Paath-----

ॐ_सह_नाववतु_।_सह_नौ_भुनक्तु_।_सह_वीर्यं_करवावहै_।_तेजस्वि_नावधीतमस्तु_।_मा_विद्विषावहै_।
 ॐ_शान्तिः_!_शान्तिः_!!_शान्तिः_!!!

The meaning of this Shanti Paath is given in appendix no. 1.

Canto 1

1. OM salutations! Those who were naturally inclined to contemplate upon and deeply ponder about the great mysteries of Brahm and used to gather in groups to discuss the various aspects of this divine and enigmatic Brahm, asked one another, 'What is the form of Brahm which is the cause of the entire creation? From what or whom are we all born? How are we all kept alive and sustained? Where are we present and what is our basis, support and foundation? And oh experts on the subject of Brahm, what impels us or inspires us to wander in the seemingly endless cycle of birth and death, all the while being buffeted, pounded and tossed around by numerous troughs and crests of sorrows and joys? (1).

2. Are 'Kaal' (age, time and circumstance which results in change of the present and determines fate of the future), 'Swabhav' (a creature's natural temperament, inclinations and habits), 'Niyati' (certain fate or destiny that is dependant upon the deed and actions of a creature), 'Yadrisha' (unexpected and sudden happenings), 'Bhuts' (the various permutations and combinations in which the five fundamental elements of creation—space, air, fire, water and earth—mingle with one another to create an infinite variety of creatures of this creation), 'Yoni' (literally a womb, but here referring to the cosmic womb of Mother Nature) and 'Purush' (literally the male, the father, but here referring to the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic gross body of creation) independently or jointly in various combinations responsible for this creation and its individual creatures coming into being? One should ponder deeply upon this question.

This is not a possibility because all of them, either independently or in combination¹, are subservient to the Atma or consciousness that lives inside the body of all living beings; they obey the command of the Atma and therefore cannot be the senior most authority.

And neither is this Atma residing in the body of the creature the senior most entity because it is subjected to being buffeted and pummeled by the affects of deeds done by the creature, having to suffer their bad affects and inclined to enjoy the good results of these deeds², (2).

[Note—¹The creation is such a complex phenomenon that none of its single unit that forms the composite compound can be independently and unilaterally responsible for the creation of the entire structure. Each plays its own part in forming the full picture, but only that much. For example, we have umpteen number of complex chemical compounds based on the numerous permutations and combinations of different elements and their configurations, but none of them can say boastfully that it is the 'one' which is 'the only cause' of that particular compound coming into existence, though it is an integral part of the entire structure and as important and essential as the other component. The independent elements of any compound cannot be visible to the naked eye; no one can see carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen, sulphur etc. of any finished organic chemical compound because the finished product is very much different from the initial ingredients that go into its making.

Similarly, this creation exists at two levels—one is the invisible subtle level consisting of the fundamental elements of creation called the various Tattwas or Principals, and the other is the gross world that is visible and tangible, which we see and feel as the physical world.

The unit at the basic level of creation is the individual creature having a body and its parts. This creature is subjected to the affects of time and circumstance or Kaal, is driven by its natural habits and temperaments called its Swabhav, and it does deeds each of which have a certain pre-determined effect or result called the Niyati which decides the fate of the creature and what would happen to it in its future. Then there are things over which the creature has no willing control, which are called accidental

or sudden happenings which are called Yadricha, but which affect the fate nevertheless. Finally, the birth of a living being is a result of a union between a male Purush and a female's Yoni or reproductive organs. The resultant embryo is considered as an 'accidental happening' because out of the countless sperms, only one is able to fertilise the female egg.

Now, in this entire process it is to be observed no one unit is the totally decisive factor in the entire cycle, though each plays its own important role.

Starting from the union of the sperm and the egg, the development of the embryo in the womb, its emergence as a creature, the infinite external factors that come into play immediately upon its birth and go on affecting the creature as long as it lives, buffeting and tossing it around like a stray piece of wood afloat on a heaving ocean, till its final death or end—no one is certain of anything. Where there is no certainty one cannot be sure of anything, and therefore none of such 'unsure' elements of creation can be the 'Truth' of creation for the simple reason that 'Truth' is certain and fixed; it does not change and is not indeterminable.

²Now, certainly there is something that is driving the creature's body from the inside, that is riding as the passenger of this chariot-like body. This is the pure consciousness called the Atma. But ironically this Atma is so deluded once it comes into the contact of the body and its nefarious designs and tendencies that it gets tainted or affected by it. How? Well, the passenger sitting in the chariot cannot remain immune to the tossing and swaying of the chariot, can he? Unless of course he is able to control the chariot, has an expert charioteer, and is more focused and concerned about reaching his destination than about the tossing and swaying of the chariot.

Similarly, the creature's Atma that is influenced by the worldly delusions which constantly pummel it from all sides is not the 'truthful' nature of the Consciousness which is universally regarded as the supreme Authority of creation. The creature's deluded Atma thinks that it is doing various deeds, and therefore has to either suffer the adverse results of bad deeds or is enticed to enjoy the good ones. In other words, it does not remain neutral and gets sucked in the vortex of 'this and that deed'. Hence, it cannot be the supreme Authority because such an authority is expected to be neutral, decisive and steady in its demeanors and bearings. Hence we observe that there is a subtle difference between the Jiva Atma (the creature's Atma) and the Pramatma (the supreme cosmic Atma)—the former appears to be deluded while the latter is beyond such notions and is pristine pure and immaculate.]

3. Then those learned and wise sages and seers decided to stop debating and instead meditate and deeply contemplate to unravel the secret of that supreme transcendental Authority which is the divine cosmic force and dynamic cosmic energy responsible for creation, including their own self.

When they deeply meditated they were able to experience a divine effulgence of radiant and splendorous energy sprouting forth from deep within their own selves. This 'illuminated and radiant self' was surrounded by the shroud of various Gunas¹ so characteristic of all the living beings that it affected this brilliant glow (as any covering would naturally affect the light source which it surrounds).

This powerful divine source of cosmic energy was the basis (much like a pillar) of the entire setup, right from the Kaal up to the Atma as debated by these wise ones earlier² (3).

[Note—¹Every creature has three basic character-determining qualities called the *Gunas* in it. The density and intensity of these *Gunas* determine what the creature is like in its basic temperament and nature; they decide its personality. These three *Gunas* are in brief the following--(a) *Sata Guna* or quality is the best quality present in a creature and it is marked by a predominance of auspiciousness, righteousness, virtuousness and noble qualities. It is marked by such high standards of ethical

existence that have, as their characteristic features, such qualities as coolness of head, peace, contentedness, humility, devotion, wisdom, mercy, compassion, creativity, selflessness, service, righteousness, virtuousness, holiness and nobility of thought and action etc. As is evident, these qualities are the best qualities that one can have in him; they have a spiritual dimension to them; they are spiritually uplifting and give a divine halo to those who practice them.

The Sata Guna or quality is the veil covering the soul like a smoke covering the fire. A slight breeze will remove this smoke. Similarly a little bit of prayer and meditation will remove the Satwic desires; its removal requires the least effort. It is the foremost and the best amongst the three characteristics of a creature such as good and positive virtuous such as righteousness, creativity, noble deeds and thoughts, the positive qualities of service, benevolence, mercy, devotion, wisdom, holiness, piety etc.

The three Gunas that determine the individual character of the creature, that determine his 'individuality' as compared to the general character of the group to which that individual belongs, are like the *isotopes* in chemistry. The isotope refers to the phenomenon wherein one of two or more atoms of the same chemical element that contain the same number of protons but different numbers of neutrons in their nuclei and therefore have the same atomic number and chemical properties but different mass numbers and physical properties. For example, two brothers have the same genes and the same inheritance, but the presence of the three Gunas in different ratios between them changes their personality and thought processes. One may be a highly righteous man while the other might be just the opposite. Their parents are the same, their upbringing is the same, they have attended the same school and ate the same food, but there is a deep chasm when it comes to their character as individuals.

(b) *Raja Guna* is the medium quality marked by a greater percentage of worldly passions, desires and attachments and their natural offshoots in a creature. It covers such qualities as worldly yearnings, passions, a stormy nature, agitated behaviour, ambitions, desires, selfishness, expansionist tendencies, desire to sustain etc. All these pertain to this materialistic world. Such qualities give worldly fame and prosperity. If these qualities are judiciously mixed with the Satwic qualities, then they provide the person the better of the two worlds, both in terms of worldly fame as well as spiritual well being.

The Rajsic quality or Guna can be compared to dust on a mirror. In this case some dusting and rubbing is needed to clean the mirror; a greater effort is needed as compared to the case with Satwic quality. Rajsic tendencies are the second best quality which produces worldly desires, ambitions, passions, selfishness, various obsessions, desire to sustain and expand etc.

(c) *Tama Guna* is the third quality which is the meanest and basest of the three types of qualities in a creature. It is marked by evilness, perversions and sinfulness. It is the most degrading, denigrating and contemptible of the three characteristics in a person, leading him to such negative traits as sins, vices, perversions, greed, avarice, haughtiness, pride, lust, attachments, yearnings, intoxication, wild behaviour, promiscuity, evils, utter disregard for anything which is righteous, ethical and noble etc. In brief, behaviour which is utterly immoral, denigrating and depraving for the creature, marked by grossness, crassness and recklessness of demeanors. It is the lowest and meanest of the three qualities leading to a person's downfall, ignominy and ruin.

The Tamsic quality or Guna covering the soul is like a foetus in the womb covered by the embryonic membrane—they cannot be removed easily and require diligence, effort, dedicated and careful handling requiring time and patience. It is the basest and the lowliest of the three characteristics, the worst type to possess, and is marked by such negative traits as sin, evil, perversions, immorality, vices, misdemeanors, anger, inertia, delusions, deception, gloom, ignorance et al.

The various permutations and combinations of these three qualities create a particular 'nature' of an individual giving him his individuality and his special characters which are unique to him; they determine his temperament, behaviour, thought process et al. Two individuals having the same external form of the gross body—e.g. two men—might look very much alike but they vary immensely in their nature, habit, behaviour, thinking, outlook, action and deeds, wisdom and way of living. This is what is meant when it said that a creature has to roam in 84 Lakh wombs or forms of life; it is only a metaphor—it does not mean an actual, countable specific number that there are actually and physically 84 Lakh types of bodies of living beings; it only symbolically refers to the huge possibilities that are possible with these three 'Gunas' and their different combinations that can imaginably produce a myriad variety of creation that can be created with these three basic qualities and their various sub classes of qualities.

The proportion of the three Gunas decides the nature, natural temperament, tendencies, habits and inclination of the creatures. For example, a person with a greater proportion of 'Satvic' (noble) characteristic will be considered nobler than a man with a greater proportion of 'Rajasic' or 'Tamsic' qualities. So we can say that sages, seers, prophets, scholars and generally enlightened persons have a high degree of 'Satvic' qualities in them; kings and householders who live a noble life are example of those with higher amount of 'Rajasic' quality in them; while sinners, killers, drunks, rowdy elements, cheats etc. are those people with higher 'Tamsic' quality in them. These Gunas have direct bearing on the personality of a man.

²When the wise ones could not come to any firm conclusion, they decided to meditate, because when a vexing question is raised even today, wise and learned men stop wasting time in endless debates and take time off to ponder over it privately in a secluded place, such as their study room, because this helps to concentrate the mind on the subject under question. When these wise sages adopted this technique of meditation and contemplation, they experienced a glow emanating from within themselves much like the glow of a 'glow-worm'. Does the *glow-worm* know that it is glowing? No, it does not. But does its ignorance of its own effulgence mean that the light is not there? No, it is not so either. When the glow-worm begins to wonder about the light illuminating its immediate surroundings even while the environment is absolutely dark, it is only then it starts researching how it happens, how and from where is the light coming, and to its amazement it then discovers that it is 'it' itself that is radiating this light!

Similarly, since the creature is ignorant of the divine and illuminated source of life and existence present inside his own self, he goes on endlessly debating upon it as being this or that. But as soon as he starts researching for it inside his own self, the answer comes out as the Truth that is astonishing for the creature. This realisation is called 'self-realisation' and is tantamount to enlightenment.]

4. They observed a glorious 'Chakra' or wheel (i.e. a symbolic whirling wheel representing the entire creation) whilst thus meditating. This wheel had one 'Nemi' or the rim (circumference of the wheel)¹, three 'Vrittis' or fastening circles that surround the central axle and hold the spokes of the wooden wheel in place (or it might also refer to the three tiers of rings or fasteners used in the wheel to tie its spokes and other parts)², sixteen 'Antas' or ends or extremities³, fifty 'Aaraas' or spokes⁴, twenty 'Pratyaa-raars' or counter spokes⁵, six 'Ashtaks' or six sets of eight factors that strengthen it⁶, a single 'Paash' or a leash representing the entire creation which is used as a symbolic belt to tie the entire structure together.

This wheel is driven to its one destination⁷ along three different paths varying from one another, and hence called 'Trimaarga Bheda'⁸. One round of this rotating

wheel gives the delusion of two⁹—that is, it is out of delusion that the wheel rotating in one direction appears to be rotating in the opposite direction as well (4).

[Note—This is an excellent allegory of the *wheel* cited in this Upanishad. Wheel is also called a *Chakra*. The ideas expressed in this verse are reflected in Canto 6, verse no. 1 of this Upanishad also. Now let us see what are these individual parts or components of this wheel, and what do they stand for.

¹The *one rim* stands for the ‘Avyakta’, i.e. that entity which is un-manifest and beyond comprehension but is at the core and form the cause of the rest of the things to have their basis and existence. It also stands for ‘Prakriti’ which is also called Avyakta because it is not verifiably, it is un-manifest, invisible and cannot be seen directly but can only be deduced by interpretation and implication.

²The *three tiers or fasteners* are the three Gunas or qualities that form the nature and basic temperament of a man. These are Sata or the best form defined by being righteous, auspicious, noble and proper; Raja which is the medium quality marked by worldly desires, passions and activity; and Tama which is the meanest and lowliest of the three and is characterised by perversions, inertia, ignorance etc.

³The *sixteen ends or extremities* are the eleven organs (five organs of perception—eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin + five organs of action—hands, legs, mouth, genitals and excretory + one mind) and the five elements (space/sky, air/wind, fire/energy, water and earth).

⁴The *fifty spokes* of this wheel are the five misconceptions, twenty-eight disabilities, nine contentments, and eight accomplishments or Siddhis.

The *five misconceptions* called Viparyayas are the following—(1) ‘Tama’ which makes one think that the body is the pure self; the mistaken notion that what is non-self is the self. (2) ‘Moha’ which is the endearment for or infatuation with the sensual material objects of the artificial world. (3) ‘Mahamoha’ literally the great Moha is the high of delusions when one thinks that the world is real. (4) ‘Taamisra’ when one gets angry if the desired objects are not obtained. (5) ‘Andha Taamisra’ is the blindness that comes in the wake of failure at fully enjoying the obtained objects of desire. For example, having to leave a meal midway due to an urgent call from the office; it leaves one frustrated and angry.

The *twenty-eight disabilities* or ‘A-shaktis’ are the following—eleven are related to the eleven organs as stated above, nine are related internally to the Anthakaran which are nine kinds of discontent as opposed to the nine kinds of contentment described below, and eight disabilities which are related to the inability to achieve the eight Siddhis described below.

The *nine kinds of contentment* or ‘Tushti’ are to be always satisfied with what one already has and not to yearn for more. They are—contentment from the knowledge of Nature (such as the study of sciences), contentment from material gains, contentment from time (because time is a great healing factor and such people derive consolation that the worst of time would pass one day), contentment from good fortune (because many people believe that good luck is round the corner), contentment from renunciation, dispassion and detachment (which is however the best form of contentment), contentment from desisting from activity not out of renunciation but because one feels that all activity would bring with it some gain and then it would be difficult to maintain it, so it is better avoided), contentment from being satisfied with whatever one has because one feels that whatever material thing is gained is perishable and would bring in its wake pain and sorrows, contentment from being satisfied with what one has because one thinks that the more one acquires the more the desires go on increasing, and contentment from the thought that no gain is possible without causing even a little harm to others, so it is better not to desire anything at all.

The *eight achievements or accomplishments* or Siddhis are the especial mystical authority and supernatural powers that one possesses. These are—(1) ‘Uha’ or the

intuitive knowledge, skills and powers that one is born with. (2) 'Shabda' or the power of acquiring knowledge and skill just by listening to words instead of actually reading and mugging up of texts. (3) 'Adhyayan' or studying deeply and with concentration to acquire knowledge and skills. (4-6) 'Dukh-Vighaatam' or the abilities to eliminate sorrows and sufferings. There are three sorrows that affect a man—viz. (4) sorrows that originate from external and perceivable sources; they are called 'Aadhi-bhautik', (5) sorrows that come from unknown phenomenal sources such as malignant stars and non-favourable Gods; called 'Adhi-daivik', and (6) sorrows that have their origin in the body and the mind; called 'Adhyaat-mik'. (7) Then comes the seventh Siddhis which is 'Suridha-Prapti' or receiving the fortunate company of someone who is compatible and like a soul-mate for the person, as opposed to the company of pervert and tormenting people. (8) And finally, 'Daan' or ability to give which implies that a person has sufficient for himself; it also implies that the person has an inherent noble nature and a renunciate and compassionate temperament.

So these are the so-called fifty spokes of the wheel representing Brahm.

⁵The *twenty counter-spokes* are the ten organs (five of action and five of perception) and their corresponding objects such as sound (ear), colour and shape (eye), taste (tongue), touch (skin), smell (nose), speech (mouth), walking or moving or going to a place (legs), grasping or accepting anything (hands), droppings (excretory), and enjoying sensual pleasures (genitals).

These literally act as 'fasteners or belts' that hold or fix the above fifty spokes in place.

⁶Next comes the *six sets of eight factors called Ashtaks*. These are the following—(1) 'Prakriti-Ashtakam' or the eight-fold nature of Prakriti; it consists of the five elements (sky, air, fire, water and earth) + mind + intellect + Ahankar (ego, pride). (2) 'Dhatu- Ashtakam' or the eight factors that sustain the outer body—outer skin (charma), inner skin (tvak), blood (rakta), flesh (mangsa), fat (medha), bones (asthi), marrow (majjaa) and semen or mucous (shukra). (3) 'Astha-Aishwariya' or the eight majesties and glories that are symbolic of the great mystical powers that a man possesses—'Anima' or the power to become as small as an atom; 'Mahima' or the capacity to become huge and majestic like a colossus; 'Garima' or to become authoritative, dignified, assertive and a heavy-weight; 'Laghima' or to have humility and simplicity in spite of being powerful and potent; and 'Prapti' or the ability to acquire anything desired. (4) 'Bhav- Ashtakam' refers to the various eight states of the mind and the corresponding virtues and vices. These are the following—'Dharma' or righteousness, probity, propriety, and nobility of thoughts and conduct, as well as its opposite component called 'Adharma'; 'Gyan' or truthful knowledge and erudition, wisdom and enlightenment as well as its opposite component called 'Agyan'; 'Vairagya' or renunciation, detachment and dispassion as well as its opposite component called 'Raga or A-vairagya'; 'Aishwarya' or having material prosperity, lordship, majesty, magnificence, renown and pelf as well as its opposite component called 'A-aishwarya or non-aishwarya' or poverty and lack of renown. It is obvious that each of these virtues affects the mental bearing of different persons in different ways. (5) 'Deva-Ashtakam' or the eight kinds of celestial beings. These are the following—Brahma the creator, Prajapati the guardian of the visible creation created by Brahma, the Gods, the Gandharvas (heavenly musicians), Yakshas (semi-gods; like Kuber the treasurer of the Gods), Rakshas (the demons), Pittars (spirits of dead ancestors), and Pishach (monsters and ghouls). All these entities have supernatural powers. (6) 'Guna-Ashtakam' or the eight qualities. These are Daya or compassion and mercy; Kshma or forgiveness; Anasuya or freedom from jealousy, hatred and ill-will; Shauch or purity and immaculacy; Anaayaasa or freedom from fatigue and indolence; Akirpanya or generosity and magnanimity or lack of miserliness; and Aspriha or lack of craving or yearning for sensual pleasures.

⁷The *one destination* of this wheel is to take the creature to its home called Brahm where its soul would find its eternal resting place. Another interpretation is that the entire wheel representing this world revolves around one thing—and this is ‘desire’. This basic desire assumes three forms—viz. Satvic or noble desires, Rajasic or that which pertains to worldly gains, and Tamasic or that which deals with all that is evil and pervert. These desires are called ‘Vishwa-rupi Paasham’ because they tie the creature in their ‘Paash’ or fetters represented by the desires for the enjoyments offered by the world of material sense objects, its pleasures and comforts.

⁸The *three Paths* along which the wheel is driven are represented by—‘Dharma’ or the path of righteousness and virtuousness, ‘A-dharma’ or non-Dharma or the path of evil and perversions, and ‘Gyan’ or the path of knowledge and erudition, of wisdom and enlightenment.

⁹It will be observed in practical life that when a wheel rotates at speed in a clockwise direction for example, it gives an impression that the spokes are turning in an anti-clockwise direction. This is due to optical illusion. In the present example, each *revolution* of the wheel gives rise to *two types of delusions*—such as good and bad, sorrows and happiness, etc. These opposite sets of notions are called ‘delusions’ because in actual fact the world where they are felt, the mind and the body which feel them are all delusory and have no truthful existence. The real entity that exists is one, and it is the pure consciousness known as the Atma at the micro level of creation, or Brahm at the macro level of creation. The rest is all delusion.]

5. [In this verse the analogy of the turbulent river is cited to describe the world and the creature that lives in it.]

We know of a great river¹ that is fed by five streams²—i.e. there are five streams that pour into it as it moves ahead from its point of origin. This causes turbulence in the river at these five points where the streams join it because the current of waters of different streams clash with each other, thereby bending the normal path of the river at five points³. The five Prans or vital winds form the five types of waves of this river⁴.

This five-faceted river has however one point of origin like all great rivers have, and in this case it is the Buddhi or intellectual mind⁵.

The river has five types of whirlpools⁶ swirling in it and trapping whatever comes within their range. There are five rapids⁷ in this turbulent and tossing river. It has five aspects or branches or tributaries⁸. And it is said to have fifty segments or sectors⁹ along its banks. [The mysterious river referred here is the world which is as turbulent, moving, unstable, unpredictable and trapping as the five-faceted river having five streams pouring into it, along with its whirlpools, waves, branches and rapids.] (5).

[Note—¹The *Great River* referred here is the world which is as turbulent, as topsy-turvy, as entrapping, as fearsome and as ever-changing as this river.

²The *five streams* represent the five organs of perceptions such as the eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin of the body of the creature. This is because the creature receives the numerous stimuli from the external world through these five organs. These stimuli disturb his normal peace of mind and keep it in constant state of agitation and flux; the creature cannot find peace as long as the organs of perception continue to receive perceptions from the world and fill the mind with their inputs. This is the reason of the *turbulence* referred in this verse. It must be noted that this world exists and has relevance only till the time the creature is alive and living in it. Hence, the world is synonymous with the creature that is engrossed in it and becomes an inseparable part of it. There is no world if there is no one to inhabit it.

³Further, the pouring in of the five streams into one body of the river and becoming one with it refers to the five primary elements that have independent

existence like these five streams but merge with each other to form the body of the creature as well as the world. These five elements are sky, air, fire, water and earth. Each of these five elements has its own characteristic defining qualities, virtues and attributes, so when they mix into one body it is obvious that they would create a great deal of turmoil represented by the turbulence. They would affect the original nature of the creature's 'self' by forcing him to bend himself according to the demands of the body and the world in which the creature lives. The creature with a gross body cannot remain immune to the demands of the body—which is tantamount to bending and twisting the straightforward nature of the creature's 'true self' and giving it a tainted form. This is referred here by the *bending of the river at five points*. These five elements do not allow the Atma of the creature to retain its pristine pure form, but force it to adapt to its new habitat in the gross body made up of these five elements.

The fact that mixing of these five elements would create a lot of agitation for the Atma of the creature is easy to understand when we realise the consequences of mixing opposite forces of Nature. For instance, the water is cool by nature but the fire is hot, so when they mix together it is natural that there would be a lot of noise and fury. This can be easily verified when we pour water in a brightly lit fire—there is a tremendous amount of noise, hissing, spluttering, cracking, as well as a dense cloud of smoke, flying of dry ash, dust, powdered cinder and sparklers.

⁴The *five waves* are the five vital winds present in the body of all living creatures—viz. Pran (breath), Apaana (the wind that controls digestion and excretion), Samana (wind responsible for circulation and equal distribution of nourishment in the body), Vyan (wind which maintains equilibrium), and Udana (which helps the body to get up and move about). They are likened to the wave because like the wave which forms an integral part of the turbulent river, this active and agile body is also moved around and kept as such because of the presence of the vital winds inside its body. In the river also, waves rise only when the placid water is pummeled by gusts of strong wind; otherwise the river would flow calmly.

⁵The *one causative factor* which has resulted in the origin of the river is basically a glacier. In the present context in which the metaphor of the river has been cited to represent the world and its inhabitant creature, this one causative factor is the 'intelligent mind' or *Buddhi* because it is the mind that makes the creature aware of the external world and its material attractions, its comforts and pleasures, thereby creating in him a desire to acquire them and get sucked in the vortex of desires and more desires. The creature gets involved in numerous deeds and then expects results from these deeds, thereby getting trapped in the cycle of birth and death. If the mind decides that everything is false then the very cause of all upheavals and turmoil just vanish from existence and this river-like life of the creature would be led along in a tranquil and calm path like the easy flowing, placid and calm water of the river which is not in spate.

⁶The *five whirlpools* are the five sense objects pertaining to the five sense perceptions such as the object of that the eyes sees, the objects that the ears hear about, the objects that the nose smells, the objects that the tongue tastes, and the objects that the skin touches and feels. These objects create desires and attraction for themselves and keep the creature trapped in their vice-like grip. They are likened to the whirlpool as they keep the creature churned, going round and round in circles, continuously tossing and turning helplessly under their influence, and gradually sinking in their vortex-like trap. These perceptions encircle the creature like the tentacles of an octopus which suck the creature in, and completely drown it in the water of the river. It means that the creature gets so much hooked to the enticing attractions of the material world and its alluring charms that he just cannot get out of their vice-like grip once he falls in their clasp.

⁷The *five rapids* are the *five types of miseries and sorrows* that afflict all creatures in this world. These are related to the creature staying in the mother's womb which is

like a hellish experience, the agonies of birth, various diseases that he has to suffer in life, old age, and death.

⁸The *five aspects or branches* of this symbolic river are Agyan (ignorance), Ahankar (false pride, ego, haughtiness, arrogance and hypocrisy), Raag (attractions, attachments, love and affections for worldly things), Dwesh (ill wills, malice, animosity, enmity, hatred and spite) and Bhaye (fear) of dying or the desire to cling to life. In other words, even as a river appears to have different forms such as turbid, muddy, clear, frothy, milky white or greenish at different places due to a variety of reasons, this world also appears to have these five types of basic characteristics that determine how it looks to the creature. For example, if the element of Ahankar is the dominant factor in a man then he would have a particular take on this world which would be very different as compared to how a humble and selfless man treats the same world.

⁹The *fifty segments or sectors* represent the uncountable variations in the character, qualities, virtues and attributes that the resultant world would acquire. This net result in which the world shapes itself vis-à-vis the creature as well as the basic character and personality of the individual creature itself would be the composite effect of all the above mentioned factors taken together. This is because this world is not an isolated unit but a composite mosaic of so many factors.

In practice also we observe that long rivers have many local names and significance. At places it is a holy river, while at others it is simply a flowing stream. Even as a holy river, some use its water to offer oblations to the Gods while others wash dirty clothes in it and spit in its water. At places it is calm and at others it causes havoc when it is in spate. Somewhere it is like an almost dry thin streak of water, while at other places it inundates large tracts of land. At places it is ankle shallow while at other places it can sink a boat load of passengers. The diversity of the river is starker than the ocean.]

6. The great wheel of creation has been created by the supreme Brahm, and hence is called 'Brahm Chakra'¹. All the living creatures are part of this great wheel—they live in it, have their foundation in it and find their sustenance and rest in it. As a result they continue to endlessly rotate with this wheel in the never-ending cycle of birth and death accompanied by all the attendant delusions, horrors and miseries².

When the wise and enlightened creature realises this fact and disassociates himself from this wheel and delusions created by it, instead regarding his 'true self' as a separate entity known as the pure consciousness called the Atma which is Brahm personified, it is only then that he finds eternal and immutable bliss, peace and tranquility³.

This is the reason why such a creature is referred to as a Hans or a Swan⁴. [Refer the fourth word in the verse.] (6).

[Note—¹Refer Canto 1, verse no. 4, Canto 5, verse no. 12, and Canto 6, verse nos. 1-4 for details of the concept of this Brahm Chakra.

²The enlightened creature understands that it is the gross body that remains trapped in this wheel of creation, but the ethereal Atma cannot be subjected to this entrapments. How this rotating wheel creates a delusion is easy to visualise if one has ever turned rapidly in circles or had ridden a giant wheel. In the former case, even after he has stopped turning, the entire room appears to be going round and round in circles for quite sometimes around him, and the giddy and the stomach-wrenching hollow feeling when the giant wheel turns is to be experienced to be believed. This would happen when the person keeps the eyes open while turning in circles, but if one keeps the eyes closed the effect of this turning would be the minimum. In other words, only as long as the creature is aware of this world and feels that it is a part of it

and participating in its activities is the creature affected by the delusions created by this world. On the other hand, if the creature 'closes its eyes to this world' or simply ignores it then the cause of delusions would simply not arise.

The deluded creature thinks that his conscious 'self' and the supreme Consciousness represented by the transcendental Self (Brahm) are two separate entities. As a result he continues to whirl endlessly in this cycle consisting of births in various forms in this mortal world which sustains and nourishes all the living creatures, and then dying to reach the other world obtained at the end of the present one. That is, he takes birth and dies to take another birth in this world itself, in one or the other forms in which the countless varieties and species of creatures exist. The phrase 'in this world itself' is indicative of the fact that life characterised by 'death and birth' is limited to 'this gross mortal world' and that this cycle is non-existent in the ethereal world of the Spirit and the Atma—because the Atma is eternal, infinite and imperishable, the Atma is the cosmic Consciousness that has no birth and death.

This cycle of birth and death and its attendant horrors happens because the deluded creature thinks that he has a physical body living in this world and doing various deeds in an attempt to satisfy the desires of the sense organs. Naturally therefore the creature would expect some results from these deeds, and then a desire to enjoy the rewards of his efforts. Once he tastes blood so to say, he would want more hunting, and the chain continues. Since the creature continues to have desires till his last minute and goes on doing deed in this world till his last breath, the creature cannot ever expect to find lasting happiness and peace. He would yearn for new lease of life so that his unfilled desires can be fulfilled and the rewards of his previous deeds can be enjoyed by in the new life. This traps him in the wheel created by the supreme Brahm.

Now the question arises why would the supreme Brahm want the creature trapped in it? The answer is that it is a necessary evil which Brahm has to tolerate if it wants to sustain and propagate its own creation. And that is why Brahm created 'Maya' or the power of delusions which would prevent the creature from realising the Truth and then breaking free from the bondage of delusions.

³On the contrary, when the creature has become wise and enlightened by pursuing the Truth, i.e. when he is able to overcome misconceptions induced by delusions and ignorance, and begins to honour the 'true' self in the form of the pure consciousness residing in his own bosom as the microcosmic counterpart of the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm, he distances himself from the temptations of getting involved with artificiality and falsehoods which are the trademarks of this world. As a result, a wise and enlightened creature sheds his mortal and gross body that is rotating in this great Brahm Chakra and lives in his causal body where the ethereal Atma or the pure consciousness resides. This frees him from going round and round with this wheel of creation and destruction and instead find eternal freedom marked by beatitude and felicity.

⁴It would be noted that this living creature that remains trapped in this wheel of creation called the Brahm Chakra is called a 'Hans' or a Swan. This word implies that the world in which the creature is roaming endlessly is also regarded as a large water body such as a large lake or lagoon etc. because swans are found floating on the surface of water and not sitting on some giant wheel which is the Brahm Chakra here. The swan spends its entire life floating on the surface of the water and produces offspring that also continue to do the same thing. Likewise, the creature continues to roam in this world, spending his entire lifetime endlessly pursuing his desires and ambitions. At the same time, a swan is regarded as a wise bird because it is reputed to drink milk and leave aside its water content, or pick up pearls from an assortment of gems which symbolically indicate its abilities to pick and choose the best from whatever is available. This swan is a bird like other birds, but this capability sets it apart from the rest. Likewise, the creature having a gross body and continuing to

roam endlessly in this world is also inherently wise, erudite and intelligent, but out of ignorance he has forgotten his special stature.

The Upanishads on Yoga describe how the practitioner of meditation should contemplate upon his Atma as a Hans and use the two letters of this word—viz. ‘Ha’ and ‘Sa’ as Mantra while meditating and doing Pranayam (breath control exercises) much like using the Mantra OM for this purpose. Refer Hanso-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, the Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 82-83 of Sam Veda tradition, Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 131-132, Canto 2, verse nos. 9-11, and Canto 6, verse no. 20, 52-54, and Dhyanbindu Upanishad, verse no. 63 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

7. The supreme transcendental Authority of creation whose glories are being sung by the Vedas is known as Brahm. It is a divine entity that is beyond the purview of all worldly deceptions and delusions, is most pure, sublime and holy, and is eternal, truthful and imperishable. It is in this Brahm that the entire world having three dimensions, called the ‘Triad of Creation’¹, is firmly established, or has its basis and foundation.

Those who are well versed in the eclectic knowledge pertaining to Brahm and have a holistic view of this supreme Divinity realise that it is present in their own bosom (heart) itself and nowhere else. This self-realisation takes a firm foothold by deep meditation, resulting in a state of perpetual blessedness. Such self-realised spiritual aspirants remain submerged in the bliss obtained by experiencing the presence of Brahm inside their own self. The affect is that they are able to get rid of the fetters of ignorance and delusions that tie them to this body and the world, and consequentially they find permanent liberation and deliverance from this entrapment (i.e. they attain emancipation and salvation for their ‘self’, for their soul) (7).

[Note—¹According to the revered sage Adi Shankarcharya’s commentary on this Upanishad, the *three fundamental aspects of the world* which give the latter three distinct characteristic forms are (1) ‘Bhokta’ or the one who enjoys or suffers, or the consumer who finds pleasure in the objects of this material world as well as the one who has to suffer the consequences of his actions, i.e. the living creature, (2) ‘Bhogya’ or that which is enjoyed or suffered from, or consumed in one form or the other, i.e. the material objects of this consumable world, and (3) ‘Niyantaa’ or the one who controls and rules over the other two, i.e. the Supreme Being. Refer Canto 1, verse no. 12.

These ‘three aspects of creation’ are called the *Triad of Creation*. Other interpretations of this phrase are the following-- (1) Creation, sustenance and conclusion.

(2) The *Trinity Gods*—Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva the concluder.

(3) The three worlds called *Triloki*—terrestrial, subterranean and celestial; also the Bhu Loka or the earth where we live, the Bhuvha Loka or the sky immediately above the earth where those creatures which fly live, such as the birds, as well as where the spirits live, and Swaha Loka or the far away heaven where the Gods live.

(4) The *three Yugs or Eras* —Sat Yuga or the age when righteousness and virtuousness was at its zenith, Treta Yuga when Lord Ram had made his manifestation, and Dwapar Yuga when Lord Krishna came.

(5) The *three chief human pursuits* —love, wealth and duty.

(6) The *three qualities* that a creature possesses and which determine his temperament and behavioural pattern —‘Sata’ which is the most auspicious noble and righteous of the three qualities, ‘Raja’ where worldly passion and desire are predominant factors, and ‘Tama’ where lowly qualities marked by perversion, evil and sins are the dominant feature.

(7) The *three chief tribes or classes* into which the human race was divided by the ancients—the Brahmins who were the learned class, the Kshatriyas who were the warrior class assigned the task of giving protection to the society, and the Vaishyas who did commerce and took care of the societies material needs.

(8) The *three primary colours*—black, red and yellow.

(9) The *three primary scriptures*—the Rig Veda, the Sam Veda, and the Yajur Veda.

(10) The *Trivikram*—the word ‘Tri’ is a prefix meaning ‘three’, and ‘Vikram’ means ‘brave, courageous, bold, heroic, powerful, valorous, valiant, strong, best and excellent’. It also refers to Vishnu because he has all these qualities. According to the Puranic concept, Trivikram refers to Lord Vishnu in his manifestation as the dwarf mendicant called Vaaman who had begged the demon king Baali for land measuring three steps as charity. When Baali had agreed, Vaaman revealed his true identity as Vishnu, who was the Viraat Purush who encompassed the whole creation in his own body. So, in one foot Vishnu measured the whole earth, in the second, the whole sky, and in the third the king’s head was measured, symbolically defeating and subjugating him. So, Trivikram refers to the Viraat Purush or Lord Vishnu from whose navel even the creator Brahma was produced aloft a divine lotus with a long stem, and the holy river Ganges emerged from the toe nails of his divine feet. According to Vedas, this Viraat Purush is a manifestation of the supreme, transcendental, attributeless, all-pervading and all-encompassing authority of the universe, known as Brahm. Rig Veda, 10/90/4, states that this Brahm has three legs (Tri) established in the heavens. The macrocosmic male, called Purush, is its first manifestation; from this Purush came into being this creation consisting of ‘those who eat food’ (the living creatures of the zoological realm) and ‘those who do not eat’ (the plants and vegetables of the botanical realm). These three—the Viraat Purush, the living creatures and the non-living things—formed the three legs of Brahm.

(11) The *three Divine Shaktis*—The three cosmic energies referred here pertain to the three forms that the supreme Brahm had taken for the purpose of creation. ‘Brahmi’ is the energy with which Brahma creates, and its relevant subtle counterpart here is the power to wish and aspire for and expect something. ‘Rudrani’ is the cosmic energy by which Shiva/Rudra ends this creation, or brings to a conclusion the creation which Brahma had made possible. ‘Vaishanvi’ is the cosmic energy by which Vishnu sustains and nourishes the creation, and its subtle counterpart is taking actions and doing deeds because without actions and deeds, the creation cannot be sustained. For all these activities—creation, sustenance and conclusion, knowledge, wisdom and intelligence are needed because success in any of these requires the requisite expertise and the ability to use and apply it judiciously.

In other words, Brahma makes this creation possible by wishing to do so in his mind. If the creation is righteous and virtuous, it is sustained and nourished by Vishnu, but if it goes wayward and starts committing evil and sins, Rudra takes charge and uses his energy called ‘Rudrani’ to destroy that evil part of the creation. Extending this logic further, we deduce that when the evil tendencies in the world will almost eclipse or outweigh the good qualities, Rudra would completely annihilate the creation, but the remnants of good elements left behind will help Brahma to re-start the cycle of creation once again.

The ‘triad of powers and strengths’ called the Trishaktis that a man possesses are the following—(a) the power to wish and have determination, called ‘Ichha-Shakti’, because it is only when one wishes to do anything and has the determination to do so that he actually does anything at all and strives hard to get success in it; (b) the power, strength and empowerment obtained as a result of acquisition of knowledge, wisdom, erudition, enlightenment, sagacity, scholarship and expertise. This is called ‘Gyan Shakti’, simply because merely wish and determination wouldn’t suffice if a person does not have the required knowledge and skill, the expertise and wisdom to

accomplish his objectives successfully, and (c) the actual ability to carry out his plans to their successful completion, i.e. the ability to do deeds and perform, to take actions and enter into enterprise, called the 'Kriya Shakti', because simply sitting and procrastinating endlessly wouldn't give success unless there is assiduous activity and diligent effort, no matter how wise a man is and how determined he might be. Besides these three, the following are also called Trishakti or the potential powers present in a man— (a) to have influence, impact, affect and sway upon others, (b) to have enthusiasm, zeal, flourish, drive and courage, and (c) to have a good advise in this world as well as the support of divine intercession or intervention of Gods who should be benign and favorably inclined towards him. Further, the three Goddesses—Kali (the black complexioned goddess of war), Tara, and Tripura also known as Tripur Sundari, are also called the Trishaktis, or the divine cosmic energy which has revealed itself in the form of these three divine Goddesses. These Goddesses are the various manifestation of Parvati, the divine consort of Lord Shiva. Parvati is usually referred to by one single epithet—Shakti—which literally means energy, vitality, strength and powers;

(12) The *Trividya* or the triad of knowledge pertaining to creation has many hues or shades of meanings as follows—(i) It refers to the legendary rewards of righteousness—'Artha' or material well being and prosperity, 'Dharma' or possessing righteous qualities, being virtuous and noble, and 'Kaam' or being successful in fulfilling all desires; (ii) the creation, sustenance and annihilation of creation; (iii) the three qualities called 'Sata' or noble, 'Raja' or mundane, and 'Tama' or mean and base; (iv) the three classes of society —viz. Brahmin or the learned class who are generally teachers and priests, Kshatriyas or the warrior class, and Vaishyas or the trading and farming class; (v) the three periods of time—the past, the present and the future; (vi) the three states of existence of pure consciousness —the waking state called 'Jagrat', the dreaming state called 'Swapna', and the deep sleep state of existence called 'Sushupta' of the creature; (vii) the three types of bodies of a creature— (a) the gross body consisting of the five organs of perception, e.g. eyes, nose, tongue, ears and skin, as well as the five organs of action, e.g. the hand, the leg, the mouth, the anus, and the excretory organs, (b) the subtle body consisting of the mind intellect complex, and (c) the causal body consisting of the pure conscious Atma. (viii) The 'Trividya' is that knowledge which is enshrined in the three Vedas—the Rig, the Sam and the Yajur. This Trividya has been dealt widely in the different Upanishads.

(13) The *Triad* of Ishwar or the supreme Lord of all that exists, Jiva or the living being or the creature, and Prakriti or Nature—these also form the apex of the triangle which is called the world. See verse no. 9 below.]

8. The supreme Lord of the entire visible as well as the invisible spectrum of creation—which is a composite structure consisting of both the mortal and perishable world as well as the immortal and imperishable world (i.e. the world inhabited by mortal beings such as the terrestrial world, and the world of Spirits and Gods called the heavens)—is the only divine Being who sustains and nourishes it at all levels.

When the Jivatma (the creature having an Atma; the living being) lives in this material world of sense objects it begins to erroneously think that it is a 'Bhokta' or a consumer in this world². This causes the creature to get trapped in the snare created by these sense objects and the world in which these objects are found.

On the contrary, when it becomes aware of the Truth, i.e. when it realises that the pure consciousness residing in its bosom is the truthful supreme reality in creation as well as its truthful identity (instead of it being the gross body), the creature is deemed to have become self-realised which is synonymous with being Brahm-realised. [This is because the Atma is none other than Brahm in a microcosmic form.] With such

eclectic spiritual realisation, the enlightened creature attains freedom from all fetters (of ignorance and delusions) that shackle him to this world and its sense objects² (8).

[Note—¹That is, the creature thinks, albeit erroneously, that he is the one for whom the objects of this material world are meant, and he is the one who is actually enjoying these objects or suffering from them. This is a fallacious proposition because the true identity of this creature who thinks that he is the consumer of the material things is his Atma or his pure consciousness residing in his bosom, and not the gross body which is the entity that actually enjoys or suffers from its contact with the world. Once this wrong perception takes hold, it acts like a swirling whirlpool which sucks everything that falls within its funnel-like vortex. Even as the illusion of water in the desert leads to the ultimate death of the thirsty person who falls prey to the bait, the creature that bites this bait of the illusion presented by the deluding world also gets trapped in it which kills all chances of the creature's emancipation and salvation.

²When the creature realises that his Atma is the supreme transcendental Divinity known as Parmatma or Brahm itself in a microcosmic form, and that this Atma is his 'true self', it is obvious that such an enlightened creature would regard himself as distinct and separate from this mundane delusory world which is transient, perishable and entrapping. A wise and enlightened creature realises that the objects of this world are just like the world in which they are found—viz. transient, perishable and entrapping. So naturally he would avoid them with a long barge pole. Say, which wise man would like to voluntarily like himself to get trapped and lose his freedom?]

9. The two poles or extremities of this creation (like the two opposite poles of a magnet—the south and the north) have opposite attributes. One is an embodiment of Gyan (omniscient and all-knowing) while the other is Agyan (ignorance and lack of knowledge) personified. One is almighty and omnipotent while the other is most impotent and incompetent. [Obviously, these two poles are Brahm or the supreme transcendental Authority of creation, and the Jiva or the living creature respectively.] But both of them have one thing in common—and that is they both have no 'birth' as the term is usually and conventionally understood to mean¹.

The intermediary entity that is present between the Jiva and Brahm is the one that creates this delusion of the former being a Bhokta (consumer and enjoyer of the material objects of the world) as well as an illusion of an artificial separation between the Jiva and Brahm. This intermediary is called 'Prakriti' or 'Maya'. [This Maya is so deluding by nature that it creates the Triad of a Bhokta, Bhogya and Niyanta as described in note to verse no. 7 above. This Maya or Prakriti is un-real and imaginary; it has no real origin but it is there nevertheless because of the erroneous conception of the mind that there is difference between the individual Atma of the Jiva and the cosmic Atma of creation.]²

The cosmic Atma or the consciousness that prevails uniformly throughout the creation as Brahm personified is limitless and infinite as it has no boundaries and inhibitions. This makes it all-pervading, all-encompassing and all-inclusive as compared to the limited scope and prevalence of the creature having a gross perishable body³. It does not do any deeds either (for the simple reason that deeds are done by a physical body and Brahm at the cosmic level has no such body, and therefore the Atma which is Brahm personified does not do any deeds).

When the creature is wisened to this eclectic fact and becomes realised of the truth, it begins to see these three units (the Jiva, Brahm and Prakriti) of creation as one single indivisible whole. It is then that it is said to have acquired true and effective knowledge of the reality (9).

[Note--¹The word creature or a *Jiva* actually refers to the Atma, and not the physical gross body of the living organism, and this Atma is pure eternal consciousness which has no end or beginning. Besides this point, the pure consciousness residing in the creature is the same as the one that prevails at the cosmic level because energy by whatever name it is known or called does not perish but only changes in its form. For example, we have kinetic energy, light energy, heat energy, sound energy etc.—all are interchangeable. The energy of the spirit can be called the ‘spiritual energy’. The cosmic consciousness is called Ishwar or the supreme transcendental *Brahm* who is the Lord of all that exists even as the Atma is the Lord of the gross body and the visible world in which it lives. That is why both are without a birth as enunciated in this verse because Consciousness and the ethereal Spirit are eternal, infinite, imperishable and infinite entities.

²Citing the example of the *bar magnet* would be easier to unravel this mystery. At one end of the magnet is the North Pole which is a metaphor for an exalted stature as the ‘north’ points ‘upwards’. On the contrary, the South Pole points ‘downwards’ symbolising demotion and degradation. The former refers to the Supreme Being, the Ishwar, while the latter refers to the deluded creature shrouded by ignorance because of his lowly stature in the spiritual ladder. And the two ends are linked with each other by the shaft or body of the magnet proper which falls in between. But it must not be forgotten while artificially breaking the magnet into three units for the purpose of study that it is called a ‘magnet’ in its entirety only when it consists of these three units in an indistinguishable, immutable, indivisible and inseparable form. Go on breaking the magnet and the smaller pieces that result also would have these three fundamental units—viz. the North Pole, the South Pole and the central part.

The point is that the exalted Being known as the Lord of creation or *Ishwar*, and the offspring of this Being, the *Jiva* or the creature, are not two distinct and separable units of the creation. They are both the two ends of the same magnet symbolising the creation. Since the creation is physically visible, verifiable and tangible, it must have two ends as anything that has a definitive shape and form must have a beginning and an end. The argument ‘what if we consider the case of a circular magnet instead of a bar magnet’ is answered by the example of the *wheel* given in verse no. 4 of this Canto.

Now, the space between the two ends of the magnet links these ends much like the *Prakriti* which acts as the bridge between the *Jiva* (creature) and *Brahm* (the supreme transcendental Being of creation). When the creature is ignorant, it thinks in terms of ‘this and that end’ of the creation, whereas when it becomes wise and enlightened it sees no difference between them even as naming the two poles of the bar magnet as north or south, or designating the two electrodes of the electric cell as the positive cathode and the negative cathode, or one particle of the atom as negatively charged electron and its counter-balancing force as the positively charged proton, or the terms cat-ion and anion—are all man made terms which should be taken in the correct perspective as an attempt to explain physical phenomenon.

In this example of the magnet, there is no physical existence of any such thing as a ‘North Pole’ or a ‘South Pole’—these are man-made distinctions in order to explain the phenomenon of magnetism. We cannot separate the North Pole from the South Pole of a bar magnet and still retain an entity called ‘the magnet’, for if such separation were likely to happen at all there would be no magnet left. Likewise, we cannot separate the electron from the proton and still retain an ‘atom’, for then the atom would cease to exist. Similarly, the supreme Ishwar and the Atma have no difference at all. The *Prakriti* or Nature acts as a go-between the two, and when the wise *Jiva* or creature realises this it sees an underlying element of uniformity between itself, Nature and Ishwar—i.e. that they are all part of one uniform, indivisible and immutable whole known as Creation. It is not possible to separate the *Jiva*’s true self from *Brahm* as much as it is not possible to separate the North Pole from the South Pole of a magnet. Refer also to Canto 4, verse no. 10.

The most stunning aspect of this analogy of the magnet or the atom is this—the ‘force or energy’ that entitles the piece of rod to be called a ‘magnet’ is the universal force of Nature known as ‘magnetism’. If the magnet displays no attractive or repulsive powers, it would not qualify to be called a magnet. This hidden subtle but dynamic and powerful energy called magnetism that empowers the ordinary and innocuous looking piece of magnet with its astonishing capabilities of attracting or repelling something is a metaphor for *Brahm* because the latter also remains hidden from view like magnetism but impels, empowers and energizes the world to carry on with all its astounding variety of activities. Similarly, in the case of the atom, the hidden stupendous fount of dynamic energy lying concealed inside it which makes the atom so feared as well as adored is a metaphor for *Brahm* for the same reason as the one applied to magnetism.

In other words, the subtle and hidden but sublime and almighty Consciousness that is present concealed in a secret and an imperceptible form in the entire creation as its integral and inseparable part, and which gives the entire world its worth, importance and significance is called *Brahm*.

³The cosmic Atma or Cosmic Consciousness known as *Brahm* is an ethereal entity that can be compared to the wind, the direction and the sky which have no physical barriers and are not subjected to limitations that arise with the possession of a gross body. The individual creature on the contrary is burdened by the limitations of the gross body which cannot display the characteristic freedom and infinity shown by *Brahm* in the form of the wind, the sky or the various directions of the open sky.]

10. This world is perishable, the Atma which is the true identity of the creature who lives in it is however imperishable, and both are controlled by the supreme Authority which is one. By focusing one’s unwavering attention on that supreme overriding transcendental Authority and Lord of creation (known as *Brahm*), by thinking of this Lord, by meditating upon the truth about this Lord, one is able to vanquish the delusions and misconceptions of the reality created by this hallucinating world of artificiality. The result is the dawn of Truth and the elimination of all vestiges of falsehood (10).

11. Once that supreme Lord is known, i.e. once the ‘grand truth’ of creation and the ‘reality’ of existence dawns upon the creature and he becomes self-realised and self-awakened, once the existence of the Supreme Being is acknowledged and experienced by him, it is then that he is able to get rid of all sorts of fetters and freed from their shackles (i.e. all sorts of misconceptions and delusions based on ignorance are dispelled, and like an educated person the creature can no longer be cheated, and neither would he repeat the mistakes he has been committing under ignorance and delusions). This results in elimination of the cause of all torments and miseries pertaining to existence in this world, and in the final analysis it provides liberation from remaining trapped in the endless cycle of birth and death in this material world and provides deliverance from it. [That is, awareness of Truth and Reality paves the way for enlightenment and the obtaining of final emancipation and salvation for the creature’s soul.]

Constant meditation and contemplation upon that Truth brings a creature closer to its target (because constant company of anything has its own psychological effects). The result is that upon death it attains that third state of blessedness¹ where there is blissfulness and happiness. When this stage becomes perpetual and steady, the creature feels so fulfilled that he has no desires left. It is then that he is deemed to have reached the final state of *Kaivalya* which is unique spiritual state and the only one of its kind² (11).

[Note—¹There are four states of existence of the consciousness—viz. waking or Jagrat, dreaming or Swapna, deep sleeping or Shushupta, and the fourth state that transcends these three and is called Turiya. Currently it should be noted that the *third state* mentioned in this verse refers to the Shushupta state which is the state when the man is sound asleep and his brain ceases to remain active. Since it is the mind that prevails upon and impels the creature to get involved in this world for a variety of reasons, when the mind is side-tracked the instigator is deemed to be gone, and the creature is left free to itself. That is, the Atma has no one to provoke and influence it any longer, and the basic immaculate nature of the Atma then comes to the fore—and this results in the obtaining of a profound degree of blissfulness and happiness.

This third stage of Sushupta is a temporary phase of deep sleep because very soon the creature reverts back to the earlier two stages of Swapna (dreaming) and Jagrat (waking). The third stage of Sushupta is compared to 'death' because here the mind-intellect is completely inactive like the case of the dead body. But sooner or later the creature would become active in this world when he wakes up from his sleep, and this reversal is symbolised by saying that the creature takes a new birth after his death. When he goes to sleep again after the day's hard toil, it would be his symbolic death, and the next day would be his symbolic next birth, and the cycle continues. But, as pointed out below in this note, when the Sushupta stage becomes perpetual and steady, the creature becomes permanently liberated from this oscillation and attains final emancipation and salvation for his soul; his soul finds permanent rest and peace. This last state of existence is called Kaivalya—i.e. the only one state, simply because from here there is no reversals.

²When the third state of Sushupta becomes permanent, it is said that the creature is in a state of perpetual Samadhi which is a trance like state of blessedness. The creature has reached the fourth state called the Turiya state of consciousness. This might happen even when the creature is alive and going about his normal duties in this world—because he has dissociated himself from the body and instead associated himself with the pure consciousness residing within his bosom.

The concept of 'leaving the body upon death' is an extension of this basic philosophy of non-involvement of the Atma with the body. When a person dies, he permanently leaves the body, but this is also achieved by acclaimed ascetics even while they still retain their body. Since the Turiya state basically refers to the permanent state of Sushupta—i.e. the state of consciousness when it is perpetually detached from both the gross body consisting of the gross organs and the subtle body consisting of the mind-intellect complex—it follows that if the ascetic is able to obtain this state even while retaining the body then the latter becomes irrelevant. Again, since Turiya state refers to a permanent state of blessedness or perpetual state of Sushupta, it follows that a creature who has reached this eclectic state would not revert back to the earlier states of either Swapna or sleep (deep sleep or even dreams) or Jagrat or waking states of consciousness. This is tantamount to 'death' because from the perspective of the world such a man who has no interest in its activities and remains immune towards it is deemed to be useless and dispensable. From the perspective of the soul, this is its final liberation; this is its deliverance from the fetters of ignorance and its attendant delusions; this is the stature from where it would not have to re-enter the cycle of birth and death and re-birth as symbolised by the oscillation of the creature between the three states of existence of consciousness in the waking, the dreaming and the deep sleeping states.

Since this disassociation with the body is a one-way process during the attempt of reaching the Turiya state, it is likened to permanent death because it also ensures a one-way disassociation with the body as well as the world in which this body lives and with which it interacts. The word *Kaivalaya* means the only one, and therefore it is an apt description of the eternal blessedness obtained when the realised person reaches this exalted state of existence of Turiya.]

12. There is no better spiritual knowledge and awareness of the reality and truth than to understand and be convinced that the supreme transcendental Brahm resides in one's own self as the pure conscious Atma.

The entire creation is a manifestation of this single divine entity known as Brahm or Consciousness. The three components of it are the Bhokta (the creature who enjoys or suffers this world), the Bhogya (that object which is enjoyed or suffered from, here referring to the material world), and Prerak (the one who inspires, impels, influences, regulates and controls all forms of activities and deeds, here referring to the Supreme Being). [Refer verse no. 7 and its note.]

In other words, these supposedly three apexes of the equilateral triangle symbolising the creation are indistinguishable from one another. [Even if one corner is removed, the triangle ceases to exist.]

Therefore, a wise and enlightened person is one who sees no difference and distinction between them. All of them describe one or the other aspect of one immutable and indivisible entity known as Brahm as manifested in the form of this creation (12).

13. The fire element is latently and secretly concealed in the firewood as its integral part though it cannot be ordinarily seen by the naked eye and its physical presence actually felt. But this fire becomes evident when the firewood is lighted.

Similarly, Brahm, which is the pure cosmic Consciousness, is eternally present inside the inner self of all living beings as their 'true self' or their Atma, but it is not easily evident unless kindled by intense practice of self-realisation with the aid of meditation and contemplation using the help of the Mantra OM¹ representing the supreme divinity known as Pranav or Brahm (13).

[Note—¹To ignite the fire in the firewood and make its presence felt, one has to blow in air. Similarly, in order to activate the concealed consciousness one has to employ the power of the ethereal air element represented by OM. The Yoga Upanishads describe how the Mantra OM is used to do Pranayam (breath control) which in turn stokes the hitherto dormant spiritual energy of the aspirant's body, leading to his realising its divine glow and potentials. Refer Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 71-104, and Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, verse no. 92-108, 161-162. Refer also to Canto 2, verse no. 8.

In the present context of lighting of the firewood, when one repeats OM, it is like drawing fresh air and blowing it into the furnace of the body to ignite the fire of consciousness hidden and lying latent as the Atma of the creature.

Refer also to Katho-panishad, 2/2/9 in this context.]

14. The aspirant should treat his body as the lower end of the Arani (the wooden drill used to ignite the fire of the sacrificial rite) and Pranav, the divine Brahm represented by the ethereal sound OM, as the upper part of this drill, and the exercise of dedicated meditation as the symbolic vigorous rubbing to ignite the subtle fire of consciousness that is otherwise normally hidden and not easily perceived in the course of a person's routine daily life. This eclectic and exhilarating experience of consciousness is called Brahm-realisation (14).

[Note—This instance of the Arani has also been cited elsewhere in this volume, for example in Brahmo-panishad, verse no. 18 and Kaivalyo-panishad, verse no. 11.]

15. Even as oil is hidden in the sesame seed, butter is concealed in fat-rich curd, water is an integral part of underground springs, and fire is latently present in firewood as its integral constituent and its defining characteristic, the supreme transcendental cosmic

Consciousness is inherently and invariably present inside the ‘self’ of the creature as its pure conscious individual Atma which is inseparable from all living creatures. This eclectic, sublime, subtle, holy and divine entity is perceived by the means of Tapa (severe meditation and great effort; observing strict principles of austerity, self control, penance and sufferance for some noble aim) as well as following the path of Satya (truthfulness and auspiciousness). It then reveals itself to the sincere spiritual aspirant even as fire reveals itself on vigorous rubbing of the Arani during the igniting of the sacred fire in the fire-pit of the fire sacrifice ritual (15).

[Note—The analogies of the oil in sesame seed, butter in curd, water in spring and fire in firewood has also been cited in Brahmo-panishad, verse no. 19.]

16. The supreme essence and cosmic Principal which a diligent seeker seeks in his own bosom as his pure conscious Atma is the same essence that is expounded and espoused by the Upanishads as the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm. It is an integral part of Atma just like butter is of fat-rich curd. This essence and principal is attainable by the awareness of the presence of the truthful Atma by special knowledge dedicated to it, and the means to successfully experience and witness it are Tapa and Satya. [That is, the pure consciousness can be accessed by painstaking hard effort and following the path of truthfulness and auspiciousness. It is not accessible by being careless, indolent, lethargic, insincere and clumsy, by lacking interest and aptitude, or by following the path of falsehoods, delusions, deceit and conceit.] (16).

Canto 2

[This Canto is dedicated to the worship of the Sun God called Savita. The Sun is obviously the harbinger and herald of life as no life is tenable in this world without the kind grace and the benevolent mercy of the Sun. The Sun sustains and nourishes life, providing it with light, heat and energy which are the basic prerequisites for life to survive on this planet. The Sun God has been honoured in another Upanishad especially dedicated to Savita, and it is ‘Savitriyu-panishad’ of the Sam Veda tradition which is included as Chapter no. 13 in the second volume dealing with the Sam Veda Upanishads in this series.

This Canto describes how one can utilise the stupendous potentials of meditation to harness the energy of the spirit for one’s liberation and deliverance from the fetters that shackle him to this world ridden with ignorance and delusions.]

1. Let the Sun God called Savita¹ divert our mind and intellect towards the Supreme Being (Brahm, representing auspiciousness and noble values) along with redirecting the energy of all our sense organs so that instead of pursuing and remaining hitched to the mundane and artificial objects of this perishable world they are directed to nobler objectives of life and inculcate auspicious values.

Let these sense organs be infused with the brilliant light that is inherent to the fire element so that we can see the reality and truth in this world². (1).

[Note--¹*Savita*—appears first in the Rig Veda, 1/24/3-4. He is the Sun God who provides the creation with virtuous, noble, auspicious and righteous inspirations symbolised by the brilliant light that emanates from the Sun. The nascent Sun at the time of dawn before its disc appears blazingly splendid in the sky is also known as Savita (Sayan Bhasya on Rig Veda, 5/81/4). This phase of the Sun is chosen because

it goes on increasing in its radiance and splendour by the passage of each moment. Savita moves between the earth and the heavens, i.e. in the solar system. Being the sustainer of life as the Sun, Savita is also regarded as the father of the Gods (Shathpath Brahmin, 1/1/2/17). Along with Varun, the God of water, he is regarded as the King of the entire realm of creation (Shathpath Brahmin, 11/4/3/14). This is obvious because water and heat are the prerequisites for life. He is also one of the Adityas (mythological Suns). Rig Veda has 11 Suktas or hymns devoted to him. The famous Gayatri and Savitri Mantras are dedicated to this God known as Savita (Yajur Veda, 36/3).

²That is, let these sense organs of perception abandon their natural tendency of getting attracted towards the illusionary charms of the world and thereby trapping us in their endless snares, but instead help us to perceive the world in the correct perspective and see that what is apparent on the surface is all falsehood and non-truth. Let these organs acquire the ability to restrain themselves from becoming indulgent and stop yearning for the comforts and pleasures of this artificial world and its sense objects, and instead concentrate upon what is the Truth and Reality in creation. This stanza also implies that these organs should be injected with fresh energy, strength and vitality so that they remain always alert and vigilant towards spiritual and nobler pursuits instead of getting sucked into the quagmire of enjoying the sensual pleasures proffered by their respective sense objects in the world. The Sun God is requested to rejuvenate these sense organs so that they do not become indolent and run-down.

Light is needed to see anything. The 'light' that is being referred here is the light of wisdom, erudition and enlightenment and the ability to discriminate between what is wrong and what is right. Though these are the functions of the mind, when these terms are applied to the sense organs they imply that these organs are properly trained and skilled in the task they are assigned to carry out for the creature—which is to 'correctly perceive' the world. These organs are like the sentries at the gate of the fort; if they are not properly trained or are corrupt then the security and integrity of city would be compromised. Incompetent or improperly trained soldiers are more dangerous than a powerful enemy.

The 'fire' referred to in this stanza is the rigorous training of the sense organs and their inherent strength, vigour and power to resist numerous temptations and other allurements that are offered by their respective objects in this world. Even as the fire can burn to ashes anything put in it, the properly trained and wise sense organs can reduce all impurities in the way of wrong and corrupted stimuli that try to enter the creature's inner self through the five doorways that these organs guard. That is, the eye would resist the temptation to see things not worth seeing, the ears would abstain from hearing things not worth hearing, the nose would run away from things that are not worth smelling, the tongue would abhor things not worth tasting, and the skin would desist from touching and feeling things not worthy of touching and feeling. Anything that would be demeaning for the exalted stature of the creature's true self called the Atma, which is the supreme Brahm personified and the most highly placed entity in the hierarchy of creation, is to be regarded as not being worthy to be accepted by any of the sense organs simply because these sense organs as well as their senior counterpart the mind-intellect are actually working on behalf of this Atma. They should not do anything that would reflect badly on the governance of the kingdom presided over by this Atma.]

2. Let us diligently and with great devotion make sincere efforts to please Savita by doing auspicious deeds (such as doing fire sacrifices) so that by this God's kind grace and divine intercession we can realise the ultimate Truth and its accompanying experience of heavenly happiness and bliss (2).

3. Let that Savita (the Sun God), who moves majestically across the sky and illuminates the vast realm of the creation with his brilliant light, inspire the patron Gods of all our sense organs as well as our mind and intellect so that they move towards light (of truth and knowledge, and away from darkness of ignorance and delusions).

[That is, let the patron God of light, i.e. the Sun God, bless us and inspire us to move on the path of auspiciousness, righteousness, wisdom and enlightenment, and away from the path of darkness representing delusions and ignorance which is just the opposite of it. Let us be wise and enlightened instead of being deluded and ignorant. Let our lives be lighted with knowledge and wisdom instead of being shrouded in a dark veil of delusions and ignorance.] (3).

4. Those exalted Brahmins (senior and learned men) who devote the efforts of their mind and sense organs towards worshipping and attaining the Supreme Being should offer sincere prayers and pay high respect to the great God known as Savita (the Sun God) for whom they make offerings to the sacred fire. This exalted God (Savita; the Sun God) is omniscient and all-knowing (because he shows light and illumination to even the darkest corners of the world so that everything comes to light or becomes known), and is deemed to be most respectable and revered one in creation (as a fount of all the glorious virtues in creation symbolised by light and illumination, such as the virtues of knowledge, wisdom, erudition, sagacity, skills in any field requiring expertise, and spiritual enlightenment) (4).

5. Oh mind and intellect! I most humbly and respectfully bow before the supreme transcendental Brahm who is your Lord and the primary cause of everything that has come into being in this creation¹. Let this prayer of mine and my humility and submission to the Supreme Being bestow me with the same glory, fame, respect and honour that an expert in any field gets in this world. Let this prayer of mine be heard by all the virtuous and exalted Spirits residing in the divine heavens who have come into being from fractional parts of the cosmic Brahm who is eternal and a fount of the elixir that provides eternity and bliss². That is why all these holy Spirits and divine Gods are called 'sons' of the Supreme Being (because all of them have come into being from his own fractions, or they represent one or the other glories and divine aspects of this Supreme Being). Like any son, they all carry the 'genes or footprints' of their cosmic Father, and therefore are to be revered and paid tributes like one would do for Brahm (who is none but the Supreme Being or the cosmic Father referred here) (5).

[Note—¹By bowing before the supreme Lord the aspirant symbolically says that he has readied his mind and intellect to shed their basically arrogant and egoistic tendencies and prepare to receive divine benediction that only comes with humility and submission. These two virtues—humility and submission—are essential necessities for realising the Lord. They are called 'Bhakti' in the realm of devotion for the chosen deity. When one submits before one's senior, the latter is morally bound to shower his compassion and benediction upon the person who has surrendered himself before him.

²The aspirant is trying to divert his mind and intellect as well as the other organs towards nobler goals in life, but in order to achieve success in his endeavour he has to ensure that the devil is kept at bay, for when one embarks upon some noble journey the devil is bound to create a ruckus. That is why the patron Gods referred to as the divine Spirits in the heaven are requested to listen to the prayer offered to the supreme Lord. These Gods must come to understand that they are now morally bound

to give their protection to the aspirant because the latter has submitted himself to the Emperor of creation who also happens to be the Father of all these exalted Spirits and Gods, i.e. to the Supreme Being known as Brahm.]

6. Such a wise man who has received divine blessing has the following characteristic signs—he always finds happiness at places where fire sacrifices are being performed in a proper way such as by igniting the sacred fire by vigorous rubbing of the Arani and harnessing the power of the air or wind element to first light this fire and then keep it burning, and where the sanctified liquid called Soma is used to create an auspicious ambience of extreme exhilaration and joy (6).

[Note—The metaphor of the fire sacrifice is used here to indicate Yoga or intense meditation and contemplation wherein a sincere aspirant meditates and practices various breath control exercises, such as doing Pranayam exercise etc., and employing other techniques such as Aasans and Mudras (postures of the body) and Bandhas (closure of all leakages) in order to harness the power of the wind element present inside his body to arouse the latent dynamic cosmic energy trapped inside in the various Chakra (whirling energy centers present inside the body) to obtain success in spiritual progress and finally obtaining the exhilarating feeling of bliss and happiness upon successful culmination of Yoga. The Soma is actually an intoxicating drink extracted from an herb of the same name, and its analogy is used here to indicate that the sense of extreme ecstasy obtained at the culmination of meditation is no less than the exhilaration obtained by drinking this Soma.]

7. Let us be inspired by Savita, the Sun God, and dedicate ourselves and pray devotedly and reverentially to the supreme transcendental Brahm who is the primary cause and the origin of the entire creation¹. Brahm is the Principal of creation.

Oh wise aspirant! You should seek and take the shelter of that Supreme Being who is the Principal Authority of creation. This would help to ensure that even your good deeds will not act like fetters to tie you down² (7).

[Note—¹Meditation and contemplation requires extensive and deep concentration. This generates tremendous amount of spiritual energy which helps to burn all traces of impurities that might be still clinging to the pure consciousness inspite of the aspirant already being wise and enlightened when he has studied the Upanishads and learnt about the ultimate Truth. The Sun is so luminous and its sunlight so powerful that if the rays are concentrated upon a spot, they create immense heat which can start a fire. This is proved when the Sun's rays are focused at a point upon a piece of paper or dry straw by a magnifying glass; the paper or the straw would very soon catch fire. Thus, this stupendous power and majestic potential of the Sun is symbolically invoked for the spiritual benefit of the aspirant when the latent fire of the Spirit, which is lying dormant, is ignited, and this in turn sets off a chain reaction which can lift the aspirant to a much higher level of spiritual existence just like a hot air balloon lifts a man to great heights.

²Good deeds are indeed like fetters as they create a sense of involvement in them, a sense of pride of doing good things, the false sense that the 'true self' is doing this or that whereas in actuality the 'true self' or the pure conscious Atma does not do anything at all for it is the body that does everything, whether good or bad, and the resultant desire to enjoy the auspicious affects of such good deeds—such as getting praise and respect. A true ascetic and hermit is one who has completely renounced all attachments with the world, and this notion of doing 'good deed' is an indirect way of getting back into the trap. It is like the so-called 'honey trap' whereby the creature is lured into the snare by some sweet bait. A truly self-realised man would remain neutral and indifferent towards deeds; he will have no notion of doing any deed at all. Therefore, a wise man who is enlightened about his 'true self' as being the pure

consciousness rather than the gross body in which this consciousness lives, and the fact that this consciousness is the same as the universal cosmic Consciousness that prevails in the entire creation as Brahm, he would naturally rise above the mundane considerations of the world and do deeds in a dispassionate and neutral manner which is not selfish and driven by vested interests. This translates in practice that such a wise man is not tied by the deeds and their consequences because he understands that the deeds are being done by the gross body and not the Atma. Such a wise and self-realised man would not yearn to enjoy the rewards of these deeds, nor would he suffer from any of their negative consequences. Therefore, no fetters related to the deeds can ever shackle him down.]

8. An expert aspirant should adopt a sitting posture that is conducive to obtaining enlightenment. It entails that he sits quietly in a steady posture with his chest, neck and head in a straight line¹. He should then make mental efforts to control the wayward tendencies of his sense organs to be extrovert, and instead divert the efforts of these organs inwards towards his inner self to facilitate self-realisation². To meditate upon the 'self' he should use the divine Mantra OM which would act like a boat to take him across this ocean represented by this horrifying world of artificiality³ (8).

[Note—¹Refer Kaivalyo-panishad, verse no. 5 which is Chapter no. 4 of this volume.

²That is, he should withdraw the sense organs from the external world and control their natural tendency to roam about aimlessly in this world amongst their respective sense objects which gratify them and which is their nature habitat because these sense organs find rest in these objects and derive comfort and pleasure in their company. Instead, the wise spiritual aspirant should endeavour to divert their energy and constant enterprise towards 'self realisation' or realisation of the Truth hidden in one's own bosom. The posture described here is symbolic of 'self control and deep concentration' as these are prerequisites for such a spiritual exercise to be successful. Even as concentration and withdrawal from the extravaganza of the external world is practiced by all serious students, researchers, philosophers and scientists etc. even in ordinary life if they have to succeed in their goal, it is all the more expected from a spiritual aspirant because his enterprise is of the highest order and he needs to focus all his energy towards reaching his lofty spiritual goal in the short span of this limited life.

³In ancient times when modern ships had not been invented, the ships had large sails which carried the ship forward when they were filled with blowing wind, billowing with it and taking the ship along. This picture of a ship with billowing sails has been used here as a metaphor to envision how the ethereal word OM helps the Atma of the creature to cross the world of horrors. The ship is the creature, the Atma is the passenger, the sail is the process of meditation involving the body and the heart, and the billowing wind is represented by OM which fills this sail to take the ship across the heaving ocean represented by the world of miseries, pains and sorrow. Besides this, OM is the universal Mantra that is used during meditation to achieve success in spiritual attainment. Refer Canto 1, verse no. 14.]

9. A sincere aspirant who is an expert in the principles of meditation and spirituality should diligently follow all the tenets and ethos of behaviour and interactions with this world while devoting his time and energy in practicing Yoga with the aid of Pranayam (wherein the ascetic controls his breath and other vital winds in the body). This practice, when mature, helps him to control all his vital winds, and then when he has been able to successfully control them and they become weak and meek and submit themselves to the force of his will, he should gradually expel them (the vital winds called the various Prans in the body) through the nostrils.

Even as an expert charioteer controls the restless horses and takes the chariot to its designated destination, a wise, erudite and expert aspirant is always alert and vigilant so that he can keep his sense organs under tight leash and harness their energy to reach his destination. [This destination is self-realisation and Brahm-realisation. This eclectic stature paves the way for the final liberation and deliverance of the creature from the snare of the tormenting gross body as well as the gross world in which this body lives. In other words, a self-realised person is able to cross this vast ocean-like world to reach his destination marked by emancipation and salvation.] (9).

10. [This verse describes the places that are conducive to meditation and contemplation.]

The aspirant should select a place that is conducive to the practice of meditation and contemplation in a comfortable way without causing any kind of disturbance, distraction and inconvenience to him.

For this purpose he should select place which is reasonably clean, calm, quiet and holy. The ground selected to sit upon should also be reasonably smooth, pleasant and comfortable to sit upon—such as a ground which is even, which has no pricking irritants and things that might cause unnecessary inconvenience such as pebbles, stones or other things that can prick and irritate, or sand because it is very dry and tends to get hot.

At the same time, the place should be reasonably pleasant and charming for the mind and the heart so that it contributes to the smooth conduct of spiritual practices without creating revulsion and a desire to move away from it. Besides this, the basic requirements of life should be easily available—such as water, shelter and peace.

It should be pleasing to the eyes as well (in the sense that it should be surrounded by natural greenery and so secluded that the aspirant does not have to see things or persons that cause any mental anguish or tension for him). Such places can be found in caves where even the wind does not disturb the aspirant when he is meditating and lost in deep contemplation (10).

11. When the aspirant practices Yoga (meditation) he experiences many visions in the beginning, such as that of fog, mist and smoke (i.e. appearance of cloud), of the sun (i.e. a brilliant disc of blinding light), of the wind or air (such as a strong breeze or storm blowing), of a glow from fire (resembling a glow-worm), of electric (such as a streak of lightening or scintillating spark from a welding machine), of a crystal, and of the moon (i.e. a large silvery white disc having emanating a soothing light). All these forms are indicators of Brahm (11).

[Note—Refer Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 2/2/1. When all these signs are visible, the ascetic should treat them as signs of appearance of the supreme Brahm in all these forms because Brahm has revealed itself in the forces of Nature that these visions represent. This is the grand and holistic view of Brahm that is expected from a self-realised practitioner of Yoga.]

12. When the ascetic has matured in his meditation, he experiences the presence in his body of the elementary elements of creation along with their inherent virtues and characteristic features, such as the earth (represented by smoke because the latter is dense and appears near the surface of the earth), water (represented by the fog or mist because they have water vapour and moisture), fire (represented by sun and the light of the glow-worm), air or wind (represented by storm and breeze), and sky

(represented by moon against the background of the fathomless sky which makes the former more prominent), as well as the crystal which is colourless but shines with the light falling upon it (much like the moon shining with the light of the sun, or the moisture present invisibly in the atmosphere that shines and produces the colourful rainbow when sunlight passes through them, or the crystals of snow and ice that provide the dazzling glitter to the snow-capped lofty mountains).

In this eclectic state of realisation, the aspirant ascetic becomes suffused with an astonishing infusion of spiritual energy which ensures that the gross external form of his body never has any diseases, nor does it decay or become old and crippled, and die prematurely¹ (12).

[Note--¹That is, in a higher state of Yoga, the aspirant's body does not remain an ordinary motley collection of elements in their gross form, but acquires the great divine characteristics that are latent in all these elements and which give each of these elements their intrinsic value and importance in creation. For example, the earth element that forms his external body abandons its grossness and stops stinking. Instead, it acquires the eclectic virtue of sustaining and harbouring life in all its colourful connotations. Say, how can anything that has the inherent virtue of harbouring life ever result in decay and degradation? In other words, the body of the ascetic would not get old and become decrepit; instead it would remain ever-fresh and emanate a fragrance.]

13. The first benefits of Yoga are the following—the body becomes lighter and sheds flab, it becomes disease-free, one loses all interest and attractions in sense objects of the world and their alluring charms, the body effuses a divine halo, the voice and speech become amiable, sweet and pleasant, an auspicious fragrance surrounds the aspirant (because the body has been de-toxicated and cleansed of all putrefying elements which are the cause of stink emanating from the body), and there is less degree of need to eliminate waste products from the body resulting in lesser output of urine and stool (13).

14. Just like a priceless gem shines brilliantly once the mud which had been encasing it is washed off, the living being with a gross body who has been able to witness and experience the essential element known as the pure conscious Atma present inside the body is also freed from all taints and pollutions represented by the numerous sorrows, miseries and pains associated with this gross body and obtained by its association with the world. He becomes pure and holy; he becomes unique in his beatitude and blessedness, and he feels himself fulfilled and contented (14).

15. When the wise and enlightened spiritual aspirant has reached that exalted state of meditation when he witnesses a bright flame resembling the light of a burning lamp while meditating, and has the level of wisdom, erudition and enlightenment to recognise this fount of divine light as his pure conscious Atma which is a personification of the supreme transcendental Cosmic Consciousness called 'Brahm', it is at that time or state that he has indeed realised his own Atma personifying Brahm; he has realised and witnessed and experienced Brahm first hand.

Upon becoming acquainted with the pure, divine and holy entity that is the Principal of creation, he becomes one who has no birth, is steady and eternal, and free from all taints and blemishes that stick to the creature when he loses his true identity. He becomes free from all fetters that had been shackling him¹ (15).

[Note—¹This is because the aspirant would have then realised that he is not an ordinary bundle of gross elements that constitute his body which is subjected to

numerous problems and miseries associated with this world, but is rather an ethereal Spirit that transcends the limitations of the gross body and is eternal, imperishable, infinite, subtle and sublime. The gross body may have taints and blemishes, it may have shortcomings and faults, but the ethereal body has none of them. The gross body may have its negativities, but the Spirit has none such demeaning attributes. The spiritual aspirant then realises that he—as the Atma—is such a divine being that he is none other than the glorious Brahm himself who has no birth, who is eternal and steady, and who is most immaculate as well as uncorrupt and incorruptible in creation. All the problems that the aspirant had been facing till this realisation dawned upon him was because he had lost track of his own true identity as the pure consciousness, and instead, under the influences of delusions and ignorance, he had been treating the gross body as his true self and the world as his real abode and fulfiller of his desires. That was the fundamental reason why he had been neck-deep involved in this world inspite of suffering so much and groaning all along under its weight and intense battering. But realisation of the Truth wakes him up to the actual reality about himself, and then all causes of miseries vanish.]

16. This Supreme Being (Brahm) is all-pervading and omnipresent; he is present in all the directions and every point in these directions. He was the one who was the first to reveal himself (as Hiranyagarbha or the subtle body of creation at the macro level; also known as Brahma the creator by Purans), he is the one who resides in the womb as the embryo, he is the one who is born in this world (as the Viraat Purush at the macro level, and the individual creature at the micro level), and he is the one who would be born in the future as well (when the new creation would be created at the end of the present cycle of birth and death). He is the one who is present in all the living beings uniformly and universally, and he is present in all the forms in which this world exists (16).

17. We bow most reverentially before that Supreme Being who is present in the fire, in the water, in all the worlds, in all plants and medicinal herbs, and everywhere else in creation. [Refer Canto 6, verse no. 17.] (17).

Canto 3

1. Those wise and learned people who come to know about that Supreme Being who rules the entire creation by employing his maverick mystical powers and overriding authority that is astonishingly stupendous and most potent and effective, and who is capable of initiating, sustaining and developing the entire spectrum of this multifarious creation all by himself without taking any other help (refer 3/4)—such erudite and wise people become immortal (1).

2. That one Lord in creation is supreme, and he is also known by the name of Rudra¹. Those who are wise and erudite seek only the best, and since there can be only one 'best' and not two which in the present case is the only one supreme transcendental Divinity known as Brahm, they seek nothing else but Brahm. That supreme Authority rules over this creation by employing his most magnificent and stupendously mystical powers. He subtly resides in all the living beings (as their Atma and Pran). Having created the entire creation (in his manifestation of Brahma the creator), he protects and sustains them (as Vishnu the sustainer and protector), and when the opportune

time arrives, he concludes it (as Shiva the concluder and annihilator) and withdraws it into himself (much like the octopus withdrawing its tentacles into its body, or the snail withdrawing its antenna into its shell, or the spider gobbling its web which was earlier created by it) (2).

[Note—¹The word *Rudra* refers to Lord Shiva who is also known by the name of ‘Maha-deva’ or the ‘Great God’. The prefix ‘Maha’ is very significant here because it is added to the name of Shiva only and to no other God, not even Brahma the creator or Vishnu the sustainer. Let us take an example to understand its import—we have a ‘great’ grandfather, who is the one from whom our grandfather and our father himself have descended. Our ‘father’ from we children are born represents the Viraat Purush from whom this entire creation has come into being. The ‘grandfather’ in the cosmic scale is the Hiranyagarbha from which Viraat Purush was born. And the ‘great’ grandfather is the supreme transcendental Brahm from whom this Hiranyagarbha emerged. In this cosmic family, Brahm is the ‘great’ Lord God from whom we, the entire creation, have emerged. Hence, as this verse asserts, Rudra—one of the names of Shiva—is used as a synonym for Brahm.]

Why is Brahm depicted as Rudra—literally meaning the angry one, the agitated one? The primary nature of Brahm is to be peaceful and calm, not being interested in any of the upheavals or any of the activities so characteristic of this world. Brahm is neutral and dispassionate under all circumstances, and therefore is in a perpetual state of blissfulness and tranquility. But it so happens that Brahm decided to ‘do something’ and this desire set off a chain of events that robbed Brahm of his characteristic calm and peace. That is why Brahm became angry and restless—that is, he became ‘Rudra’. That was not all. As soon as the juggernaut of creation rolled forward, Brahm realised the Frankenstein Monster he has unleashed, and this made him all the more furious. Brahm tolerated this Monster as long as he could, but finally decided that enough was enough and began to wind up this creation in his role of Rudra and Shiva. When peace was restored, Rudra became Shiva—calm, peaceful, meditating and auspicious.]

3. That one Lord has eyes in all the directions (i.e. he sees everything and nothing is hidden from him), he has mouths in all the directions (i.e. he speaks all tongues and the sound that is heard in any direction is Brahm speaking), he has hands in every direction (i.e. all that the world does and all that the world receives is being done or received by Brahm), and he has legs in all the directions (i.e. the virtue of ‘movement’ that is so characteristic of life and which keeps the world on its toes is a specialty of Brahm).

That one supreme creator creates the heavens and the earth, and populates it with creatures having two hands and two legs¹ (3).

[Note—¹The eighth word used in the text is *Patatra* which indicates a wing or a flap or any thin wafer-like surface like that of a leaf also. So this verse implies that for the purpose of movement, the creator created terrestrial creature with legs, while for the inhabitants of the sky represented by the word heaven he provided two wings. The example of the former is of course the man, while the latter is the bird. Even the terrestrial trees show movement when their leaves sway in breeze as compared to their branches and stems which are like the hands. This is because the tree absorbs nutrients from the soil by its roots and then transports it to the body by the means of its stem and branches, but they show no movement like the leaves. The leaf dangles in the air like a bird on wings, and hence it shows movement like anything dangling in the sky—it quivers; it shakes and it shivers.]

Refer verse nos. 11, 14 and 16 of this Canto.]

4. That supreme Lord known as Rudra (refer verse no. 2) who is not only the cause of creation of all the divine Gods but has also provided them with their renowned fame and authority besides the magnificent powers and glory that they possess (refer verse no. 1 and 17), he who is the supreme Authority and unquestionable Lord of the entire creation (refer verse no. 17), who is omniscient and all-knowing, and is the one who created the first known sign of creation in the form of Hiranyagarbha (the macrocosmic subtle body of creation)—let this supreme Lord bless us all with an auspicious mind and intellect (4).

5. Oh Lord Girishant Rudra (i.e. Lord Shiva who resides in the mountains and spreads bliss and happiness all around)! Your blessed form is most auspicious, untainted, holy and divine. It is reassuring and soothing (like the glow of the moonlight). It is so ethereally illuminated that it eliminates the darkness cast by sins and evils (representing the darkness of night). Oh Lord, glance upon us with such a divine form; cast your benevolent eyes upon us so that we become blessed and fortunate (5).

6. Oh Girishant (one who resides in the mountains and spreads bliss and happiness all around)! The arrow that you keep ready in your hand to shoot at the living being¹, oh the Lord who gives protection even to the mountains, show mercy and make them (the arrows) harmless and auspicious for the creatures. Do not harm and kill anyone by these arrows. Instead, let these arrows shower the creature with welfare, good fortune and blessedness. [Refer also to Canto 4, verse no. 22.] (6).

[Note—¹Rudra is the God of death because Shiva represents that third force of creation which was envisioned by the supreme creator Brahm even before he started the process of creation so that he could keep a tight leash on his offspring, the world, and kept the right of conclusion exclusively with himself. This is one reason why the creatures fear the supreme Lord, otherwise as the things are, the greedy, rapacious and ambitious offspring would have cut the throat of the grandfather himself in order to usurp all authority and power vested in him, and capture the throne of creation to become the Lord God himself!

In order to prevent this incredulous thing from ever happening, the supreme creator assumes a forbidding and awe-inspiring form of Rudra. The word Rudra literally means ‘anger, wrath and vengefulness’, so the general countenance and bearing of this Supreme Being is one that instills fear of punishment in the mischievous child (the creatures of this creation) so that it does not create unnecessary nuisance. See note to verse no. 2 also.]

7. That great, transcendental and supreme Brahm is beyond the purview of the mortal world inhabited by living creatures, and who is even superior to and more exalted than the immortal world represented by Hiranyagarbha (i.e. Brahma the creator).

He is subtly present in a hidden but integral form in all the living creatures (as their pure consciousness called Atma and life called Pran), assuming as many forms as there are number and varieties of creatures because he is omnipresent and all-pervading.

He surrounds the entire creation from all sides because he is all-encompassing and all-incorporating by nature. A wise and erudite person who comes to know of this Brahm (with these unique virtues) becomes immortal¹. [This Brahm is described in the following verse nos. 8-10.] (7).

[Note—¹It has been repeatedly stressed that by knowing this Brahm the creature becomes immortal, but how? The creature would know about Brahm when he has withdrawn himself from this artificial world which is perishable and instead diverts his mind to contemplation and meditation to find out the ‘truth’ which is immortal.

He then discovers his true self as a radiant consciousness hidden inside himself as his Atma. Then he discovers, by being guided by the teaching of the Upanishads, that this Atma of his is none other than the supreme Brahm personified as is indicated in this verse when it says that Brahm resides inside each and every single creature. The creature then realises that his 'true self' is his Atma representing Brahm who is immortal rather than the body which is mortal. Therein lies the obvious key to becoming 'immortal'. The realisation that the entity known as 'I' is the Atma, and not the body, makes the creature immortal.

There is one very interesting observation to be made here by analyzing the word *immortal*. The word 'immortal' starts with the letter 'I' signifying the eternal bond between that which is immortal (Brahm) and the truthful identity of the creature which is represented by the letter 'I'. When this single letter 'I' is removed, the rest of the creation becomes 'mortal' and no longer remains 'immortal'.

[Refer to verse no. 10 below also.]

8. When the enlightened creature comes to realise and experience the presence of Brahm, he exults—'I know this great, divine, holy, radiant and splendorous Purush (Supreme Being) who is beyond the touch of darkness (representing delusions, ignorance and all other forms of taints and corruptions that are so characteristic of this mortal creation). He is shining like the glorious Sun in the sky (dispelling darkness all around).

It is only by knowing this Supreme Being that a person can cross the whirlpool of death, and there is no other way out of it' (8).

9. There is nothing better, nothing superior and more exalted than him (the Supreme Being), and neither is there anything smaller or bigger than him. He is standing alone like a huge tree in the grounds of the heaven (sky), and pervades in the entire creation much like the shadow of the tree covering the ground around it (9).

[Note—This verse refers to the Viraat Purush by referring to the huge tree, because the 'tree' harbours life in the form of birds and insects that find their abode on it, it casts shadow, it shows movement when its leaves move in the wind, and it is a metaphor for life as it produces fruits that sustain other creatures, and seeds which create a new tree. A tree has a physical body and therefore it is like the Viraat Purush that is the gross body of Brahm. It is said that the entire creation has been revealed from the body of this Viraat Purush much like the tree creating an entire world revolving around its existence.

But it is to be noted that though a tree produces another tree through its seeds, its own body is however mortal because it would die one day. This is in sharp contrast to the supreme Brahm who is immortal and therefore there is no question of it ever dying and leaving any seed behind. This distinguishes the Viraat Purush from Brahm. The Viraat Purush is the macrocosmic gross body of Brahm and a metaphor for the entire creation just like the huge tree in this verse. The 'supreme transcendental' Brahm is far more superior to this Viraat Purush because it is from Brahm that the Viraat Purush derives his glory and authority. This observation is borne by the next verse no. 10 as well as verse no. 20 of this Canto. The unique characteristics of Brahm are outlined in Canto 6 also.]

10. There is a divine entity that is beyond the one described above as having such and such attributes or not having them (as described in verse no. 9). 'That' entity is better, superior to, and more exalted than the entity mentioned above. It has no forms and attributes. It is beyond any kind of taints or faults that are inherent in everything that has an existential name, form and designation¹.

A wise and learned person who knows this Supreme Being obtains immortality², whereas all others obtain sorrows and agonies (because they would not have found the 'real and truthful' Brahm, and instead be deceived by images of Brahm such as the Trinity Gods as well as other Gods who personify one or the other dynamic powers of Brahm, etc.) (10).

[Note—¹The Supreme Being referred to in this verse is the ultimate Authority of creation known as Brahm. This Brahm is the cause of coming into being even of the Hiranyagarbha of verse no. 7 as well as the Viraat Purush of verse no. 9. Briefly, Hiranyagarbha is the macrocosmic subtle body of Brahm, the Viraat Purush is the macrocosmic gross body of Brahm, and Ishwar is the macrocosmic causal body of Brahm. Brahm itself is the universal cosmic Consciousness that prevails uniformly throughout this creation as its Principal and Absolute Truth. Hiranyagarbha has been described as being of a golden colour like the Sun, while Viraat Purush is like the tree or the macrocosmic form of the individual creature such as the man specially, whereas the 'real' Brahm has no colours in him, he has no definite forms and attributes. So the former are definitely different from the Supreme Being known as Brahm.

²Refer to note of verse no. 7.]

11. That supreme Lord (Brahm) has mouth, head and neck in all the directions. He is subtly established in the secret chambers of the bosom or inner self of all living beings, and is all-pervading and omnipresent. He is therefore everywhere in the creation. He is auspicious, truthful, holy and divine (11).

[Note--Refer verse no. 3, 14, 16 and 20 of this Canto as well as verse no. 14 of Canto 4.]

12. That supreme Lord is great, almighty, capable of doing everything, controller of all, an embodiment of brilliant light, eternal and imperishable, as well as most divine, holy and pure. He is called 'Ishan' because he is the Lord of all. He inspires the creature so that it can have a vision of that splendourous Ishan (Brahm) in its own bosom or inner self (12).

13. That supreme transcendental Being (Brahm) lives secretly in a subtle form in the inner chambers of the inner self of the creature in his heart as his Atma. This Atma lives in the subtle space of the heart (called the Hridya Akash) measuring the size of the thumb¹. The Atma is the Lord of the Mana or mind as well as the heart (i.e. it controls both the thoughts as well as the emotions). Those wise ones who know this Lord as such become immortal (because they would have realised that their true self is the pure consciousness known as the Atma which is characterised by being eternal and imperishable) (13).

[Note--¹Refer 5/8 of this Upanishad as well as 2/1/12-13 of Katho-panishad.]

14. That supreme transcendental Brahm has thousands of heads, thousands of eyes and thousands of legs¹. These numbers do not put a limit to his majesty and magnificence (but are only symbolisms for his greatness) for he is one complete whole, encompassing and enclosing the entire creation from all the sides like a girdle but still remaining at a distance of ten fingers away from it². Or in other words, he is subtly present in the heart located at a distance of ten finger width from the navel (which is like the epicenter of the universe)³ (14).

[Note—¹Earlier, verse no. 3 has affirmed that Brahm has as many eyes, hands and legs as there are directions, and verse no. 11 asserts that Brahm has his mouth, head and neck in all the directions. This fact has been repeated in verse no. 16 also for the

purpose of re-assertion and re-affirmation. Refer also to Bhasma Jabal Upanishad, Canto 2, paragraph no. 3 of the Atharva Veda tradition.

This current verse no. 14 is simply an extension of these verses. The word 'thousands' is just a figure of speech to indicate that the heads, mouths, hands, legs etc. of the Lord are present in every place of this creation in a gross form as their counterparts in the body of the countless creatures that inhabit this creation, and in their subtle form as the various perceptions and functions that these individual organs stand for—such as the eye which stands for the function of seeing, hand which indicates the ability to do anything, leg signifies the ability to move from place to place, the mouth is a symbol of speech and the ability to express oneself and to eat, and the neck shows the ability to rotate the instruments of observation located in the head, i.e. the ear, eye, nose and tongue, in any direction one wishes much like the rotating turret of a battle tank or the rotating dish of a radar.

²The allusion here is of the wall of the fort which surrounds the city represented by this creation inhabited by living beings who are its citizens, or even to the moat around this wall which encircles the wall. Brahm is neutral and so vast that even if it were possible to measure the circumference of this wall or moat, Brahm would still surpass this measurement by ten times. This is a figure of speech to indicate the vastness and all-enclosing nature of the Supreme Being. Refer verse no. 7 in this context.

³Earlier verse no. 2, 7 and 11 specially assert that Brahm lives inside the bosom of the creature in the subtle space of its heart called the Hridaya Akash. This space measures eight fingers in width (verse no. 13), and the heart itself lies about ten fingers-width above the navel.

The shape of the navel resembles the crater formed on the ground at the time of an underground nuclear test. The burst of nuclear energy is similar to the forces of creation which result in the creation of new life in the form of the embryo which traps this energy for growth and development, and finally emerges as a creature which would, in this scenario, resemble the nuclear reactor or bomb made to harness the results of the successful underground testing. It has now been almost established that the universe came into existence due to a cosmic 'Big Bang' millions of years ago. This Big Bang was the virtual 'underground testing' done in the cosmic ground represented by the vast and deep recesses of the space of the sky at the very start of creation by Brahm to unfold the energy trapped in the cosmic Atom, the pure conscious cosmic Atma, to unravel its secret potentials and eventually showcase it in the form of this creation. This 'crater-like navel' remained as the only visible sign of the original beginning of creation. It should be noted in this context that the embryo derives its nourishment through the placenta which is a tubular duct attached to the mother at one end and to the embryo at the other at its 'navel'. When the child is born, this placenta is severed, but the hole, reminding one of that original cosmic plan, remains forever.]

15. All that was in the past and would be in the future, and all that is dependant on food that is the source of nourishment, sustenance and development—all of them are nothing but one or the other manifestation of that Supreme Being. This divine Lord is the one who provides the nectar or ambrosia of eternity and salvation called Amrit, and he is the Lord of this Amrit as well. [That is, this Amrit is in his custody. Refer 1/11-13 and 2/16.] (15).

16. That Supreme Being lives everywhere. He has his hands and legs everywhere; his eyes, head, mouth and ears are everywhere. [Refer to verse no. 3, 11 and 14 in this context.] He indeed uniformly pervades and remains universally present in all the

forms that this creation has taken, being omnipresent and all-pervading. [Refer verse no. 7.] (16).

17. In spite of the fact that the Supreme Being (Brahm) has no physical attributes such as having organs of perceptions and actions, he still possesses and displays the individual virtues and characteristic features of these organs individually and jointly. [Refer verse no. 19.] He is the unquestioned Lord of everything that exists, is the supreme controller and regulator as well as the grand shelter of all that exists. [Refer verse no. 4.] (17).

18. This Lord who controls the entire animate as well as the inanimate world assumes the form of a Swan and lives inside the body having nine legendary doors¹ from where it interacts with this external world of material objects and receives its stimuli. In other words, in spite of being the Lord of the world, he begins to treat himself as an ordinary creature and plays around or swims around this world just like a Swan swims around aimlessly in a lake (18).

[Note—¹The *nine doors* are the following-- two ears, two eyes, two nostrils, one mouth, one anus, and one urethra.]

19. That Supreme Being moves most swiftly in spite of having no limbs, hears everything in spite of having no ears, and sees everything in spite of having no eyes. [Refer verse no. 17.] He knows everything worth knowing, but no one knows him. Such an eclectic and mystical Lord is addressed by the wise and learned ones as Great, Grand, Exalted and Supreme (19).

[Note—This is made possible because the Supreme Being lives secretly everywhere, even without anyone knowing about his presence. Refer verse nos. 14-16 of this Canto.]

20. That Supreme Being is smaller than the atom and more colossal and vaster than the colossus and vast. [Refer verse no. 9.] He is hidden secretly in the cave like heart of the creature. [Refer verse no. 2, 7, 11, 13 and 16.]

A fortunate man who is able to 'see' (i.e. observe the subtle and sublime presence of; to perceive, experience and witness on a subtle plain and not physical level) that supreme Brahm with the grace of the benevolent Lord himself who is untouched by the senses and their objects in this world (i.e. the Lord who resides as the Atma of the creature in his bosom and who is totally neutral and dispassionate)—such a man is able to free himself from all torments and miseries (that are associated with these sense organs and their association with the world hallmarked by torments and miseries)¹ (20).

[Note—¹This happens because such a person is no ordinary man but a self-realised man who has witnessed the blessedness of coming in direct contact with the divinity residing in his own bosom in the form of the pure consciousness called the Atma. This Atma is holy and pure, and it has nothing to do with falsehoods and false charms presented by this deluding world of artificiality. Such a person also realises that 'he' is the Atma and not the body which actually comes in contact with the sense objects of the world to either suffer from such contact or enjoy them. Such a man becomes neutral and dispassionate, thereby eliminating all causes of tensions and miseries that are associated with his interaction with this world.]

21. [The self-and-Brahm realised man firmly asserts as follows--] 'I know him who is eternal and free from such faults as aging and decay. That most ancient Purush is

present in all living beings as their Atma or soul. He is all-pervading, omnipresent, all-incorporating and all-encompassing. He is vast and colossus, being beyond dimensions and measurements. Those who are well versed with Brahm affirm that he is free from the fetters of birth and death, being eternal and imperishable'. (21)

Canto 4

1. He who was all alone at the beginning of creation and had no attributes, used his magnificent mystical and majestic powers and maverick tricks to assume numerous forms and shapes having countless attributes. At the time of the end of this creation, he withdraws the entire creation into himself (like the octopus withdrawing its tentacles). Let that stupendous and majestic supreme Lord bless us with an auspicious mind and intellect (so that we inculcate wisdom and intelligence) (1).

2. That same supreme Lord (Brahm) has manifested in varied forms such as the fire, the sun, air or wind and the moon. It is he who has taken the form of the red planet Mars, the creator Brahma, the water element as well as of Prajapati, the first male in visible creation on earth and the first father of the human race (2).

3. Oh Lord! You are the male as well as the female. You are the son as well as the daughter. It is you who reveal yourself as an old man walking with the help of a stick as well as a new embryo which develops into this myriad world of astonishing diversity (3).

4. It is you who has revealed himself as the blue/azure colour (of the sky), the kite (the sun), the green colour (plants and vegetation), the red-eyed one (the planet Mars and the Fire), the clouds (the rains), the seasons and the seven oceans. You are the Lord who has infinite authority and endless sway over all that exists. You are all-pervading and omnipresent. It is you from whom the entire creation has come into being (4).

[Note—The cosmic creation is being referred to here as well as in the next verse no. 5, hence the units of the cosmos at the macro level are the apt metaphors cited above. Some wise scholars have referred to more mundane metaphors, but they do not fit into the wider picture of the cosmic creator. Even when we consider the progression in which the creation came into being, it was started at the vast cosmic level and then metamorphosed into those forms which were closer at home on the earth. For one, the earth was a late comer in this cosmic scheme of things, and second, it was and still is merely one speck of dust on the shore of the cosmic ocean for astronomers have discovered numerous earth-like planets, still in their nascent stage of development, orbiting around distant stars representing the sun.

However, it would be in order of things that the other view is also presented here. According to this, the blue colour refers to the blue-tinged bee, and the green colour and the red-eyed creature is the parrot.]

5. There is one she-goat (the nanny goat)¹ having a three-coloured coat (skin). These colours are red (indicating the predominance of Raja quality), white (indicating Sata quality in predominance) and black (symbolic of the predominance of Tama quality)². This she-goat produces offspring in its own likeness. [That is, it produces offspring

having the predominance of one or more of the qualities represented by the three colours mentioned here.]

This she-goat is subjected to two types of treatment by the he-goat or the ram. One, she is enjoyed by the latter to produce offspring in his likeness (as described above). And two, he remains detached and indifferent to her presence, even to the extent that he does not even glance at her overtures³. [Refer verse no. 6 below also.] (5).

[Note—¹In the cosmic scale of things, this verse refers to the Mother Nature as the *she-goat*.

²The *three colours* are symbolic representations of the basic nature of all the creatures born in this creation. The Chandogya Upanishad, 3/5/4-3/9 and 6/3-4 uses these three colours to describe the different types of characters called Sata, Raja and Tama defining the three basic types of creatures and their individual personality traits and temperaments that exist in this creation.

The Paingal Upanishad, 1/3-9 of the Shukla Yajur Veda clearly states that these three colours were the ones with which Nature representing creation was born and how the supreme creator had subtly entered the entire creation to be uniformly present in its every minutest of corner.

The concept of *Gunas affecting the Atma* has been elaborately dealt with in various Upanishads, for example the Maitrayanyu Upanishad, 1/11, 2/5, 3/5, etc. of the Sam Veda tradition. Canto 6, verse no. 16 of the present Shwetashwatar Upanishad describes how the supreme Brahm was the creator of all the three Gunas. How the three Gunas were used by Brahm to create this world has been beautifully described in Paingalo-panishad, 1/7 and 2/3. Canto 2, verse no. 3 describes how Sata and Raja were used, while Canto 1, verse no. 7 narrates the use of Tama. How the three Gunas affect the man's character have been very precisely and expressly narrated in Shaarirako-panishad of Krishna Yajur Veda in its verse nos. 7-13.

The three characteristic qualities called the *three Gunas* inherently present in the creature, in different ratios, are the three thought textures which bombard the mind. These three thought textures are manifestations of the 'Vrittis and Vasanas' (inherent tendencies or desires) of the creature which mire its pure conscious Atma or soul as a covering or veil. These three basic qualities or Gunas which are inherent in all the living beings determine their nature, habits, temperaments and inclinations which in turn decide the behaviour, personality and outlook of each individual in this world.

(a) 'Sata Guna or quality' is the best quality present in a creature and it is marked by a predominance of auspiciousness, righteousness, virtuousness and noble qualities. It is marked by such high standards of ethical existence that have, as their characteristic features, such qualities as coolness of head, peace, contentedness, humility, devotion, wisdom, mercy, compassion, creativity, selflessness, service, righteousness, virtuousness, holiness and nobility of thought and action etc. As is evident, these qualities are the best qualities that one can have in him; they have a spiritual dimension to them; they are spiritually uplifting and give a divine halo to those who practice them.

The Sata Guna or quality is the veil covering the soul like a smoke covering the fire. A slight breeze will remove this smoke. Similarly a little bit of prayer and meditation will remove the Satwic desires; its removal requires the least effort. It is the foremost and the best amongst the three characteristics of a creature such as good and positive virtuous such as righteousness, creativity, noble deeds and thoughts, the positive qualities of service, benevolence, mercy, devotion, wisdom, holiness, piety etc.

(b) 'Raja Guna' is the medium quality marked by a greater percentage of worldly passions, desires and attachments and their natural offshoots in a creature. It covers such qualities as worldly yearnings, passions, a stormy nature, agitated behaviour,

ambitions, desires, selfishness, expansionist tendencies, desire to sustain etc. All these pertain to this materialistic world. Such qualities give worldly fame and prosperity. If these qualities are judiciously mixed with the Satwic qualities, then they provide the person the better of the two worlds, both in terms of worldly fame as well as spiritual well being.

The Rajsic quality or Guna can be compared to dust on a mirror. In this case some dusting and rubbing is needed to clean the mirror; a greater effort is needed as compared to the case with Satwic quality. Rajsic tendencies are the second best quality which produces worldly desires, ambitions, passions, selfishness, various obsessions, desire to sustain and expand etc.

(c) 'Tama Guna' is the third quality which is the meanest and basest of the three types of qualities in a creature. It is marked by evilness, perversions and sinfulness. It is the most degrading, denigrating and contemptible of the three characteristics in a person, leading him to such negative traits as sins, vices, perversions, greed, avarice, haughtiness, pride, lust, attachments, yearnings, intoxication, wild behaviour, promiscuity, evils, utter disregard for anything which is righteous, ethical and noble etc. In brief, behaviour which is utterly immoral, denigrating and depraving for the creature, marked by grossness, crassness and recklessness of demeanors. It is the lowest and meanest of the three qualities leading to a person's downfall, ignominy and ruin.

The Tamsic quality or Guna covering the soul is like a foetus in the womb covered by the embryonic membrane—they cannot be removed easily and require diligence, effort, dedicated and careful handling requiring time and patience. It is the basest and the lowliest of the three characteristics, the worst type to possess, and is marked by such negative traits as sin, evil, perversions, immorality, vices, misdemeanors, anger, inertia, delusions, deception, gloom, ignorance et al.

The various permutations and combinations of these three qualities create a particular 'nature' of an individual giving him his individuality and his special characters which are unique to him; they determine his temperament, behaviour, thought process et al.

³The ram or *he-goat* is used as a metaphor for the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic aspect of Brahm's revelation as well as the creature's male form at the micro level of creation. Fundamentally there are two basic mental bearings and psychological responses that a creature exhibits in its interactions with the world—it either enjoys the interaction, finding pleasure and comfort in this world and its material objects, or wishes to be left alone and remains detached from it. The creature with the *first type of temperament* is the ram who gets involved in producing offspring with the she-goat, and by extension it refers to the Viraat Purush who got involved with his own maverick Maya (his own delusion creation powers) to start this process of creation. The *second type of temperament* signifies the ram who is a renunciate and self-realised creature that has realised the falsehood of this artificial world and does not wish to have anything to do with it. The first has a propensity of getting involved and getting caged like a bird, while the other prefers to keep all entanglements at bay, preferring to remain free as a bird out of its cage.

Therefore, the first type of ram is the ordinary creature which remains engrossed in this world and gets sucked in the vortex of joys and pains, while the other ram is the self-realised soul who gets liberation and deliverance from all these entrapments.]

6. [This verse uses the beautiful metaphor of two friendly birds perched on the same tree.] There are two friendly birds on the same tree. [Here, one bird symbolises the Jivatma or the creature, and the other bird stands for the Parmatma or its pure conscious Atma which is a personification of the Supreme Being living inside its body representing the tree. Refer verse no. 5 also.]

Out of these two birds, one enjoys the fruits of the tree while the other just watches silently. [Here, the first bird which eats the fruit is the creature which enjoys the world and the fruits of its deeds and efforts, while the second bird is the Atma which just remains neutral and does not get involved in this enterprise.] (6).

[Note—The body is required by the Atma to live in this world. When this Atma displays the eclectic and sublime qualities of dispassion and non-involvement, of not finding charm in attractions of the material world, and instead maintaining stoic calmness of demeanors and stern neutrality, exercising self restraint which is tantamount to doing constant Tapa and Yoga (severe penance and meditation), it is deemed to be an incarnation of the Supreme Being (Brahm) residing in the body of the creature.

On the other hand, when the same consciousness begins to show carnal desires and allows itself to get dirty and corrupted by getting involved in the muck of the world, then it gets sucked in the swamp in which it had voluntarily jumped. This is the creature at his worst—worldly and entangled in its own web like the spider getting entangled in its own web. Refer Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 2, Brahmin 1, verse no. 20.

The concept of two birds sitting on a tree has been also described in Rudra Hridaya Upanishad, verse no. 41 which is Chapter 26 of this volume.]

7. Sitting on the same tree, the creature (literally ‘the Purush’ because the Viraat Purush representing the macrocosmic gross body of Brahm has revealed himself as the individual creature at the microcosmic level of creation; here represented by the *first bird*) who is overcome by delusions gets submerged in all types of miseries, sorrows and distresses, wailing and lamenting in the process¹.

This situation prevails only till the time the creature does not witness and experience the presence of the majestic glory and divinity of the supreme Lord whose mere presence dispels all causes of pains and miseries (much like the presence of sunlight automatically eliminates darkness of the night). This Lord, known as Ishwar, is served by countless spiritual seekers who focus their sight upon him by a variety of ways and try to reach him by so many paths. This Ishwar is distinct from the creature’s corrupt form (that is consequential to the creature’s ignorance and its attendant delusions, such as those that arise out of his association with this artificial world and its ensnaring sense objects). This Ishwar is not at all tarnished by any of the negativities and faults associated with the possession of a gross body as is the case with the ordinary mortal creature.

Once the creature is able to witness the presence of this benevolent Lord and understands the Lord’s majestic powers and overriding supremacy in this creation, when the creature knows that this almighty and most powerful Lord is there to give him his magnanimous protection and extend his helping hand to him so that the creature is able to overcome or get rid of all his numerous torments, miseries and agonies from which he had been suffering all along, he (the creature) feels reassured and rested that the Lord is not only able to deliver him from all his sufferings but would actually do so. It is then that the creature finds freedom from all sorrows, miseries and torments that have been overwhelming him due to ignorance about the omnipresence and omnipotence of this supreme Lord who is present literally at his own doorstep. [That is, the supreme Lord is very near the creature and not far away from him, for the Lord resides in the creature’s own heart, in his own bosom. It is like the paradoxical case of a man searching for the gold in the haystack while the gold is in his own breast pocket!] (7).

[Note—¹The ignorant creature thinks that it has a body and therefore all sorts of troubles that are associated with the body submerge it in their surging waves of delusions. The creature fears old age, diseases and death. It has enemies and friends; it has numerous attachments and as many hatreds; it has so many tasks unfulfilled and so many desires yet to realise; and so on and so forth. The result is that all its peace is snatched from it.]

8. It is in the infinite, fathomless and eternal sky or heaven that all the divine Gods are present; and it is this vast heaven that is also lauded in the Vedas. [This 'sky' is a metaphor for *Brahm* because the latter is also featureless, all-encompassing, all-pervading, omnipresent, taintless, vast, infinite, fathomless and eternal like the former.]

Those who do not understand the secret behind this can do nothing by reciting the hymns of the Vedas. [That is, it is most important to understand the secret behind the tenets and spiritual philosophy of the Vedas to benefit from them instead of mechanically repeating their hymns as if they would work miracles merely by staccato chanting. Nothing is further from the truth.]

On the other hand, those who understand that supreme eclectic and divine Being in a holistic way become fulfilled and accomplished (8).

9. All the Vedas, the various religious sacrifices and sacraments, all the different religious vows and duties, all that existed in the past, exists in the present and would exist in the future that are described in the Vedas (which are vast repositories of knowledge about these things)—all of them have been created by the maverick Supreme Being from one imperishable entity known as 'Akchar'¹. [In other words, since *Brahm* is Akchar or one who is imperishable, it follows that the entire spectrum of creation, not only the entities mentioned here, has its origin in 'Akchar'.]

This supreme entity (i.e. the Akchar *Brahm*), though it is distinct from everything else, being unique and matchless by all definitions and in all spheres, appears to be tied to this world of its own creation with the tag of *Maya* which attaches it to the latter² (9).

[Note--¹The word *Akchar* or *Akshar* means 'one that does not perish'. Such an entity is 'supreme' because everything that exists has to perish according to the laws of Nature except this supreme entity known as Akchar. Since there is only one entity known as *Brahm* that is 'supreme' and 'imperishable', and which has the characteristics of the sky such as being 'fathomless, eternal and infinite' as well as being the 'abode of everything in existence', the Akchar from which the Vedas etc. have come into being is none other but *Brahm* himself.

Again, the word Akchar also means 'a letter'. The ethereal word OM representing *Brahm* also consists of letters A, U and M. It is believed that this OM is the original sound from which the rest of creation has unfolded. Since the Vedas consists of hymns composed of 'letters' as the basic building blocks to form the words of those hymns, they represent this divine word OM. Refer 5/6 and 6/18 in this context.

²*Maya* is the delusion creating powers of the supreme *Brahm* which keeps the world on it toes, hiding the reality and truth from it. Had it not been so, all the creatures would have become renunciate ascetics and then the wheel of creation would have come to a grinding halt. So when the supreme creator decided to create this world, he entered it to control it from within, and took up an abode as the Atma of the creature. But under the delusory spell purposely cast by *Brahm*, the creature could not see the reality much like one cannot see the reality when he is under the hypnotic spell of a magician or an expert hypnotist—the audience begins to eat out of the hand of the magician or hypnotist although it might be fully alert and wide awake.

That is why Brahm appears to be involved in this world even though it is fundamentally non-attached and non-involved in anything that has to do with falsehoods and deceit just like the magician or a hypnotist who remains an active participant in the game of illusion-creation but himself is not under the illusions created because he knows that what is seen is not the actual thing but merely an illusion which he himself has created. A magician or a hypnotist is never swept off his feet by the illusion created for the audience.

The concept of Maya is described in note to verse no. 10 below along with Prakriti or Nature.]

10. Prakriti¹ (primary Nature) should be treated as the Maya², and the supreme Lord called Maheshwar (one who is ‘Maha’—great, and ‘Ishwar’—Lord, of everything) as the maverick Lord who inspires and enables the Maya to not only create this world but also imprint it with its own characteristic qualities (much like the offspring bearing the characters and features, or genes, of the parent).

Thus, the entire creation bears the characteristic qualities and virtues so typical of and unique to Maya; these qualities and virtues form an integral character and nature of this creation as a whole as well as of all its individual units. [They are called the various Gunas³.] (10).

[Note—¹*Prakriti*—The word basically means ‘nature’ with all its connotations. The Chambers dictionary defines it as the power that creates and regulates the world; the power of growth; the established order of things; the cosmos; the external world especially that untouched by man; the inherent qualities in anything that makes it what it is; the essence; the being; the constitution; a kind or order; naturalness; normal feeling; conformity to truth or reality; the inborn mind; the character, instinct or disposition; the vital power; the course of life; the nakedness of truth; the primitive undomesticated condition; the strength or substance of anything; a deity personifying some force of physical nature.

Sir Monier Monier-Williams, in his encyclopedic Sanskrit-English dictionary describes it thus—‘making or placing before or at first’.

The word Prakriti has many connotations, viz. the original or natural or basic form or condition of anything; the original or primary nature, character, condition, constitution, temperament, disposition; the fundamental form or shape or essence or pattern or standard or model, rule; Mother Nature which has the active physical natural forces that are responsible for unfolding the creation, its sustenance and annihilation; something that is inherent, innate, genuine, unaltered, unadulterated, basic, normal, bare, naked, crude, integral and stripped of all pretensions; the fundamental pattern, form, standard and model upon which the rest of the things are based; the crude or basic or root or seed form of any word, and by extension of anything expressed; that which decides the existential mode of anything; the coefficient, the multiplier of any fundamental element.

As inherent nature and temperament of a creature, it determines the way the world behaves and thinks; it determines the basic character of the creature and the creation as a whole because the individual creature is but a single unit of the creation.

The word Prakriti also refers to the ‘personified will of the Supreme Being in the creation’, and it therefore is synonymous with the powers of the Supreme Being personified as Mother Nature in whose womb the entire creation has revealed itself. It is deified forces of Nature and revealed as different renowned and powerful Goddesses.

The Prakriti represents the cosmic creative will of the creator that has revealed itself as the primary female aspect of creation which is known as ‘Shakti’, while its male aspect is known as the ‘Viraat Purush’. The Shakti is the active ingredient or force that creates and regulates everything, while the primary entity or Being whose will this Shakti is implementing is called Brahm who remains passive.

According to the Purans, this Prakriti or Nature has been personified as different Goddesses, while Brahm has been known as Viraat Purush in the terminology of Vedanta or the Upanishads, and Vishnu in the Purans. The Shakti is the female aspect of Purush, and is considered as inseparable from him; in fact they are two halves of the same Brahm. In order to create, Brahm revealed himself in these two primary forces which revealed themselves as the cosmos or Nature. As the different inherent tendencies of a creature, the forces of creation came to be known as Sattva, Raja and Tama which determines and regulates the continuous cycle of creation, sustenance and conclusion. The Purush is the male aspect while his female counterpart is the Prakriti. Since a man resides in this world, he is surrounded by Nature which casts its shadow upon him. All the maverick tricks that Mother Nature knows create an impression upon a man. He is enthralled and so overwhelmed by the deception created by Nature that he forgets about the falsehoods of what he sees, as well as about the truthful nature of his own pure self. He is deluded by false impressions so much so that they appear to be true to him. Consequentially, he drifts along in the swift currents created by those delusions. He acquires the colours of Prakriti without realising the truth about its falsehood.

According to Sankhya Shastra, Prakriti is the original producer of the material world consisting of the three Gunas or fundamental qualities that are inherent in all the creatures and they decide the character and temperament of that creature depending upon the dominance of one quality over the other two. These three Gunas are—(i) 'Sata', or those which are auspicious and righteous and noble, (ii) 'Raja', or worldly qualities marked by such notions as having passions, desires, greed etc. and (iii) 'Tama', or those qualities that are 'dark' by nature, such as those that are categorised as sinful and pervert, leading to a creature's moral downfall.

The word Prakriti refers to the following—(a) Mother Nature and (b) the natural habits, temperaments and inclinations of a person. The Purush is the male aspect while his female counterpart is the Prakriti. Since a man resides in this world, he is surrounded by Nature which casts its shadow upon him. All the maverick tricks that Mother Nature knows create an impression upon a man. He is enthralled and so overwhelmed by the deception created by Nature that he forgets about the falsehoods of what he sees, as well as about the truthful nature of his own pure self. He is deluded by false impressions so much so that they appear to be true to him. Consequentially, he drifts along in the swift currents created by those delusions. He acquires the colours of Prakriti without realising the truth about its falsehood.

²Maya-- Maya is a word which has two parts, Ma + Ya. The first half means a 'mother', while the other half refers to the notion of doubt, of either this or that. The word 'Ma' also means 'to measure, mark off, by any standard; to show, to exhibit, to display; to infer, to conclude; to be formed, built, made of'. Therefore, the composite word Maya refers to a situation which harbours uncertainties, where it is uncertain whether what is said or understood or seen or witnessed or experienced is actually the truth or not. It is virtually the 'mother of all confusions and perplexities'. It therefore refers to something or some situation which creates doubts and confusions, something that is not real; that which is deluding, illusionary, deceptive, mirage-like and deceitful, and is caused by the ignorance about its truth and reality; something that has no substance or pith; displays no certainty and leads to wrong inference. The term Maya is used to define all these phenomenons. Hence, Maya is a synonym used for all that is deceptive, faulty, false, deluding, ignorance based, illusionary, pretensions, deceitful, invisible and super-natural; all that which has no reality or substance; all that is hollow. It creates hallucinations in a creature's mind leading him to believe that what he sees is the truth. It is the deluding and magical powers of the supreme transcendental Lord that hides the reality and creates an imaginary world of deceptions and misconceptions

Maya has three basic constituent qualities. Hence it is called Trigunmayi, i.e. one which has the three Gunas or qualities. These three Gunas or qualities are— Sata,

Raja and Tama. 'Sata' is the most auspicious, virtuous and noblest quality in a man and raises him to a high moral and spiritual pedestal. It marks predominance of righteousness and the highest standards of spirituals and mental evolvement leading to high thoughts, noble actions and righteous behaviour. 'Raja' is the medium quality in a person, and it is marked by worldly passions, desires, yearnings and greed. It makes a man more worldly than spiritual. 'Tama' is the third and most lowly of the three qualities and is used as a synonym for darkness and evil. Obviously, 'Tama' means ignorance, delusions and all the forces or qualities that are evil, mean, lowly, miserly, wicked and base. They pull down a man from high pedestal and virtually dump him in the dust yard of creation to rust and decay.

These three qualities together, in various permutations and combinations, decide the innate nature of a man. The greater presence of 'Sata' makes a man nobler as compared to a high ratio of 'Tama' which makes him wicked, pervert and evil. Various proportions of these qualities will therefore produce innumerable varieties of creatures having different temperaments, thought processes, behaviours, demeanors and mental setup in this world.

The basic idea here is that Maya is like a transparent sheet which covers the supreme 'truth' in the creation. Since it is transparent, it assumes the attributes of the truth that it covers, because for all practical purposes an ordinary man is unable to see that veil because of its transparency. This is a simple way of understanding what is called 'illusion and Maya vis-à-vis the Truth and Reality'. Maya nevertheless hides the truthfulness of the Truth, and instead lends its own attributes and characteristics to that Truth known as the 'Nirgun Brahm' by the Upanishads when the latter is observed through this veil, while at the same time assuming the glorious attributes of Brahm itself. So ignorant fools think that the Maya is the real thing, whereas they are actually seeing the 'veiled truth' as observed through this covering of Maya, because the actual 'truth' is hidden from view by this transparent sheet which has lent it its own colour and hue to it. As a result, that Nirgun appears to have some attributes, and it thereby becomes 'Sagun', or the one with attributes and characteristics, by the interference of Maya.

Now, there are *eight forms that Maya takes*, and they are the following—the five elements forming the basic building blocks of the gross creation (i.e. the elements of earth, water, fire, air and space which form the gross body of all the living creatures) + mind + intellect (together called the subtle body of the creature) + Ahankar (the ego, pride and arrogance that the creature possesses, leading to the notion of 'I', 'me', or 'mine' = eight entities).

Maya has three names—viz. (a) Maha Maya—or the great powers exhibited by Brahm at the cosmic level. This Maya is the progenitor of all other types of Mayas which keep the individual creature trapped in their net. The Maha Maya is the virtual mistress of all the delusions and misconceptions and their attendant ignorance that keep all the creatures of this creation enthralled by their deceptive charm. (b) Yog Maya—this is the stupendous magical powers created by the union of the supreme authority of creation known as Brahm, and the mystical and esoteric powers that delusions and hallucinations can create for the creature. (c) Maya Shakti—this is the 'shakti' or power and authority displayed by Maya in association with Brahm from whom it acquires its stupendous energy and powers.

Mantriko-panishad of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition describes Maya in substantial detail. In its verse no. 5 it says that *Maya has three basic colours*—viz. 'white', 'red' or 'dark', and the various shades in between. These three colours represent the three basic qualities, called Gunas, present in all the creatures and are only symbolic of the innumerable variations in which the basic qualities can combine to produce countless number of characteristics and virtues and behaviours that give individuality and specific characteristics to millions and millions of creatures. These are simply metaphors only meant to explain and help visualise certain things, and therefore should not be taken too literally as meaning that dark skinned people are

sinful and pervert and worthy of condemnation, or that fair skinned ones are all righteous and noble, for just the opposite is witnessed daily in our lives.

Even as an offspring gets the colour of the skin of the race to which it belongs, the inherent characters of all creatures are inherited from their mother, and this mother is Maya. The white colour stands for the best category of qualities called Sata Guna, the red colour stands for the second and medium quality called Raja, and the dark colour stands for the meanest quality called Tama. The word Tam itself means 'dark' and it stands for the worst type of qualities leading to sinful and pervert nature in a man which makes his life hellish; the word 'red' is a metaphor for anger, vehemence, vengeance, agitations, restlessness, short temper, strife, hatred, envy, jealousy and the other such negative worldly characteristics in a person; the colour 'white' stands for peace, tranquility, prosperity, happiness and wisdom, all of which are the characters of noble and gentlemanly persons.

³As has been noted above, the three inherent qualities or Gunas of Sata, Raja and Tama that characterize all the creatures of this creation are like the genes that the offspring carries of its parent. Through these Gunas, the Maya resides in the bosom of all the creatures as their defining 'nature' and basic 'temperament'—called the *Prakriti* of the creature. Even as the supreme Brahm as the Great Lord called Maheshwar used his mystical deluding maverick powers to create this illusion of the world at the cosmic level and made it so perfect that it appears to be perfectly true, the same Brahm while residing in the bosom of the individual creature as its Atma also creates this world by using its delusion creating powers, and uses its man-Friday, the mind, to ensure that it is implemented to perfection.]

11. That supreme Lord is alone competent and capable of creating and establishing all the countless forms in which all the creatures of this creation are born in this world. It is in this supreme primary Lord in whom the entire creation dissolves or merges at the time of its end, only to be reborn from him once again at the time of the start of a new cycle of creation.

When the spiritual aspirant succeeds in his endeavour of seeking the ultimate Truth and getting acquainted with the supreme Authority of creation that is the overriding authority that controls everything in existence, that governs and regulates them, that can grant boons and blessings (because only an authority that can punish can also pardon, one who is all-powerful and authoritative can bless and give or grant boons or favours), and that is worthy of praise, honour, reverence and worship—it is only then that such an aspirant finds eternal peace and tranquility, eternal bliss and contentedness (11).

[Note—This is because he would have realised his 'own true self' in the fount of bliss and peace revealed in the form of his own pure conscious Atma. He would have realised that the external world in which he had so far been searching peace and happiness was actually a mirage and it was misleading him all through much like a trickster who uses all tricks in his trade to trap the gullible innocent prey, or like a magician or hypnotist who made his subject live in a world of make belief charm which is far removed from the harsh realities of this world.]

12. The great Lord Rudra (literally Lord Shiva who is also called Maheshwar or the Great God, but here referring to the supreme Brahm—refer 3/2-6) who is the cause of coming into being of all the Gods of creation and who endowed them with their divine powers, great authority and majestic glories¹, who is the unquestioned, unequivocal and the only supreme Lord of all that exists, who is all-knowing and omniscient, and who had watched the emergence of Hiranyagarbha²—let that supreme transcendental Being (Brahm, the Supreme Lord, the cosmic Consciousness) bless us with pure, auspicious and enlightened wisdom and intellect (12).

[Note—¹It is Brahm who has created the numerous Gods and then bestowed each one of them with their divine and glorious powers and authority which are astounding and most magnificent. These Gods are of two basic types—the *primary Gods* such as the Fire God, the Water God and the Wind God which are personifications of the original elements of creation and represent the dynamic forces of creation and the different fundamental life creating, sustaining, developing and concluding powers of Brahm. They also stand for the fundamental virtues and sublime but subtle qualities that are so characteristic of Brahm. The *secondary Gods* are the ones which followed once this creation came into being, when Brahm had to devise a mechanism to regulate his own creation and ensure its orderly functioning. Brahm had to lay down the detailed infrastructure and frame the constitution for his own creation lest it would just fall apart under its own weight of unregulated growth and uncontrolled propagation. This was a distinct possibility in the creator's mind—because the very origin of this creation was based on 'Maya' or deception which tended to hide the truth. Thus, the secondary Gods are primarily guardians or 'enforcing authorities' of the doctrines and principles of creation laid down by the Father of creation.

Naturally therefore, the Father Brahm 'had' to give these Gods necessary power and authority to implement and enforce his ordinances; he had to 'delegate his own powers' to a great extent to these Gods so that this vast and measureless realm could be controlled. In this scenario, Brahm retained the central command, interfering only when absolutely necessary, and having the final say in all matters just like the chief commander of an army or the Emperor of an extended empire. That is why even the Gods fear him.

Refer Canto 3, verse no. 4, and Canto 6, verse nos. 1-3, 16 of the present Upanishad also.

The various *directions and their patron Gods* have been described in Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, 3/1/9, 3/9/21-24.

According to the Purans, the twelve directions and their patron Gods are the following—(1) East—Indra; (2) South East—Fire God; (3) South—Yam God, the God of death and final judgment; (4) South West—Nairiti; (5) West—Varun, the Water God; (6) North West—Vayu, the Wind God; (7) North—Kuber, the God of treasure and wealth; (8) North East—Ishan, Lord Shiva; (9) Zenith—Brahma, the creator; (10) Nadir—Prithivi or earth; (11) Sun; and (12) Moon.

²*Hiranyagarbha* is the first sign of emergence of creation. It is the first embryo and, in terms of metaphysics, the subtle gross body of creation. Hiranyagarbha was the 'first born'. So if someone 'watched its emergence' it implies that this someone or some unknown entity existed even before Hiranyagarbha started to become a reality; this someone or something obviously pre-dated Hiranyagarbha. Now, it has also been said in verse no. 11 above that everything collapses into Brahm and merges into him at the time of conclusion of creation. Therefore it is very logical to say that this Brahm existed 'after the end of creation' and 'before the beginning of creation', i.e. in the intervening period. This is possible because nothing can come into being from nothing; there must be something—however unknown, inconceivable, untraceable and incomprehensible—into which everything collapsed at the end and from which it was reborn. Had it been true that after the conclusion of any given creation there was a complete 'nothing' after it, then it would have been a 'black hole' type of thing, and modern science has established that even light cannot escape from this black hole, so there was no question of the next world 'remerging' from this 'black hole of nothingness'.

This validly proves that there was indeed 'some entity that was present and existent' even after the conclusion of the last creation and before the beginning of the present creation.

The concept of Brahm watching the birth of the first-born in creation has also been stated in Canto 5, verse no. 2 of this Upanishad.]

13. He who is the supreme Lord and overriding Authority ruling over all the Gods in creation, in whom the entire creation has its foundation and basis, who is the regulator and controller of all the living beings in this world whether they are two-legged (such as humans) or four-legged (such as animals)—let us honour and worship that Supreme Being who is an embodiment of beatitude and felicity by paying tributes to him in the way of offerings of sweet rice pudding (or porridge) as sanctified food meant for the sacred fire (13).

14. He who is smaller than the minutest, who is hidden in the center of the Kalil¹ (i.e. who is surrounded by Avidya or the darkness of ignorance as is the case when Brahm voluntarily allowed himself to be surrounded by Maya or delusions, and Ahankar or ego and a false sense of pride, when he decided to forgo his neutral stature and indulge in the game of creation), who is the creator and progenitor of the entire creation², who assumes numerous forms because he pervades uniformly and universally in the entire creation (and therefore is deemed to exist in as many forms as there are types and classes of creatures in this creation), and who is most auspicious and a provider of well being to all—by being acquainted with this Lord, the spiritual aspirant finds eternal peace and tranquility as well as bliss and contentedness (14).

[Note—¹The word *Kalil* literally refers to the embryonic fluid formed by the fusion of the male semen with the female genital fluids. This results in the nascent embryo which is in the shape of a frothy bubble of viscous fluid. Since the embryonic fluid is lodged in the female womb, it is surrounded by pitch darkness. Further, this frothy fluid is the progenitor of the creation because it develops into a full blown creature. But its primary strength is derived from the sperm which fertilises the egg of the female which then undergoes rapid divisions and metamorphoses into an embryo. In the present context, Brahm is compared to this Kalil because Brahm is the cause of creation of this entire creation, including the ‘darkness of Avidya or ignorance’ with which Brahm allowed himself to be surrounded so that an excuse could be found for initiating the process of creation. The present version is according to the revered sage Adi Shankaracharya, the greatest exponent of Advaitya Vedanta and an unchallenged authority on the Upanishads. Others like Vigyan Bhagwan and Shankaranand endorse this view. According to Narayantirtha, the word Kalil refers to ‘Tamso Madhye’—i.e. to being in the center of darkness or ignorance called ‘Agyan’. Since Brahm was surrounded by negative factors of Ahankar and Maya when the process of creation rolled forward, this description also fits into place. In this interpretation, Brahm is an astonishing Being who even lives inside something that is dark and foreboding, indicating that behind the darkness of ignorance and falsehoods there is hidden the real ‘truth’.

²Refer 5/5, 6/1-3, 16 in this connection.]

15. It is he who is the protector of the entire creation in all time frames (past, present and future), is the unquestioned and unchallenged Lord of the whole world, and present in all the creatures uniformly and universally (as their Atma and Pran). It is he on whom all the learned and wise sages and seers as well as the different Gods remain focused by the way of meditation and contemplation. By becoming acquainted with or being Brahm-realised, a wise and enlightened spiritual aspirant is able to break free from the fetters of death, i.e. he is able to free himself from the causes that keep him tied to this cycle of birth and death¹ (15).

[Note—¹The cause of death is birth, because only one who is born would die. When the aspirant realises that his true self is Atma which is pure consciousness and Brahm personified, he also realises that the body is not the self he was previously thinking it to be. It is the body that dies and not the Atma because it is eternal and imperishable

and therefore without a birth. So the basis of fear of death vanishes. Besides this, when he distances himself from the body and the deeds that are done by this body as well as the world in which these deeds are done, then also he does not have to take another birth as no after-effects of deeds remain, thereby eliminating the need to take another body to suffer or enjoy the results of those deeds.]

16. [This verse describes both the macrocosmic form of Brahm as well as its microcosmic subtle form.]

That eclectic, unique and divine Supreme Being is like the clarified butter floating on the surface of milk. This butter represents the best part of milk (or curd); it enriches the value of milk (or curd), and is much sought after by food connoisseurs. This supreme and divine Being of creation is therefore honoured and worshipped by the epithet 'Shiva'—one who is eternal, beautiful, holy, auspicious, truthful, best and most divine as well as an embodiment of infinite happiness and bliss.

This supreme Lord lives secretly inside all the creatures in a very subtle form as their atomic and invisible microcosmic Atma. At the same time, this same mystical Lord pervades the entire creation and encloses it from all sides in his vast colossus form as the Viraat Purush at the macrocosmic level. When the seeker comes to know this Supreme Being (or when he becomes Brahm-realised), he is freed from all the fetters that had been shackling him from time immemorial (16).

17. That all-pervading, all-permeating, all-incorporating and all-encompassing supreme Lord is the creator and progenitor of the entire creation. He resides subtly in the heart of all the creatures (as their Atma). He is known, and the truth about him realised, by coordination between a sincere and dedicated heart, an enlightened mind, and a wise intellect. When this supreme transcendental Divinity is brought to light by this method, the seeker becomes immortal (because he would have realised that his own true self is none other but this supreme Brahm residing in his heart as his pure conscious and enlightened Atma which is his essential spirit or soul) (17).

18. When the darkness of ignorance is dispelled, there is no such notion as day or night, or of something being true and something being false¹. In other words, there is no sense of duality and confusions. When the light of enlightenment and wisdom dawns on the spiritual horizon of the wise self-realised seeker, there is only the existence of one and non-dual Truth, which is the eternal, auspicious and universal supreme Lord.

This supreme, eternal and imperishable Lord is even the object of worship by the Sun God. It is from this Lord and the supreme Authority of creation that ancient wisdom and erudition came into being and was propagated (in the form of holy scriptures and enlightened preachers) (18).

[Note--¹This is because when there is only *one state of existence*, i.e. when there is only 'truth' prevailing, and therefore there is no sense of duality and cause of any confusion and doubt, it does not matter whether one lives in sunshine or darkness of the night, he would have no sense of fear from any quarter. For example, for a man in sleep or one who is confined to a closed room, it does not matter to him whether it is day or night outside.

This 'day' and 'night' are relative terms because, as everyone knows, if one part of the earth has day, the other part has night. It is not that 'day' completely eliminates 'night' from the surface of the earth; they have a cyclic occurrence. Suppose one believes that the day is the truth and night is not the truth, then what would happen when night falls, something which is bound to happen and simply cannot be wished away. So, if one is made to believe that the 'day' is the only truth, then when night

comes and day sets, he would be completely confounded because 'truth', which for him is represented by day time, cannot be expected to set as 'truth' is everlasting. But the fact that it does is irreconcilable for him; he would not be able to comprehend how the 'truth' comes to an end.

Similarly, what appears to be 'truth' now becomes 'false' at some other moment, and vice versa. For example, the 'day light' now becomes false during night time. The existence of the creature now becomes false once he is dead. But since he takes a new birth, he is actually not dead, but only changed his body and form.]

19. This Supreme Being cannot be caught or understood from the above, from the sides, or from the middle. He whose name has the epithet 'Mahadyaash'—one who is the greatest and most magnificent, one who is grand and majestic, one who is astounding and stupendous, one who is the most exalted and superior to all others—indeed has no match because he is unique and peerless. There is verily nothing with which he can be compared, or that which can be compared with him (19).

20. The divine and esoteric form of this Supreme Being is not the subject matter for the perception of sight, therefore the physical eyes of the body cannot see him. A self-realised and enlightened seeker who can perceive this Supreme Being in his own heart with the aid of uncorrupt and wisened mind that can penetrate deep into the realm of the subtle truth (with meditation and contemplation) is able to actually become immortal (because the Atma is immortal, and the Atma is his true self as well as the personification of Brahm inside his body) (20).

[Note—When a wise and self-realised man is able to see deep inside his own self, he realises that 'he' is the Atma and not the body as he had been thinking till now. This Atma is immortal, eternal and imperishable—and therefore 'he' is also immortal, eternal and imperishable!]

21. Oh Lord Rudra! Since you have no beginning (i.e. you do not die to take a birth again as you are eternal, imperishable and infinite—because you are Brahm personified), someone who is afraid of death, or someone who is scared of this world and its horrors, seeks your shelter and refuge, or seeks your protection. [This is because only one who is immortal himself can know how to become immortal and advise others on the subject. Such holy souls as you are definitely divine and holy and worthy of seeking shelter with. They are also powerful and potent enough to give protection to their wards who seek their intercession, their refuge and blessings.]

Such scared person pleads with you to protect him with your face which faces South¹, which is a metaphor for your benevolent, compassionate, kind and favourable inclinations towards those who are meek and seek your protection (21).

[Note—¹There is an Upanishad called Dakshin Mukhi Upanishad which is Chapter 18 of this volume and it describes this South facing form of Lord Shiva along with its metaphysical importance and significance.]

22. Oh Rudra! You are requested not to destroy (kill; eliminate; exterminate; or subject to torments and miseries) any of our sons, grand-sons, our age and life (i.e. let us not die pre-maturely), cows and cattle as well as horses and other domesticated animals. You are also requested not to harm our loyal brave servants and subordinates. We always show our greatest of respect to you; we duly worship and adore you, and offer sweet puddings to you as offering in the sacred fire during religious sacrifices. [Refer Canto 3, verse no. 6.] (22).

Canto 5

[This Canto is built around the philosophy of Sankhya Shastra and Sankhya Yoga. The next Canto, i.e. canto 6, would carry on with this theme further. These twin philosophies have been explained in detail in a note to verse no. 13 of Canto 6.

It would be noted that the three Canto nos. 3-6 of this Upanishad are exclusively dedicated to describing how Brahm is and what is his form and nature.]

1. There is a transcendental entity which is superior to Brahma, the creator of the world. That supreme transcendental Authority is eternal and imperishable. It is here that Vidya and Avidya both exist but in clearly defined and delineated forms. That body of knowledge which points to truth and removes the delusions created by ignorance which are the cause of all falsehoods and misconceptions about this existence is called 'Vidya'. On the contrary, that knowledge which is misleading and the cause of delusions and falsehoods, that which is entrapping instead of liberating is called 'Avidya'. [In other words, Vidya leads to liberation of the soul from all delusions pertaining to this world ridden with falsehoods, while Avidya has the opposite effect as it creates delusions and is the cause of bondage.]

The supreme transcendental Brahm is that entity which is distinct from both these two—Vidya as well as Avidya. This Brahm is the authority that rules and controls both of them; it is Brahm that has created both the opposite characters in this creation (because it is necessary to create such a world in which one force counter-balances the other to maintain equilibrium and ensure that the wheel of creation continues to rotate) (1).

[Note--Brahm is a witness to both types of creation, one which is truthful and other that is marked by falsehood; one that is upright and auspicious while the other which is downright corrupt and inauspicious; one that has its sight fixed on the citadel of immortality located above the mundane existence, such as the pursuit of the eternal Truth and spiritual salvation, while the other contented and happy in remaining submerged in the muck of delusions and ignorance represented by the artificial and perishable world of material objects. It is like the case of a magnet which has both the North Pole as well as the South Pole—one attracting while the other repelling. If an object is to be designated with the title of a 'magnet' then it must exhibit these two opposing characteristics. Otherwise it can be called anything but a 'magnet'. Likewise, the supreme creator created this world of opposite characters in order to maintain a balance between two opposite poles, and also to ensure that the wheel of creation goes on rotating for eternity and regulating itself by the various forces of Nature till the time the creator himself decides to put a stop to it. Refer note of Canto 1, verse no. 9 also.

He watches the drama unfold like an Emperor who does not wish to interfere in the day to day running of the administration of his empire (creation) once he has laid down the constitution (the scriptures) and appointed authorities (the different Gods) to ensure the implementation of the edicts of this constitution and uphold its sanctity. But when things start going out of hand, the Emperor reserves the right to annul everything and rescind the authority that he has delegated to his subordinates, and redraw the constitution if deemed necessary. In the empire, there are both the good as well as the bad citizens; both are the subjects of the same Emperor, both get the same protection of the constitution. If a so-called 'bad' citizen feels that injustice is being meted out to him, he has all the rights to appeal to the Emperor, and a noble and benevolent Emperor is one who gives him a patient hearing and gives the 'bad' man

all the protections that he would have given to the ‘good’ man under the laws of the land. And if this ‘bad’ citizen sincerely regrets for his bad deeds and asks for mercy, the Emperor has all the powers to forgive him and give him the best of chance for atonement of his sins and also bless him with certain privilege to celebrate the occasion that he has another ‘good’ citizen in his empire!

This analogy also applies to Brahm at the cosmic level of creation. Once the above example is understood, it is easy to follow how Brahm behaves and what are his responses to this world which is symbolically like the Emperor’s vast empire having astounding diversities that are simply mind boggling.]

2. That supreme Lord has not only established but also framed the rules and regulations for the governance of this vast world of numerous types, classes, species and forms of life that exists in every nook and corner of this creation. He is the Supreme Being who had watched Kapil*, the first human sage, taking birth and then, like a loving and benevolent father, had empowered this sage with all the necessary wisdom and knowledge that would be required for the well being of the creation (here referring to the human race) that would proceed him (Kapil). [Naturally therefore, Brahm existed prior to Kapil representing the human race, and is therefore the Father of Kapil and the grandfather of all his off-springs, the human race. Further, just like a father teaches his son all the tricks of life so that he can live a happy life, Brahm taught Kapil all the laws of Nature that would govern life in this mortal world.] (2).

[Note—Even as a good lawyer learns all aspects of law and enlightens himself about how the same law, which is neutral and treats everyone equally, can be correctly interpreted to benefit the righteous people, and how this same law is used by criminals and unscrupulous elements who would spin it on its head to suit their nefarious designs. So, likewise, Brahm taught Kapil, and through him to mankind, all aspects of knowledge classified under two categories, Vidya and Avidya. He then left it to the discretion of the human race to decide for itself even as a wise father or teacher leaves it to his son or student to fend for himself when he grows up. Which father would want that his son become a mass murderer, or a teacher would like his student to use the knowledge so diligently taught to him over years to devise methods to maim and kill others on the battle field? But the naked truth of life is that it does happen, and the father and the teacher just watch helplessly. The only difference between this worldly father or teacher and the almighty cosmic Father and Teacher is that he wields the stick and can actually punish his ward.

When Kapil was given the basic laws of life, which can be compared to the Ten Commandments, he coded them in a set of principles named after him as Kapil’s Code.

*The revered sage Adi Sankaracharya has interpreted the birth of sage *Kapil* as the emergence of *Hiranyagarbha*, the cosmic subtle body of creation from which the cosmic gross body of creation, known as *Viraat Purush*, was born. The subtle body consists of the mind and the intellect, the instrument of the body that deals with knowledge and wisdom. The word ‘Kapil’ refers to the golden colour, which was the colour of the primordial egg *Hiranyagarbha* which derived its name precisely for this reason of its colour being golden. Since this verse deals with the imparting of knowledge to the first born, it refers either to the ‘first born in the invisible creation at the macro level’ meaning *Hiranyagarbha*, or the ‘first born in the visible creation at the micro level’ meaning *Kapil*. Besides this point, if we examine other places in this Upanishad, the same concept that Brahm had watched the first-born taking birth is stated in Canto 4, verse no. 12.]

3. While engaged in the process of creation of this world, the Supreme Being weaves innumerable varieties of Jaals¹ (nets, snares, traps or webs) having complex and most

intricate designs and textures using the uncountable types of threads². These Jaals in their entirety are collectively known as ‘creation’.

At the time comes for conclusion of this world (or when the maverick player wishes to wind up his joyful creative activity), he simply folds it back (and tucks it away).

Again, when the Supreme Being decides to replay the cycle of creation once again at the time of a fresh creation, he creates the different guardians of creation, called the different Prajaptatis³, to take care of this new generation⁴. (3).

[Note—¹Different scholars have interpreted this word *Jaal* in different ways. The revered sage Adi Sankaracharya says that it refers to the different species or classes of living beings that came into being at the time of creation, with each class or specie having uncountable sub-classes, divisions and sub-divisions etc. For example, the broad classes that came into beings were animals, insects, plants, humans, Gods etc., and each class has obvious uncountable number of sub-classes, divisions, families, genus, etc. which form separate bodies of scientific knowledge such as zoology, botany, astrology, etc. The creation is so astoundingly varied that no two members of the same family are exactly alike in all spheres; even twins may resemble each others in physical features but differ in habits and temperaments.

According to another scholar named Shankaranand, the word Jaal, which literally means a web or net, refers to the artificial world which keeps the creature trapped in its delusions and illusionary charms.

According to Narayantirtha, it refers to the fetters that tie the creature to his deeds and their consequences. There are no limits to the types of deeds that the man does, and hence there are also no limits to the types of consequences that he has to face. It is exactly like a web—once one gets trapped in it, it is hard to break free unless one makes diligent efforts for it.

According to Vigyanbhagwan, the body of the creature, in its numerous forms, is like the net that keeps the creature trapped in it. The creature forgets that the body is a net that has ensnared its soul much like the fish caught in the fisherman’s net, and the world and its illusive charms are like the bait that attracts the creature to get caught in this net. It is because the creature gets attracted towards this world of sense objects and sensual gratification through the medium of the body, and not the soul, and once hooked it finds it impossible to get free from the chain of events that are set in motion after that.

The term ‘Jaal’ meaning a web reminds one of a spider who creates its own thread from its mouth and weaves a web out of it. The insect then roams around this self-created web for as long as it wishes or even for the entire length of its life. Finally, it eats its own web and goes to another corner of the room to weave another net. Likewise, the creator created this world as a playground for himself, played around it as long as he wishes, and then winds it up to unfold it in a new way but almost in an identical fashion like the case of the spider cited here. The insects caught by the spider are killed by it for food, and this resembles the case of Kaal or death personified that feeds upon all the creatures that get trapped in this world.

²The *threads* used by the supreme creator are the various principal elements, attributes, qualities, virtues and other such essential principles which are called the Tattwas, Gunas and Kalaas. These threads were weaved by him in a complex structure called the ‘creation’ with its intricate and bewildering variety of textures and designs that baffles imagination and defies explanation. Briefly, Tattwas are said to number one to ninety four but according to Sankhya Sastra discussed in Canto 6, verse no. 13 and its note there are twenty five principal Tattwas, Gunas are primarily three in number—refer note to verse no. 5 of Canto 4, and Kalaas are sixteen—refer note to verse no. 14 of Canto 5.

³The *Prajapati* is the guardian of the world appointed by the supreme creator to take care of the mundane affairs of running the world. They have taken two forms—

one that of the *Gods*, and the other that of the *Manus*, the first humans. Refer also 4/11-13.

There are *twenty four Devtas or Gods*, and they are the following—Aagneya (Fire), Prajapati Brahma, Soma (Moon), Isha, Savitri, Aditya (Sun), Bhrihaspti, Varun, Bhag-dev, Aryamaa-ishwar, Ganesh, Twastaa, Pushaa, Indra, Vayu, Vamdeo, Maitraa-Varun Dev, Vishva-dev, Maatrikaa, Vishnu, Vasu-Dev, Rudra Dev, Kuber and Ashwini.

The *fourteen Manus* of mythology, who were the forefathers of the entire creation, are the following—(i)Swaayam or Swaayambhuva, (ii) Swaaroachisa, (iii) Aautami or Uttam, (iv) Taamas, (v) Raiwat, (vi) Chaakshush, (vii) Vaivaswat, (viii) Savarni, (ix) Daksha Savarni, (x) Brahm Savarni, (xi) Dharma Savarni, (xii) Rudra Savarni, (xiii) Dev Savarni or Ruchi/Raucha Savarni, and (xiv) Indra Savarni or Bhaum.

‘Vaivasvat or Vaivaswat Manu’ is the 7th Manu and the legendary progenitor of the current living beings on this earth. The word ‘Vaivaswat’ means coming from the Sun or belonging to the Sun, or relating to or belonging to Yam (the God of death and a judge of a creature’s deeds done by it during the life time). It also means the planet Saturn as well as one of the Rudras. In the present context of this text, Sri Ram means the Vaivaswat Manu who is the forefather of the human race in general and Sri Ram’s ancestor in particular because he belongs to the Solar race.

The word ‘Swayambhu’ refers to the primal man represented by the creator Brahma as well as the Viraat Purush who were both born from the Lord called Narayan who is deemed to be their father. Swayambhu was the male aspect of creation, and his female counter part was Mother Nature. The word means ‘someone who was born out of his own free will’. So, Viraat Purush and Brahma are generally regarded as Swayambhu, because both were born out of their own free will as a manifestation of Brahm. ‘Swayambhu Manu’ was the first male born on earth and from him the rest of the creation was born.

The word ‘Swayambhu’ also means ‘self existent’ and refers to Brahm, while ‘Swayambhu Manu’ is Brahma, the Prajapati or the Lord and sustainer of the subjects of this creation; he is a representative of the Male aspect of creation, the Viraat Purush, and is primal male par excellence; he is the divine father of the human race. The name ‘Manu Swayambhu’ is especially applied, in the context of the Purans of which Ramayan is a part, to fourteen successive mythical progenitors and sovereigns of the earth and who create and sustain this world through successive long period of time called ‘Kalpas’. The first such mythical progenitor is known as ‘Manu Swayambhu’ as the one who sprung (created or manifested) from the self-existent Brahm. He is regarded as a secondary creator who commenced his work of creating by producing 10 Prajapatis, of whom the first was ‘Light’ called Marichi. To this Manu is ascribed the celebrated code of conduct called ‘Manu Smriti’ and two other ancient Sutra work on Kalpa and Grihya, i.e. the sacrificial and domestic rituals. He is also known as Hiranyagarbh and Prachetas.

The other five Manus are called Swaroachish, Uttam, Taamas, Raivat and Chakshush. The 7th Manu is called Vaivasvata Manu the son of the Sun God, and he is regarded as the progenitor of the present race of living beings. He is like the Noah of the Old Testament of the Holy Bible, is said to have been preserved by Vishnu or Brahm in the form of the legendary great fish from being drowned in the great deluge of the dooms day. This Manu is also called as one of the twelve Adityas, the author of Rig Veda, VIII, 27-31, as the brother of Yam (the God of death and a judge of a creature’s deeds done by it during the life time), as the founder and first king of Ayodhya, and as the father of Ila who married the son of the Moon-God named Budha. This makes two great dynasties —the solar and the lunar races to which Sri Ram and Krishna respectively belonged —related to each other. The 8th Manu, or the 1st of the future Manus according to Vayu Puran, III, 2, will be Savarni, the 9th would be Daksha Savarni, the 10th would be Brahm Savarni, the 11th would be

Dharma Savarni the 12th would be Rudra Savarni, the 13th would be Raviya or Deva Savarni, and the 14th would be Bhautya or Indra Savarni. The life of one Manu is equivalent to roughly 311,040,000 years.

⁴This verse establishes that the creation follows a cyclic path of creation-annihilation-creation. It is like the atomic oscillation of crystal that keeps perfect time in an electronic clock. It is indicated, more vividly, in the constant cycle of day and night, or of birth and death which one witnesses all around in this world.]

4. Even as the single Sun shining in the sky is able to light-up every place, every nook and corner of the world simultaneously during the day time, this illuminated supreme Brahm also shines above, below and in every direction to illuminate this entire creation¹.

This supreme transcendental Brahm is as glorious and splendorous, and as potent to infuse life and then sustain, nourish and develop it on this earth as this celestial Sun² (4).

[Note—¹The word *illumination* here refers to the light of consciousness that characterizes life and the living world. Death in this context would be symbolised by darkness. So everywhere where there is life there would be this ‘consciousness’ with its divine light and splendorous radiance. This light of consciousness is like the light emanating from the body of the glow-worm or the glow radiating out from a red-hot piece of iron or gold. It simply effuses out from the whole being of creation; it literally drips from it like honey from the mature honeycomb. It encompasses and suffuses everything that lives and exists in this manifested world. Since Brahm is Consciousness personified, it follows that Brahm is universally present wherever there is life, and ‘light’ emanating from this Brahm is a metaphor for knowledge, wisdom, erudition and enlightenment. It should be noted that the word ‘enlightenment’ has ‘light’ as an integral part of it.

In all the major Upanishads, the celestial Sun is regarded as the metaphor for Brahm and is the latter’s most splendorous visible sign. The Sun is regarded as a visible personification of Brahm with all its glory and majesty. Its splendour and brilliance are appropriate citations to give an idea of how Brahm might look if ever one happens to see him.

²It is beyond doubt that life on this earth is sustained by the *Sun*. The Sun provides us with heat, light and energy; the Sun’s light is used by plants to generate food by the process of photosynthesis; and the world would freeze to death if there was no light and heat of the Sun which is proved by the fact that when the Sun was blocked for some months millions of years ago when a meteor hit the earth, all life forms that roamed on the surface of the earth at that time were extinguished. Science has established that it was the reason for the extinction of the Dinosaurs. In the present context it means that life exists only as long as there is ‘consciousness’ representing Brahm in this world. Shorn of Brahm this world would cease to exist.]

5. [This verse outlines the genesis of creation.]

That supreme Lord is the cause of coming into being of the entire creation, starting from the basic or fundamental five elements¹. He then determines the basic nature and character, the fundamental qualities, virtues and attributes of not only these elements but also of the produce which results from the conjunction of these elements in various permutations and combinations².

He assigns the Gunas (the inherent fundamental qualities present in all the creatures of this creation; the qualities that determine the character, nature and temperament of these creatures) with their designated functions vis-à-vis the world³.

Once the final product (the creation) is ready, the Supreme Being then regulates and rules over it as its supreme regulator and unquestioned Authority.

This supreme Lord is called Brahm (5).

[Note—¹The fundamental *five elements* of creation are usually regarded as the following—(a) sky/space, air/wind, fire/energy, water and earth. Other connotations are the following—(b) the *five sheaths*—‘Annamaye Kosh’ or the food sheath, ‘Pranmaye Kosh’ or the vital wind sheath, ‘Manomaye Kosh’ or the mental sheath, ‘Vigyanmaye Kosh’ or the intellect sheath, and ‘Anandmaye Kosh’ or the bliss sheath; and (c) the *five vital winds*—Pran, Apaana, Vyan, Samaan and Udaan.

These are the basic subtle forms in which the living world came into being. What is visibly seen externally basically consist of these five elements. That is, the five elements listed under (a) were the basic bricks of this creation. They were used in different ratios to create the body of the creature consisting of the five sheaths mentioned in (b). And finally, this body is controlled by vital winds outlined in (c).

²In other words, the supreme creator moulds this creation out of these elements and gives it myriads of forms; he crafts such an astonishing variety of creation just from these limited raw materials and then delineates them into millions of species and numerous groups that have no resemblance with their other brethrens or even their own siblings. And therein lie his astounding abilities and stupendous creative powers.

³There are three basic *Gunās* or qualities that determine the nature and inclination of each individual creature of this creation. Briefly, they are:--(a) ‘Sata’ or noble qualities leading to higher values in life. This quality creates an inherent affinity in a creature towards things in life which are of high moral value and uplifting for the soul rather than things which are demoting and denigrating for the spirit. (b) Raja or mediocre qualities that are run-of-the-mill qualities that dominate the majority of worldly creatures. In other words, those creatures who have this quality as a dominant trait are more inclined towards the world as compared to those creatures who have the Sata quality in a greater density. Such qualities give worldly fame and prosperity. (c) Tama which is the meanest of the three qualities leading to the propensity to commit sins. This quality creates an inherent affinity in a creature towards things which are very mean and lowly, which are totally sensual and pertain to the immediate gratification of the sense urges without any thought to what would be their consequences in the long run. In brief, behaviour which is utterly immoral, denigrating and depraving for the creature, marked by grossness, crassness and recklessness of demeanors. It is the lowest and meanest of the three qualities leading to a person’s downfall, ignominy and ruin.

Since each individual is like an independent piece of mosaic that completes the entire picture in conjunction with other such pieces, this individual creature’s nature and character helps to determine the overall shape of the creation. These Gunas keep the creation in a state of constant change, because numerous creatures die every moment and new ones are born. The Supreme Being has to be constantly on the alert because of this flux.

‘Brahm is the cause of creation’—this universal truth has been repeatedly said in this Upanishad and it forms the basis of the Sankhya philosophy of creation given in Canto 6, verse no. 1-3 and 16, as well as at number other places, for example 4/12, 14.]

6. That divine Supreme Being known as Brahm is the quintessential target of all the preaching and research undertaken by the eclectic Upanishads which expound upon and elucidate the secret essence and sublime message of the holy Vedas. Brahma the creator knows about that Supreme Being who has been lauded and worshipped by the Vedas¹. [This is because the Vedas have been created or pronounced by Brahma the creator, and therefore it is natural that he knew what he was saying about.]

Those ancient sages and seers as well as divine Gods who knew this Supreme Being or Brahm—i.e. who were self-realised and consequentially Brahm-realised—

indeed became one like him and attained the supreme stature of beatitude and felicity (6).

[Note—¹Refer 4/9 and 6/18 of this Upanishad.]

7. That creature (living being) who inherently possesses the different Gunas or qualities (of Sata, Raja and Tama) in different combinations (which determine its basic nature, temperament and inclinations), who does different deeds with the aim and hope of obtaining some sort of reward from them, and then either enjoys the consequences of those deeds or suffers from them, who assumes numerous roles, displays various temperaments and characteristics, and shows unpredictable spectrum of moods, and who is the Lord of the five Prans (the vital winds—Pran or breath, Apaana, Vyan, Samaana and Udaana) that live in its body and are like its subjects (subordinates)—this creature roams around in this world characterised by three Gunas (Sata, Raja and Tama—which determine the nature of the world) on three types of paths in accordance with the deeds done by it¹ (70).

[Note—¹(1) The *three paths* upon which the creature goes according to the deeds done by it are the following—the path that goes to the heaven where the Gods live, the path that leads to the world of Spirits, and the path which leads to the world of mortal creatures on this earth. These have been elaborately described in Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, 3/1/3, 3/2/11-12, 3/9/28, 4/3/12, 36, 5/10-5/11, 6/1/1-6, 6/2/2, 14-16, etc.; Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 5, Section 3-10; Kaushitaki Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 1; Taittiriyo-pahishad, Valli 2, Anuvak 6; and Katho-panishad, Canto 1, Valli 1, verse no. 20, and the whole of Canto 1, Valli 2 right up to Canto 2, Valli 3 it.

What happens to ignorant people after death is explained in Brihad Aranyak 4/4/1.

(2) The other interpretation of this phrase is that the *three paths* are the following—the path of 'Dharma' marked by auspiciousness, virtuousness and righteousness, the path of 'Adharma' marked by inauspiciousness, sins, perversions and guilt, and the path of 'Gyan' or the path dominated by truthful knowledge, wisdom, erudition and enlightenment.

(3) The *three paths* are also the following--(i) Karma Yoga, (ii) Gyan Yoga, and (iii) Bhakti Yoga.

(i) The 'Karma Yoga' expounds on the importance of doing deeds and taking actions, but with a different attitude. It stresses that we must not get 'involved or attached' to those deeds or action in as much as we shouldn't be bothered about the rewards or punishments incumbent on such deeds or actions. We must do them dispassionately and with detachment. The action or deed should be treated as one's offering to the God as well as an offering to the sacred fire sacrifice. This will ensure that the actions or deeds are not unrighteousness, corrupt or evil. On the contrary, whatever is done in which a person's subtle sub-conscious says is not the correct thing to do will be deemed to be unrighteous, unethical and unlawful, and therefore cannot be an offering to either the God or the sacred fire sacrifice.

(ii) The 'Gyan Yoga' involves the intellect and mind to determine and delineate the true and the false; it helps to access and understand the reality and falsehood behind the manifested visible world which appears to be 'real' but is actually like a 'shadow of the truth'. This Gyan Yoga helps to establish the mind firmly into seeing unity in diversity. Those following Gyan Yoga are called 'seers' because they can 'see' beyond the visible, multifarious and bewildering variety of this false world. Gyan Yoga is in the realm of the intellect and discriminating mind of a creature.

(iii) The 'Bhakti Yoga' refers to having devotion for a chosen Godhead who is a person's ideal, on whom he showers all his adoration, and on whom he focuses his

attention. He is emotionally and sentimentally involved with his deity. Hence, the heart is the realm of Bhakti Yoga; it helps to commune with the divine.]

8. There is another subtle and sublime form of the Supreme Being (Brahm) that has been perceived or conceived as having the width of a thumb¹.

It is as glorious, radiant, brilliant and splendorous as the Sun. [Refer full Canto 2, and Canto 3, verse no. 8 as well as verse no. 4 of this Canto.]

Further, this manifest form of Brahm also exhibits certain gross traits and characteristics that distinguish it from the more divine and sublime form usually referred to as the Supreme Being. [Therefore, the form referred to here is the individual living creature having a gross body in which Brahm lives as its pure conscious Atma.]

Some of these traits are having Ahankaar (a sense of pride, ego, haughtiness and arrogance of its exalted status), and the tendency to make different Sankalps (vows and promises; volitions, determinations and aspirations). [Obviously, these two are characteristic features of all living beings who have a gross body. Every creature has these two traits in it to a lesser or greater degree.]

This manifest gross form of Brahm (i.e. the living being or the creature) displays all the characteristic features so typical of the mind and body. [That is, the living being shows all the specialties and attributes that characterize anything which would have a body with all its sense organs and their attendant problems. It sees with its eyes, it hears with its ears, it smells with its nose, it tastes with its tongue, and it feels with its skin. Not only this, it picks up and accepts with its hand, it moves and goes to places with its legs, it eats with its mouth, it excretes with its excretory organs, and it enjoys with its genitals. The body gets old and dies, and also suffers from illnesses and other torments. Similarly, it thinks, it understands, it analyses, it remembers, and it responds to external world with the aid of its subtle body consisting of the mind and intellect. These two—the gross body and the subtle body—are the two pillars that support the redoubt of Brahm residing as the Atma in the heart of the creature.]

This Brahm (in the form of the microscopic Atma) is smaller than the sharp point of the saw (used to cut wood). And it appears to be different from the Supreme Being of creation. [That is, the living creature—though being a true image of Brahm in its manifested form because of two reasons, one is that the Viraat Purush had revealed himself in the form of the creature at the time of creation, and second it has been repeatedly stressed that Brahm resides in the creature as its Atma—is distinctly separate and distinct from Brahm. This happens because the Atma gets covered by a veil of delusions and ignorance once it assumes a body, losing sight of its exalted heritage and lineage. It begins to erroneously identify itself with the gross body and the perishable world in which it lives. One small error of perception on its part has a deep cascading effect and plummets the Atma into the chasm of deep ignorance-based delusions from where it finds difficult to rise up again. The Upanishad's main thrust is to help it to rise up to its exalted stature once again.] (8).

[Note--¹This is the Brahm manifested as the pure conscious Atma of the individual creature living inside the subtle sky or space of the heart, called the 'Hridaya Akash'. Refer Canto 3, verse no. 13, as well as in Katho-panishad, 2/1/12-13.]

9. The size and dimension of the Jiva (literally and generally referring to the living creature, but here implying to the 'true identity' of the creature as its pure consciousness known as the Atma and not the gross body which might be as colossus

as the mammoth or an elephant, and as minute as the one-cell organisms as the bacteria and amoeba) is astonishingly miniscule and microscopic beyond imagination. It is as small as the fraction that remains after the tip of a hair follicle is split into one hundred parts and then one part of this (i.e. the one hundredth part) is further split into another hundred parts. [That is, the Atma is the size of one thousandth part of the tip of a hair follicle. The idea is not to actually measure its physical dimensions but to drive home the point that it is unimaginably minute like the atom.]

The miracle is that this single minute atomic entity expands itself into infinite variety of creatures, having as many variations in forms, shapes, sizes and colours as well as temperaments, inclinations, behavioural patterns and nature as there are number of species, classes and divisions of creation in this world (9).

10. This pure conscious Atma is neutral and without any gender or attributes. It is, in its pure and basic form, neither a male, nor a female or a eunuch. It assumes the character and attributes of the body in which it resides (10).

11. [Verse nos. 11-12 explain why the Atma takes birth as a creature and then gets entangled in this world.]

Just like the general health and well being as well as the development and growth of the physical body of the creature is dependent upon the nourishment it gets from food and water (drink), the future health and well being of the Atma also depends upon the various 'Sankalps'¹, 'Sparsh'², 'Darshan'³ and 'Moha'⁴ that it is subjected to and which affect it (if at all the Atma comes under their influence). This leads the Atma to take so many births and so many bodies according to the deeds done by it in any previous or current life⁵ (11).

[Note—¹The word *Sankalp* refers to the various volitions, determinations, vows, promises, aspirations and resolutions that a creature makes. Since the Atma is the true identity of the creature and its pure consciousness that actually makes any decision, it is the Atma that is accused of making any Sankalp when it said that the creature has done it. This is like the scenario when all things done in an Emperor's empire are done in his name though it is impossible practically for him to know each and every deed done in his empire that is being done in his name. But that does not absolve the Emperor of the consequences of those deeds—he might get ignominy or fame for the deeds done by his ministers and citizens though he might not be a party, directly or indirectly, in them. It is his designation of an Emperor that makes him responsible for each and every decision in his empire. Likewise, the Atma is responsible for each and every deed done by the creature.

²The word *Sparsh* literally means 'touch'. Here the word refers to the awareness by the Atma of the presence of the different sense objects of the external material world with the help of the various sense organs of perception in the body. It is through such perceptions, which are like 'touching' or 'coming into contact' with the outside world, that the Atma receives inputs from the external world and gets hooked to it. The Atma 'gets to feel' and 'gets the hang' of what this world is like and about.

³The word *Darshan* literally means 'sight'. Here the word refers to the next step in observing this world when the Atma, once having become aware of the existence of such and such object through the sense organs, now gets attracted to that object. It then 'sees' it through the instrument of its mind and intellect; the Atma then seeks the advice of its ministers, the intellect and the mind, to learn about the importance of this object. In other words, the Atma accepts these inputs as being useful for it, and having some value or worth which is worthy of acceptance, when advised by the mind-intellect complex.

This 'seeing' is not physical seeing but a metaphor for focusing the faculties of the mind and intellect towards the objects of the material world which the organs of perception have first located and have passed this information to the mind, which in turn has turned over this vital piece of information to the intellect to determine its worth. The mind-intellect duo, in consultation with each other, thought that this information would please their supreme Commander, the Atma which is like an Emperor, to whom they pass on the file. The Atma, which is guided by this input of the mind and intellect, then sees something attractive in what is presented to it, and as is its wont, it wishes to learn more about it. This is because the Atma wishes to see how its own maverick play is unfolding in the wider world outside the physical body in which it is currently trapped. It has already been established that this Atma is also the one which has revealed itself in the form of the vast world not limited to the individual body of the single creature about whom one is referring to in this verse. This is because the Atma is Brahm personified, and the same Atma that resides in the heart of one creature also lives in the wider world outside this single individual creature. Refer verse no. 9 above for instance. Thus, this 'seeing' is the third step before the ultimate stepping-down of the Atma from its exalted state of neutrality and dispassion to one of becoming involved and engrossed in the world of falsehoods which revolves around the various deeds done by the creature in the world.

⁴The word *Moha* literally means attractions and infatuations, to get emotional and attached to anything, as well as ignorance of the truth and its accompanying delusions. Once the Atma is misled to believe that the objects of the material world are true and really charming, and that they can bestow long lasting happiness and joy to the creature. The Atma representing the living being falls for the bait and gets hooked to the world. This is because the Atma has a natural affinity to get attracted to anything which is true, which is eternal, and which is a provider of happiness and joy.

In fact, as we have seen here, the real culprits who have led to the entanglement of the creature in this world are the mind-intellect complex, called the subtle body, along with the body and its organs, called the gross body of the creature. Since the Atma lives inside this body, it is bound to be affected by the nature of these two entities. This is one single reason why the Upanishads repeatedly and unequivocally stress on the necessity of having strict restraint over the body and mind for spiritual aspirants.

⁵It is an established principle that the creature reaps the fruits of the deeds done by it much like the saying 'one reaps what one sows'. If the creature does good deeds, it gets good and auspicious fruits or rewards, and if the deeds are sinful then the results would also be equally sinful and horrifying. Since the Atma is the true identity of the creature, it follows that it is the Atma that is deemed to be the one who actually does the deed and then has to suffer or enjoy the consequences of these deeds. It has to take a new birth because the rewards or punishments of deeds done in this life cannot always be fully nullified in a limited time frame because the body is perishable and dies sooner than expected. Katho-panishad is the one which is fully dedicated to this theme of 'what happens to the Atma after death'. It is chapter no. 1 of this volume. Other places where the question 'what happens to the Atma after death' is answered are, inter alia, Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, 3/1/3, 3/2/11-12, 3/9/28, 4/3/12, 36, 5/10-5/11, 6/1/1-6, 6/2/2,14-16, etc.; Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 5, Section 3-10; Kaushitaki Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 1; Taittiriyo-pahishad, Valli 2, Anuvak 6; and Katho-panishad, Canto 1, Valli 1, verse no. 20, and the whole of Canto 1, Valli 2 right up to Canto 2, Valli 3 of it.

What happens to ignorant people after death is explained in Brihad Aranyak 4/4/1.

The *three great Truths* to be remembered at the time of *death* have been precisely enunciated in Chandogya Upanishad, 3/17/6. They are—(1) You are eternal and imperishable; (2) You cannot be demoted, degenerate, become fallen and digressed;

and (3) You are basically most sublime, subtle, atomic and a microcosmic image of the vast and macrocosmic supreme Brahm.

The metaphor of the *tree* has been brilliantly employed to explain ‘what happens after’ death in Brihad Aranyak 3/9/28, and in Chandogya 6/11/1-3.

The important point worth noting here is that the involvement of the Atma with this world has resulted in its getting sucked in this vortex of deeds and the necessity of suffering from them. But if the Atma does not get involved in doing deeds, then obviously the need to suffer from consequences of deeds do not arise. This is essentially what the Upanishads mean by ‘liberation and deliverance’ of the soul or Atma or the creature. And the only means to do it is, again obviously, the knowledge of what constitutes ‘true freedom for the soul’ from the artificial world of delusions and snares that can cunningly trap the innocent creature in its web/net of falsehoods is called Gyan. Fundamentally again it lays stress on keeping the Atma detached from getting involved in any deed done by the body, and instead remain firmly grouted in the ‘truth’ of the Self which is pure consciousness, uncorrupt, enlightened, splendourous, glorious, holy, divine and eclectic. With this enlightened outlook, the creature does not create any hurdle in the path of lifting its Atma to the citadel of exalted existence and pure divinity.]

12. The creature assumes many types of bodies—such as the grossest forms and the subtlest forms¹—in various future births depending upon the good or bad deeds done by it in the present body. This sequence is repeated in the new birth (i.e. in the second birth) when the creature gets involved in doing a fresh round of deeds which creates the background for some other form of birth (i.e. the third birth) which might be completely different from the present body in the second life². And so goes on the wheel of creation and destruction! (12).

[Note—¹The gross form of bodies that the Atma assumes in the new birth are, say for example, those of animals and insects or still lower creatures like the insects and worms. The subtle form of bodies refer to the higher level of existence in this creation, say for example, the Gods, the semi-Gods, the Gandharvas, the Kinnars, the Spirits, and even the Humans who are noble and righteous in their demeanors and outlook as compared to vice-ridden sinful and pervert people who are no better than worms in society.

These terms are just indicators of what happens to the Atma if it at all allows its pure self to get corrupted by the corrupting influences of the world.

²This happens because the creature may have taken birth in a high class because of his past good deeds, but unfortunately allows himself to be surrounded by bad company, in which case he would start doing even those deeds and things which are forbidden for him by the virtue of his high-class birth. Naturally therefore, his third birth would bear the brunt of his misdeeds done now in his second birth, but the irony is that he would not remember why he has been suffering so much in his third life. This is why we blame ‘the God’ when misfortune befalls us. Frankly, how many people ‘thank God’ for the good deeds done by them; how many people sincerely feel and say ‘well, I do not deserve the credit for this noble deed and please do not shower lavish praise upon me because it is the supreme Lord who has done it, and not me’. No. Rather, we like to bask in the sunshine of glory, and pass on the buck to God when things go awry.

It is to be noted here that verse nos. 1-3 of the next Canto 6 describes how the creation came into being according to Sankhya Shastra, and it should be read in conjunction with these three verses here, viz. 10 to 12.]

13. When the seeker realises that one universal supreme transcendental Being (known as Brahm) uniformly pervades in the entire gross creation, he is freed from being shackled by all forms of fetters (representing ignorance and delusions)¹. This Supreme

Being is eternal, without an end or beginning, is the creator and regulator of the entire creation, multifaceted and multifarious, and the only entity that permeates throughout the creation uniformly but secretly (13).

[Note—¹When the creature realises that the Supreme Being is universally present everywhere it means that he has also realised the fact that Brahm is present in his own bosom, in his own heart and in his own body as much as in the bosom or body of the other creature. This is a true understanding of the words ‘universal, uniform, omnipresent, all-pervading, all-permeating, all-inclusive, all-encompassing and all-incorporating’ etc. Nothing escapes it; nothing is outside it; nothing is without it. So, all causes of dichotomy and duality are removed in one stroke.]

14. This divine and eclectic Authority of creation known as the supreme transcendental Brahm is attained or accessed only by a pure and uncorrupt heart as well as an equally pure and untainted mind and intellect. It has no physical body like an ordinary creature which can be corrupted or tainted, or which has any attributes and delineations, or which has any kind of dimension which can be measured. It is the cause of coming into being as well as winding up of this creation.

This supreme Authority known as Brahm is honoured by the epithet of ‘Shiva’ (which means ‘beautiful, truthful, divine, holy, auspicious, enlightened and eternal’). It is this Authority that has created the different ‘Kalaas’¹ that determine the various hues of characters and nature of this varied and colourful creation.

A wise, erudite and enlightened self-realised creature who becomes acquainted with this supreme eclectic Divinity is freed from the fetters of the body and becomes liberated (i.e. such a creature finds true emancipation and salvation for his soul) (14).

[Note—¹The word *Kalaa* has many connotations. It means—(a) shape, form, contours of a thing; (b) special qualities, art, craft, skills, expertise, attributes etc. that one possesses; (c) a division, portion, fraction, phase or degree; (d) any kind of discharge; (e) brilliance, magnificence and grandeur; (f) fraud, deceit, pretensions and trick; (g) maverick and supernatural powers. It also refers to—(h) the sixteenth part of the moon’s diameter/disc, or one of the various phases of the moon; (i) the twelfth part of the sun’s diameter/disc; (j) the division of time equivalent to about eight seconds; (k) one degree out of the three hundred and sixty degrees. So when this term ‘Kalaa’ is applied to that supreme Truth, also known as the supreme Brahm, it implies that it is so grand, so majestic, so magnificent, so stupendous that it transcends the definitions or parameters set by this particular word. That Truth or Brahm is beyond their reach and dimension; these various connotations of the word cannot either be applied to that Truth or Brahm nor can they define it in its entirety in any way.

(1) The sixteen so-called *Kalaas* of a man are his different attributes, strengths, qualities and virtues. Since a man is an exact replica of the ‘Viraat Purush’, who in turn is a subtle manifestation of the sublime Brahm, these sixteen qualities or attributes of a man refer to the sixteen qualities of Brahm himself. These qualities or attributes are the following—(i) Shraddha (faith, believe, conviction, reverence, respect, devotion), (ii) Pran (life; the very essence of creation; the vibrations of life; the rhythm and essential functions pertaining to life), (iii) Akash (the all-pervading, all-encompassing sky or space element), (iv) Vayu (wind, air element), (v) Tej (energy, splendour, radiance, glory, might, majesty and fire element), (vi) Apaha (water element which is the all-important ingredient for life), (vii) ‘Prithivi’ (earth element which is the base or foundation for all mortal creation), (viii) Indriya (the organs of the body, both the organs of perception as well as of action), (ix) Mana (mind and heart and their stupendous potentials), (x) Anna (food, the element without which life is simply not imaginable because it provides it with the basic nourishment and energy), (xi) Virya (semen, sperms, standing for courage, valour, potency, vitality

and prowess), (xii) Tapa (austerity and penance, forbearance and tolerance of hardships, carrying out strict religious vows) (xiii) Mantra (the ability to give good advice, the power to contemplate and think, concentrate and focus, logically arrive at a conclusion), (xiv) Karma (taking actions and doing deeds), (xv) Loka (worldly interactions and behaviours), and (xvi) Naam (good name, fame, reputation, honour and glory).

In simple terms it means that a person's total composite personality, his characteristic attributes and individuality, his vitality and stamina, his prowess, powers and strength, his drive and vigour et al can be divided into sixteen parts.]

Canto 6

[This Canto carries forward the discussion of Canto 5 and elaborately espouses the cause of Brahm-realisation through the philosophy of *Sankhya Shastra* as well as *Sankhya Yoga*. An elaborate note has been added to verse no. 13 to explain this concept.]

1. [Verse nos. 1-3 describe the grand cycle of this creation called *Brahm-Chakra* or the wheel of creation. This wheel has been elaborately described in Canto 1, verse no. 4 and 6 as well of this Upanishad.]

Some wise men regard the 'Swabhaav', or the inherent and basic nature and temperament of a creature as the reason for it falling into the seemingly endless cycle of birth (and death) called the 'Brahm-Chakra' or the cycle of creation set in motion by the supreme Brahm. Others regard 'Kaal', or time, age, period and circumstance as the reason. But such people are wide off the mark; none of these are the reasons for the turning of the wheel of creation (though they are contributory factors and themselves created by some supernatural Authority in order to keep the wheel in motion).

Actually, it is the magnificent potentials and divine abilities, the supernatural powers and overriding authority of the supreme Lord (Brahm) that does it (rotates this awesome and vast wheel of creation), and it is a measure of this Lord's stupendous majesty, his astounding greatness and splendorous glory (that the wheel goes on rotating on its own until the Lord himself decides to stop it) (1).

2. He who pervades uniformly throughout this whole creation, surrounding it from all the sides, he who is an embodiment of Gyan (knowledge and wisdom, erudition and enlightenment), he who is the authority that even rules over Kaal (time, age, period and circumstance), he who possesses all the qualities and virtues present in this creation, and who is all-knowing and omniscient—verily, this Brahm-Chakra is turning under his command and authority, following the laws and principles laid down by him.

Even the symbolic wheel consisting of the five fundamental elements of creation, viz. sky, air, fire, water and earth, which are the basic building blocks of life, is also in his hands. (One should be convinced of this eternal irrefutable truth.) (2).

[Note—Refer to Canto 1, verse nos. 4 and 6 that describe the Brahm Chakra in detail. There is another interpretation of the word *Chakra*. The word 'Chakra' refers to the subtle energy centers present inside the body. According to Yoga texts, when the vital dynamic energy trapped in these Chakras are activated, a person acquires immense potentials, including spiritual and mystical powers. In brief, the Chakras and their

location and shape are the following— (i) ‘Bhug’ or ‘Brahm Chakra’ is triangular in shape and represents the female genital organ; (ii) The ‘Mool Kanda’ (literally the edible root, tuber root, e.g. radish) is present near the anus, has the shape of a lotus with 4-petals. It is also called ‘Kaam’ because it is the seat of passion and lust; (iii) The ‘Mooladhar Chakra’ is located between genitals and anus; (iv) The ‘Swadhisthan Chakra’ is located in the groins of males and the Bhug area of females. It has a 5-headed male phallus like a sprouting seed and its counterpart in the female is the clitoris; The Chakras 1-4 are related to the sexual reproduction cycle marking the creation of the world. Hence are called ‘Kaam’ (lust, passion, desire), and are associated with the fire element; (v) The ‘Kundalini’ is located between the navel and Swadhisthan Chakra in the upper part of the Moolkand, and it is coil shaped having three and a half loops. Its one end blocks the entrance to the Sushumna nerve (Naadi) rising from the base of the spine and going right up to the head. Therefore, we conclude that Kundalini lies dormant at the base of the spine; (vi) The ‘Manipur Chakra’ is located in the navel area, is shaped like a gem and is surrounded by the network of Naadis (nerves) called solar plexus. It is also the site of the Sun energy; (vii) The ‘Anahat Chakra’ is located in the chest between the heart and lung area and it is shaped like a swan looking downwards. It is also assumed to be like a 8-petal lotus facing down; (viii) The ‘Vishuddha Chakra/Kanth Chakra’ is located in the throat. To the left of it passes the Eda nerve representing the moon, to its right goes the Pingla nerve representing the sun, and in the center is the Sushumna nerve through which the Kundalini energy rises up from the base of the spine to the skull; (ix) The ‘Talu Chakra’ also called Rajdant. It is the route to the 10th door of Brahm. It is located in the palate (back of the mouth); (x) The ‘Agya Charka or Bhru Chakra’ is located between the eyebrows and root of the nose. It is also called the third eye of enlightenment and wisdom; (xi) The ‘Brahm Rahandra Chakra or Sahasraar Charka’ is located in the forehead and has the form of a grey cloud or smoke. ‘Brahm Randhra’ has two connotations— (a) it means ‘an opening of fistula’, (b) the hair-like spilt in the top of the skull from where the vital wind called ‘Pran’ makes its exit from the body of a Yogi (ascetic) at the time of his death. For the purpose of Vedanta, the latter is regarded as the ‘Brahm Randhra’ while for practices of meditation in the initial stages when the ‘Apan Vayu’ is required to be diverted from the lower intestine into the ‘Kundalini’, the former definition of ‘Brahm Randhra’ is referred to; (xii) The ‘Vyom Chakra’ is symbolic of the sky and it is shaped like a 10-petal lotus located at the top of the head.]

3. That supreme creator (Brahm) did the ‘deed’ of creating this Brahm-Chakra and then set it in motion. He watched it move, and then created a circumstance whereby the subtle conjoined the gross to result in the unfolding of this vast world. [That is why this world consists of two types of attributes or qualities—one which come under the category of subtle, and the other that come under the category of gross.]

In other words, the supreme creator first revealed his own characteristic ‘Self’ in the form of the pure consciousness called the cosmic Atma which was very subtle. Then he went on progressively making it grosser and grosser by slow degrees, in a step-by-step method. Thus he created the many elements. Then he mixed them in various permutations and combinations to produce newer, more varied, and extremely fascinating array of products which become heavier by degrees and then finally resulted in the structure which we call ‘creation’ and which is still evolving.

Therefore, it all started from one element (Avidya—lack of truthfulness, substance and pith in what is being created, as all the creation that was created as a result of this endeavour of the creator was a mirage and not the reality), and this was followed by a chain reaction, progressively producing two elements (Dharma—righteousness, probity and propriety + Adharma—the opposite of Dharma), three

elements (the three basic qualities of Sata—the high moral quality of spiritualism + Raja—the mediocre quality of worldly passions etc. + Tama—the meanest quality of sinfulness), four elements (Prakriti—nature + Mana—mind + Buddhi—intellect + and Ahankar—pride and vanity), five elements (the five Prans which are the vital winds—Pran, Apaana, Vyan, Samaan and Udaan; it also refers to the five sense perceptions—sight, hearing, smell, taste and feeling), six elements (the five perceptions + Mana or mind, because it is the mind that brings effectively coordinates these five perceptions), seven elements (five perceptions + Mana or mind + Buddhi or intelligence), and eight elements (the five basic elements—sky, air, fire, water and earth + Mana or mind + Buddhi or intellect + Ahankar or pride and vanity).

The supreme creator mixed his own divine and eclectic qualities with the gross characteristics of Kaal (time, age, period and circumstance) and the subtle qualities of the inner self (such as having compassion, mercy, benevolence and magnanimity as well as desires, wishes, aspirations, hopes and expectations) to create this world. [That is why this world exhibits these basic characters because they all have been incorporated in its structure by the creator.]

The entire gross creation came into being out of this concoction.

Since this wheel came into being as a result of some deed done by this supreme creator, it was also called the 'Karma Chakra'¹. The creator, having thus created this wheel out of the subtlest of elements and the grossest of elements, watched fascinatingly as it rotated (3).

[Note—¹The cycle of deeds, their consequences, and newer deeds and their fresh consequences is called the *Karma Chakra* or the 'Wheel of Deeds'. This cycle is referred to as a 'wheel' because it rotates around the central axle consisting of the notion of 'deed' done by the creature, and therefore this wheel has its existence only till the time the creature 'does the deeds'. As soon as the creature stops doing any deed, the wheel is dismantled because the axle breaks. But this ideal scenario is always not possible as a creature has to do one or the other deed when he lives in this world, and he cannot escape the consequences of these deeds done by him, which in turn make him do other deeds as a follow up action, and these new deeds set in motion their own set of consequences, and so the wheel goes on rotating on and on. In other words, the creature gets shackled to the wheel of deeds just like the bull or the ox that turns the water-wheel for its master throughout its life but cannot get done with it. The bull or ox dies turning the water-wheel but even after its death the wheel goes on turning, albeit some other unfortunate animal is yoked to it.

Now, the question is 'how to stop this Wheel of Deeds even while living in this world'? The answer lies in the truthful knowledge of the self, which is the Atma, and the fact that it is the true self of the creature and that it is very distinct and independent from the body which is the entity that actually and physically does the deed. Once this delineation becomes obvious—and this is only possible by studying the Upanishads and intelligently understanding their fundamental tenets and doctrines in the correct perspective—the creature endeavours to distance himself from the deeds done by the body. This attitude removes the *basic cause of all the problems*, and leads to the breaking of the vicious cycle known as Karma Chakra, thereby setting the creature free from his bondage.

There is another option which is described in the next verse no. 4.]

4. Those wise persons who do all the necessary deeds as ordained by fate for them, though these deeds would entail their coming into contact with all types of Gunas (attributes and qualities)¹, but do them dispassionately and in a detached manner, offering them and their consequences to the supreme Lord², then these deeds do not leave any muck of consequences sticking to such persons.

As a result, such persons (who do deeds and then offer the consequences, the rewards of the deeds, whether good or bad, to the Lord) are able to gradually exhaust all the pending burden of consequences of deeds done in their past lives which they have been born with as their heritage and a carry forward baggage from their previous life, and which are impelling and forcing them to do what they are doing under the forces of Nature in the present life³. At the same time, they do not create any fresh burden for themselves because of the fact that they transfer the credit to their Lord⁴.

The final result is that the creature is able to break free from the vicious circle of deeds and the necessity of suffering their consequences whether in the present life or in the next life. Thus attaining an exalted state of existence which is above the mundane and gross, the creature is able to attain that divine Being who is the essential and Absolute Truth in creation⁵ (4).

[Note—¹While living in this world in which all the three types of qualities—the best, the worst and the medium—exist intricately mingled with one another, the creature does deeds in this environment with no freedom to select only the best ones, and so he is often forced to do all sorts of deeds even against his wishes. But it also happens that there is a choice for him, but the bad ones are so enticing and lucrative that he just cannot resist himself. For example, earning money is not at all bad, but who would like to sweat it out if easy grub is available round the street corner by deceit, trick, thugry and fraud, or even by use of threat, coercion and force, even if that means harming the other innocent person. This greed for enjoying the goodies of this world stops once the enlightened person transfers all the benefits of deeds to his Master who is watching him all the time. In the first place, the fear of the omnipresent Lord would pre-empt all involvements in evil deeds. But still one would like to enjoy his hard earned benefits. Here he must realise that these good results would themselves set off a chain of events that would commit him to doing more deeds, and thus he would have to take a new birth in order to enjoy these good rewards. The only way out is to not having any desire whatsoever to enjoy anything—no matter how high, good, noble and exhilarating that desire or enjoyment is.

²The wisened creature is one who does the deed in the spirit of his duty as ordained by the supreme Lord, and as a service to the latter. This is what is meant here. It is like a laborer working for his master in the fields—the former can't claim the produce, and therefore is unconcerned if the crop is sold at a loss or at a profit, or whether it is ruined by vagaries of Nature or decays in the barn. He sleeps peacefully at the end of the day's toil, while the land owner remains awake worrying over so many contingencies. In our present case, the creature, once having passed over the results of the deeds to his Lord, sleeps peacefully leaving the worrying to the supreme Lord who is accustomed to such things because he deals with such a vast universe and its as vast problems that an individual creature's burden of deeds are not even like the weight of the hair on his side.

³This law of Nature states basically that every deed has a result and it cannot be ignored or wished away sweetly, and that each result, whether good or bad, must be borne by the doer and by no body else.

The creature has brought with him some sort of baggage representing the consequences of the deeds done by him in his past life which he could not set off then. These shape the basic nature, inclinations and temperament of the creature in this present life; they decide his mental setup and how he would react to given circumstances. Since the creature cannot sit idle in a world marked by constant movement, he has to do deeds. But when wisdom and enlightenment dawns upon his intellectual horizon and he realises the affect of getting involved in doing deeds, this wisened creature withdraws himself from all involvement in deeds. But since this 'total non-involvement' is not practically feasible or possible, the Upanishads show him the way—and that is to do the deeds but offer the result to the Lord. Anything that has been 'offered to the deity' does not any more belong to the person who

makes the offering, and it also acquires a holy connotation. So, even seemingly bad deeds become holy and divine. The concept of why a creature is born in different births with different types of bodies each time has been beautifully explained elsewhere also, such as in Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, 2/1/18 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition.

There is another spin to this concept. When one knows that what he does do not belong to him, he becomes totally detached and dispassionate towards it. This is the basic idea in this marvelous verse. Once renunciation takes root, the tree of emancipation and salvation is bound to bloom by and by. Since deeds are done on a constant basis, and since one is required to offer each and every consequence to the Lord, it follows that the creature remembers the Lord at all times of his wakeful life. This constant remembrance of the divine Lord is in its self a form of worship because the creature would not then think of the world.

⁴This Lord is so magnanimous and obliging that he accepts whatever is offered to him by his devotee, and so he readily accepts the consequences of deeds done by him. We can draw another parallel here. When anything is offered to the fire, the latter reduces it to ashes. That is why the fire sacrifice is regarded as the best form of purification for the creature's taints and blemishes that he has accumulated over many births, willingly or unwillingly. When he does the fire sacrifice with proper understanding of its metaphysical and spiritual import, significance and importance it is obvious that the creature's soul would be privileged to regain its primary shine which had become dulled, tarnished and tainted over time. That is also why the fire is regarded as a manifestation of Brahm as the latter is the most powerful dynamic force in creation as pure and unadulterated Consciousness. Incidentally, what we call 'voice of conscience' is indeed this Brahm speaking to the creature about what is auspicious and righteous and what is not. But as it happens in practice, the deluded creature has become so deaf in the din created by the noisy and cacophonous world that he rarely hears this voice.

In this context, the offerings that are made to the fire sacrifice are symbolic of sacrificing all the worldly attachments, attractions, infatuations, lust, greed and involvements by the performer of the fire sacrifice. But does it happen in practice? Definitely no, for once the sacrifice is done the creature returns to his old rotten ways. But surely if he does them with the correct attitude then it is certain that all his bondages and fetters would be broken or reduced to ashes.

⁵The realisation of the truth as outlined here is tantamount to becoming a witness to the presence of the supreme Lord, because 'truth' is only one and not two. This Supreme Being has revealed himself as the pure conscious Atma residing in the bosom of the creature. Realising of the 'truth' is like realising of the 'pure self' or Brahm.]

5. That Supreme Being is the most ancient and primary one in existence; he is the Principal of creation. [That is, he is the great-great grandfather of creation.] He is deemed to be the one who had brought about an alliance and established a connection between two units (i.e. between Prakriti or Nature, and Atma or consciousness) which is the primary cause of coming into being everything that exists in this creation¹. This Supreme Being transcends the three periods of time (the past, the present and the future). He is beyond the definition and purview of the sixteen Kalaas that mark the nature of all life in this creation. [The concept of the term 'Kalaa' has been explained in note to verse no. 14 of Canto 5 above. See also verse no. 19 of this present Canto 6 below.]

One should revere, show due respect, adore, admire and honorably worship that Supreme Being who is secretly ensconced in the redoubt of the inner self of all the living beings. This Lord is present in every form in which this creation exists. He

has indeed revealed himself as the creation itself (i.e. this creation is nothing but a visible manifestation of the normally invisible and un-manifest supreme Brahm) (5).

[Note--¹That is, the supreme Brahm connected the Atma, which is pure consciousness, with Nature or Prakriti, which stands for the inherent subtle qualities that evolved as one of the primary elements that came into being at the very beginning of creation, determining the numerous subtle tendencies, temperaments, inclinations and habits of all the creatures that would eventually evolve in this creation. This union between the cosmic Atma and cosmic Nature created the produce called the Jiva, the living being or creature that had both the 'consciousness' as well as the 'nature' as part of its genes which formed its integral and inseparable constituent part. In this configuration, the conscious Atma represented the supreme Father, the Brahm, while the nature of the creature represented Prakriti, the cosmic Nature which played the role of the mother. The offspring inherited the characteristics of both the parents—one the one hand, it had all the virtuous qualities of the Atma inherent in him, and on the other hand his external features, his outwardly behaviour, his natural inclinations and habits, his basic temperaments and usual affinities were determined by the characteristic features which came down to him from the mother, i.e. from Prakriti or Nature. Thus, the combined effect of the two resulted in the composite personality of the creature.

Left alone, the Atma (pure conscious Self) would have remained satisfied with itself as is its wont. But when it came in touch with Prakriti (Nature), it was shadowed with myriad of desires, wants, aspiration, hopes, volitions, yearnings etc. leading to greed, rapacity, expectations, frustrations, depressions, hopes, and other types of surges of emotions and sentiments that flooded the Atma and swept it off its feet as the latter (the Atma) allowed its pure self to be influenced by the former (Prakriti).]

6. That Supreme Being is the one from whom this entire spectrum of 'Prapanch' (delusions, illusive charms, ignorance and falsehoods) pertaining to this artificial world has come into being. He is so grand and majestic, so vast and infinite, so magnificent and stupendous, so indefinable and without any attributes that he cannot be compared to this vast world which is compared to a huge and colossus tree, or to the wheel of time called Kaal (Kaal Chakra) and the wheel of deeds called Karma (Karma Chakra)¹. Indeed, the Supreme Being is distinct from all of them and transcends their limitations and definitions.

That Lord expounds, espouses and spreads the holy message of Dharma (i.e. the message of righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety and nobility); he holds aloft the banner of Dharma and upholds it inviolable sanctity.

The Lord vanquishes and destroys sins and all other things that represent evil and vices. He is the Lord of all good virtues and auspicious qualities that firmly establish his glorious fame and divine name through the length and breadth of creation.

When the wise and enlightened seeker realises that this Supreme Being—who is the basis and foundation of the entire creation, who is the 'creator' and sustainer of this world, providing it with succour, shelter and protection, and who is an eternal fountain of Amrit or the ambrosia of eternal beatitude and felicity—resides in his own bosom (i.e. in his inner self in his heart), it is then that he attains or obtains access to that eternal Lord and all the divine benefits that attend such realisation. [In other words, a self-realised man is deemed to be Brahm-realised because Brahm resides in his own heart. Self-realisation leads to the opening of the flood-gates of eternal bliss, happiness and joy because it gives access to the pitcher of Amrit stored there in the form of the Atma.] (6).

[Note—¹The concept of *Kaal Chakra* and *Karma Chakra* have been described in verse nos. 1-4 above. Since the supreme Brahman is responsible for these two symbolic wheels to rotate, they are named after him as *Brahm-Chakra* which is a metaphor for the huge wheel representing this colossus world.]

7. [A self-realised man who is also deemed to be Brahman-realised proclaims thus--] 'Verily, we know and are well acquainted with that Supreme Being who is known as 'Maheshwar' because not only is he the Lord of all 'Aishwaryas' in this world (i.e. who is the Lord of all good, noble, righteous, divine, holy, eclectic and auspicious virtues, qualities and characteristics that bestow glory, name and fame to all the living beings in this creation), but also of all the great Gods (representing the patron deities who control all these Aishwaryas) at the cosmic level of creation.

He is the great, most exalted and senior most 'Pati' (literally a husband, but in the wider perspective meaning the Lord or Master or Chief or Guardian) in this creation.

He transcends even that which is beyond comprehension, and he is very mysterious, esoteric and indefinable¹. He is the supreme Lord of the entire known creation as well as that which is unknown.

Indeed, this Supreme Being is the Lord who deserves to be praised and honoured, adored and admired, revered and worshipped² (7).

[Note--¹That is, even if it was ever possible to understand something that is beyond the scope of the mind and intellect to decipher and comprehend in a coherent and cogent manner, it would still be impossible to decode the mysteries of this enigmatic and esoteric Supreme Being. He is so mystical and mysterious that the mind's comprehension powers cannot reach him, and even if it does manage to touch its periphery it would just not get any further. An analogy of the Sun can be cited here. It is impossible to go near the Sun, but supposing for a moment, in an absolutely hypothetical manner, that one were able to reach its outer burning sphere of fire, it is unimaginable to seek entrance into its cauldron of fire. And supposing that even this was theoretically possible, who would escape alive, unscathed and un-scorched from its core?

²The Lord is to be worshipped not out of some overriding fear of some awe-inspiring and terror-instilling Emperor whose slightest displeasure can harm anyone, but out of deep reverence and gratitude to honour that Lord for his exalted status as much as for the fact that in spite of his such a high stature he chose to stay such close to us, in our own hearts, that we can have easy access to him whenever and wherever we need him!]

8. That Supreme Being has no forms and attributes, i.e. he has no physical body having a shape and different organs. There is no one like him or greater than him (because he is 'supreme').

His seminal powers, potentials and authority are magnificent, majestic, supernatural and transcendental. They have revealed themselves, inter alia, as the power and potentials of knowledge, wisdom, erudition, sagacity, expertise, skill and scholarship, as well as other forms of subtle strengths that a creature possesses, such as physical strength, mental strength, emotional strength, spiritual strength, moral strength, strength and authority wielded by the virtue of being able to influence others, possession of worldly material wealth and prosperity, a good reputation, fame and name, various creative skills such as oratory, artistry and authorship, and so many other glorious virtues that give immense glory and bestow great honour and high respect to the creature (8).

9. There is no one who is the Lord of that Supreme Being; there is no Authority that can rule over that Supreme Being. [This is because the Supreme Being is 'supreme' in the true sense of the word in as much as that he is the ultimate Lord and Authority of all that exists in this whole creation and there is no one to supersede him.]

He has no gender, i.e. he cannot be categorised as a male, a female or a neutral gender (either a hermaphrodite or a eunuch).

He is the cause of everything that, and everyone who, exists in this multifarious creation. He is the Lord of the creature (as his Atma and Pran) who has given shelter to the various organs¹. [Refer 3/17.]

This Supreme Being has no creator (as he is eternal, unborn, infinite and imperishable), nor is there any overriding and superseding Lord over him (as he is supreme and beyond the apex of the metaphoric triangle consisting of this world). He is indeed the supreme Authority who rules over the entire creation, being its only supreme controller and regulator, its only arbiter and adjudicator. [Canto 3 of this Upanishad describes this all-inclusive form and nature of Brahm. There are innumerable verses in this Upanishad in this connection, for example verse no. 17 below which expressly states this thing. This concept has also been reiterated in Canto 3, verse no. 14 which clearly stated that the supreme Brahm surrounds this creation from all the sides like a moat surrounding a fort, or a wall of the fort surrounding the city, and lives even beyond this periphery at a symbolic distance of ten fingers from it.] (9).

[Note--¹The living being has a body which has eleven organs—five organs of perception, e.g. eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin, and five organs of action, e.g. legs, hands, mouth, excretory and genitals. The eleventh organ is the mind-intellect complex. It is the combined effort of all of them that enables the Atma living inside this body to manage its affairs in this world. This Atma is the 'Lord' of this body, because the latter serves the former.

This Atma, which is pure consciousness living inside the body, is even the Lord of the Pran, which is the vital sign of life present inside the otherwise lifeless and inane body in the form of the vital winds. This is because the vital winds can remain active only as long as there is consciousness in the body; they can carry out their assigned functions in a body that is conscious and alive, but they cannot keep the body alive on their own account. The only factor that can keep the gross body 'alive' is the conscious Atma and nothing else. That is why even those who practice Pranayam, a meditation exercise whereby the practitioner can withhold air, or breath, for extended periods, cannot be termed as 'dead', for all other functions of the body, the most evident being the beating of the heart continues unabated. This profound truth has been explained in Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, in its Canto 2, Brahmin 1, verse no. 20.

When the Atma leaves the body along with the Pran, i.e. when the creature dies, the various organs have no function and no use, rendering them worthless and useless. That is why as soon as a man dies, we dispose of his body either by cremating or burying.]

10. Even as a spider allows itself to be surrounded by the web created by its own self and remains entangled in it for life, that Supreme Being, who is basically neutral and detached from everything, first created a desire to do something and then allowed himself to get entangled and be involved in the web of delusions (called Maya) created by him. Let this divine Being bless us so that we become one with and inseparable from the eternal, imperishable and unequivocal Truth represented by the supreme Brahm (10).

[Note—When Brahm decided to start the process of creation, he had to *do something*, because anything is achieved by some or the other sort of action. Remaining neutral and inactive does not start anything. So, the very first step in achieving success in any endeavour is to start ‘thinking’ how to do it in a planned manner, and then ‘making efforts’ to implement this thought into action.

Brahm is primarily neutral and indifferent, not doing anything because he need not do anything as he does not need anything for his own self or his own survival because he is self-contained and self-fulfilled. But this attitude wouldn’t set the ball of creation rolling, so he ‘did’ something, albeit most subtly, silently, secretly and imperceptibly, such as for example the very basic notion of ‘thinking’ that he must ‘do something’, and ‘wandering’ how to go about the process of creation from virtually nothing. It was a daunting thought because there was no precedent to guide him.

Once this first step was taken by Brahm, i.e. once he ‘thought that he must do something’, it got him entangled in the web. How? Since there was nothing as a raw material to start with, he had to first create an ‘imaginary’ source material for this world, and this first ‘illusion’ or ‘deception’ or ‘artificiality of imagination’ that he created is called Maya. The chain reaction was thus started, and even before Brahm realised what was transpiring, he found himself in a make-belief world of fantasy called the ‘Universe or Cosmos’ of which this mortal world in which we live is just a small speck of dust on its vast and endless shore.

It must be remembered that this entire game of creation is based on *imagination* (Maya) and is therefore illusionary and hollow like a miracle created by an expert magician, and the former is as illusive as the latter. It shows how the entire creation is just an imagination of the mind of a creature who symbolically represents Brahm at the micro level of creation—a fact so often emphasised by the Upanishads.

Once Brahm—which incidentally is said to be a personification of wisdom, erudition and enlightenment—realises that he has had enough of it and now it is time to wind up the game, he does not have to create some huge catastrophe to clean the slate, but needs only to stop his ‘mind’ in getting involved in this self-created theatre. This scenario applies to the individual creature as well because the creature is an image of Brahm at the micro level of creation.

Who can wind up the miraculous world of illusions on stage which has kept the magician’s audience spellbound? Obviously, the magician himself. Similarly, it is Brahm himself who can free his own self from his own web of self-created delusions, and not anyone else! This applies to the individual creature as well.]

11. That single supreme divine Being is established in all the living beings (as their true ‘self’ called the pure consciousness without which no creature can be called a ‘living being’). He is all-pervading, all-encompassing, all-incorporating and omnipresent. He is the inner self called the Atma (pure conscious ‘self’) of all living creatures. He is the Lord who presides over all the deeds done by each individual creature. [That is, nothing is hidden from the Supreme Being who decides how the individual should be rewarded or punished for his deeds. He also inspires the creature towards doing deeds because he himself had done it at the beginning of creation—see verse no. 10. He controls the deeds through the mind-intellect complex as well as the organs of the body.]

He is subtly and imperceptibly enshrined in the inner chambers of the creature’s self (i.e. in the heart), is a witness to all (and that is why it is impossible to cheat one’s own self and one’s own consciousness), is pure and wholesome consciousness, is most immaculate and pristine pure, and is without any (physical and gross) attributes and qualities (11).

12. That Supreme Being is the independent and unquestioned Lord of all. [That is, Brahm is like an Emperor who has no one over his own head.]

He is such an expert, skillful and maverick creator that he can transform one single seed which appears to be lifeless, inert and inactive from the outside into a multifaceted creation of myriad hues and shades¹.

Those wise and enlightened ones who observe (witness and experience) the presence of this Supreme Being inside their own self (as their Atma) become blessed and experience perpetual state of blessedness marked by bliss and happiness. They feel fulfilled. This divine and sublime feeling is not experienced by anyone else (who has not realised his true 'self' and the fact that Brahm is not outside somewhere in the upper or lower heaven in some abstract corner of the unreachable sky high above the clouds, but in his own heart) (12).

[Note—¹The *seed* of any tree appears to be lifeless, with no visible signs of life in it. Even if the seed is examined under a microscope, no living element is observed in it. It can be peeled layer after layer, but it won't yell and jump with pain, nor would it bleed and shed tears. Besides this, all the seeds basically have one standard shape, viz. they are rounded and egg-like. But the world it creates is a multi-coloured, multi-dimensional, multi-faceted canvas of astounding variations and possibilities of more variations.

In brief, the miracle is that this innocuous looking pebble-like structure known as the humble 'seed' can generate a huge tree full of colours and vibrant with life in all its splendorous best. There would be chirping birds on its branches, there would be so many insects finding shelter in it, it would produce colourful leaves, beautiful flowers and succulent fruits, and to top it all, new seeds. This extraordinary and wonderful event has been cited in Chandogya Upanishad, 6/12 of Sam Veda tradition when Shwetketu's wise father explained to him who Brahm was.

The revered sage Adi Sankracharya has regarded this 'seed' to mean the conscious Atma subtly present inside the bosom of the creature. He says in his commentary on this Upanishad that the Atma does not do anything because it is a neutral observer to all the deeds done by the body and its organ, which explains the observation that the 'seed is inactive and inert'. The Atma is also without any fixed attributes like its parent Brahm.]

13. That Supreme Being is the most divine, the most exalted and the highest eclectic entity amongst those eternal, imperishable and truthful entities, such as the Great Gods of creation, that are themselves divine, exalted and eclectic.

He is the most conscious Being amongst all the conscious entities, such as the living creatures of this creation.

He is the supreme adjudicating Authority who decides on the rewards and honours or punishments to be given to all the creatures according to the deeds done by them.

He is the primary cause of all that exists in this creation, and this Supreme Being can be known by a coordinated effort involving a dual approach, i.e. by simultaneous use of the philosophy of Sankhya (i.e. the path of knowledge and research based on the philosophy expounded and espoused by the scriptures, such as the Vedas and the Upanishad, and first preached by sage Kapil) and the philosophy of Yoga (meditation and contemplation)¹.

A wise, erudite and learned seeker who knows these eclectic and subtle facts about the Supreme Being is freed from all the fetters (representing delusions, ignorance and misconceptions) that shackle him (to this artificial and delusory world as well as the gross and perishable body) (13).

[Note--¹(a) Sankhya Philosophy or *Sankhya Shastra* –This is one of the six great schools of Indian philosophy. It was first propounded by sage Kapil as ‘Shankhya Sutras’. [Refer Bhagwata 3/25-33, and Canto 5-6 of Shwetashwatar Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

Sage *Kapil* was the celebrated sage who is regarded as the fifth incarnation of Lord Vishnu (Bhagawata, 1/3; 3/24). He is compared to Lord Krishna in Bhagawata (10/26). He was the brother-in-law of sage Vashistha, being the brother of his wife Arundhati, and the only son of sage Kardama and his wife Dev-huti. He taught even his mother spiritual wisdom in Bhagawata, and hence this part of this scripture is called ‘Kapil Gita’ in which the sage has expounded upon the philosophies of Sankhya Shastra, Ashtanga Yoga (the eight-fold path of Yoga) and Bhakti-yoga (the path of devotion for and submission to the Lord) (3/25-33).

Sage Kapil is however renowned for one of the six schools of Indian philosophies known as Sankhya Shastra.

The word *Shastra* means any body of knowledge which has been deeply researched and then systematically codified and made useful in a meaningful way.

The word *Sankhya*, according to some scholars, refers to the ‘number’ or ‘numeral’ that it refers to, because it says that there are twenty five elements or ‘Tattwas’ in creation. However, there are some others who assert that it refers to ‘Gyan’ or acquisition of truthful knowledge of the reality behind the façade of illusions. It stresses on Gyan or truthful knowledge as the only path leading to liberation and deliverance of the soul from this world, and its attaining final emancipation and salvation riding on the boat of knowledge.

Therefore, the combined word *Sankhya Shastra* refers to the philosophy that endeavours to unravel the great secrets of creation based on sound knowledge and rational logic. It has six chapters and contains five hundred twenty six Sutras or keys or codes that unlock the profound treasure of knowledge pertaining to who the creature actually is, how has he come to be what he is at present, and how he can be freed from this vicious cycle of birth and death. Only when one understands the beginning can he understand the end, because this so-called ‘beginning’ has its origin in the previous ‘end’. That is, only after something ends and carries forward certain baggage with it does a new beginning can start. After all, this is based on the fundamental tenet of Nature that ‘nothing can start from nothing; there must be something from which anything starts’. That is why we say that there cannot be smoke without a fire.

Now, if one goes back to the ‘very beginning of creation’ when there wasn’t any prior life from which any new life could be born on the principles of ‘deeds and their consequences’, i.e. the theory that when a creature does any deed in this life then he would have to take a new birth to suffer the consequences of these deeds because they cannot be wished away, the question arises ‘what started this creation then?’ The Sankhya Shastra endeavours to answer precisely this question in a very logical and systematic manner.

This secret was revealed, according to the of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition’s Shwetashwatar Upanishad, 5/2, to sage and seer Kapil who was the first person to whom the esoteric secrets of creation were unraveled by the Supreme Being (Brahm) himself. In fact, the whole of Cantos 5 and 6 of this Upanishad are dedicated to this philosophy of Sankhya Shastra. Sankhya Shastra has been referred to in other Upanishads of the Krishna Yajur Veda, e.g. in Pran Agnihotra Upanishad, verse no. 1, and in Varaaha Upanishad, verse no. 55.

It was propagated by Kapil’s disciple Aasuri, and then by the latter’s disciple Pancha-shikaa.

This philosophy accepts only three basic yardsticks or valid sources of knowledge—viz. ‘Pratakshya’ or direct perception or cognition of anything such as directly seeing a thing for one’s self, ‘Anumaan’ or implied knowledge or deduction of anything entails inference of something based on some other first hand knowledge,

and 'Shabda' or the word affirming this knowledge which is like a testimony of some witness or any dependable source.

So this philosophy adopts the approach of reaching the unknown from what is known. It has reduced all that can be experienced in this world to two fundamental units of creation—the Purush (the Supreme Being; Brahm; cosmic Self) and Prakriti (Nature; the invisible matrix of all forms of natures and temperaments that characterize this creation). The basic argument of this philosophy is that 'nothing can be produced from nothing'. In other words, if the creation has come into being, then there must be something that pre-dates this present creation. If this creation is the effect of some past deed, then obviously there must have some occasion when certain deed was done which resulted in the present. It states that 'Karya (the result) pre-existed (had a truthful existence) in the Kaaran (the cause of the result)'. Suppose we have an earthen lamp. This lamp, made of clay or mud, was inherently present in the un-moulded lump of clay or mud before it was shaped. Had it not been so, the clay or mud could not have been moulded into the shape of the lamp.

When this argument is applied to the experience of the world, one observes that there are three basic qualities exhibited by all things—one that gives pleasure and happiness, the other which is just the opposite, and the third which does not effect us at all, i.e. we remain neutral to it. Sankhya philosophy states that there are three 'Gunas' or basic virtues and qualities in creation which determine these three responses as well as the characters of things which evince these responses. These three Gunas are Sata which produce positive responses of happiness and bliss, Raja which create negative response of pain and sufferings, and Tama which generates neither.

In more physical terms, Sata Guna means pure and holy, and it is conducive to knowledge marked by these characteristics. The Raja Guna produces desires and ambitions which create restlessness in their wake. Tama Guna is meanest of them all, for it creates a tendency for resistance and inactivity. A man having the Tama Guna in excess would not do anything himself and neither would he allow others to do their duties.

It should be noted here that there is a situation when all these three Gunas can theatrically exist in perfect balance—this situation is the ideal situation and is synonymous with Prakriti at the cosmic level. This Prakriti, therefore, becomes perfectly 'neutral' and self centered; it is the perfect example of grossness because it remains in a state of perpetual coma or paralysis because of this balance. It is when this perfect balance is disturbed that it starts stretching and yawning like a man waking up from a deep slumber.

An example would illustrate. An electrolyte works when there is a difference of potential between the two electrodes—i.e. the cathode and the anode. A neutral solution having the same electrodes dipped in it would not perform the function of electrolysis.

On the other hand, the Purush is the cosmic Consciousness or the Atma or cosmic Soul.

The *evolution of the creation* starts when a union is established between this Purush and Prakriti. There arises a question here. Purush is neutral and absolutely unattached to anything, while Prakriti is gross and lifeless. How is their cooperation possible? Well this is illustrated by the example of physically handicapped intelligent man who has lost the leg and cannot walk and a blind man who cannot see but can walk. The blind can carry the lame on his back, and under the latter's guidance, can reach the destination.

The process of evolution of creation from this primary Nature or Prakriti is as follows—As the result of the three Gunas mixing with themselves, the first offspring was 'Mahat' or Buddhi (the cosmic intellect).

From the Raja Guna part of this Buddhi emerged Ahankar (cosmic pride and vanity, ego and the notion of individualism and selfish arrogance).

From the Sata Guna part of this Buddhi emerged Mana (the cosmic mind), the five organs of perceptions (eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin), the five organs of actions (hand, leg, mouth, excretory and genital).

From the Tama Guna part of Buddhi emerged the five Tanmatras (the five perceptions of sight, hearing, smell, taste and feeling) and from these further developed the five Bhuts or elements (such as the sky, air, fire, water and earth).

Thus, there would be twenty three such elements + Prakriti + Purush = *twenty five components of creation* in all.

There is another way at looking at this philosophy. It describes the origin of the cosmos from Brahm who created the macrocosmic first Male called Purush and his female counterpart, the Prakriti (Mother Nature), who are the basic cause of this vast and myriad creation. The individual male and female human beings are the microcosmic forms of that macrocosmic Purush and Prakriti. It is their union which resulted in this cosmos. Their offspring were—Buddhi (intelligence, wisdom, mind), Ahankar (pride, ego), the mind-heart complex called the ‘Mana’, the five perceptions (of smell, hearing, touch, taste and sight) forming the subtle body of the creature, the five elements (space, wind, fire, water, earth), the ten sense organs (five organs of perception—ear, nose, tongue, eye and skin, and five organs of action—hand, leg, mouth, anus and genitals), which together formed the gross body of the creature, the invisible Atma (pure consciousness) and Prakriti (nature of the individual creature). These are the twenty five basic constituents of creation.

So, according to Sankhya Shastra, there are *twenty-five fundamental Elements or Tattvas* as follows—one Avyakta (the un-manifest entity known as Prakriti or cosmic Nature) + one Buddhi (intellect, wisdom, discrimination) + one Ahankar (the inherent ego and pride that is integral to all the creatures) + five Tanmatras (senses—sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste) + eleven organs (five organs of perception—eye, ear, nose, skin and tongue respectively + five organs of action—hand, leg, mouth, excretory and genital) + one Purush (the macrocosmic Consciousness; the cosmic Self or Atma or Soul; the Male aspect of creation; the Viraat Purush who is all-pervading, all-encompassing, omnipresent, eternal, infinite, un-manifest and almighty Lord of creation; the macrocosmic gross body of creation).

There is another version as to what constitutes the twenty-five Tattvas. They are the following—Purush (the primal cosmic Male; the Viraat Purush), Prakriti (primal Nature), Mahtattva (the powerful Buddhi or intellect), Ahankar (ego, pride), the five organs of perception (i.e. the eye, nose, ear, tongue and skin), the five organs of action (i.e. the hand, leg, mouth, excretory and genitals), the Mana (mind), the five perceptions (such as the spoken word or speech, sight, smell, touch and taste), the five Bhuts (i.e. the five primary elements, the earth, water, fire, air and space or sky) = 25.

It further postulates that Brahm created Nature (cosmos) because it allowed itself to be covered or mired by the three Gunas—‘Sata’ meaning righteousness and virtuousness which are the best and noblest of qualities, ‘Raja’ meaning worldly passions and desires which are the medium or mediocre qualities leading to worldly desires, and ‘Tama’ meaning evils, sins and other mean mentalities leading to perversions and vices. The Purush, though he remains aloof, still gets shackled or attached to Prakriti, the creation, because of these three Gunas which act as ropes or strings that tie him down. This fact has been very stated in Shwetashwatar Upanishad, 5/10-12 and 6/10.

Breaking one’s habits is tantamount to liberation and deliverance from this bondage, and it is called Mukti. The three Gunas are the causes of the myriad temperaments, natures, thought patterns and behaviours of all the creatures, because they have all these three qualities or virtues in them, though they vary in ratio or proportion. These three Gunas are also present in Mother Nature, giving rise to a populace which is so varied and diametrically opposite to each other, even virtually getting at each other’s throat, because of the infinite possibilities created by their

mixing in different proportions to mould the innate nature, inclinations and temperaments of a creature.

This school of philosophy says that there are five elementary 'Bhuts' in this creation—they are the earth, water, fire, wind and space which, in different permutations and combinations, form all the creatures who have a gross body. A creature, it says, has eleven organs— five organs of perception (ears, nose, eyes, tongue and skin), five organs of action (hands, legs, mouth, anus and genitals) and one organ called the Mana (mind and heart).

According to Mahopanishad, 1/4 – 6 of Sam Veda tradition, these twenty-five elements or Tattwas are the following—five organs of perception (ear, nose, tongue, eye, skin) + five organs of action (hand, leg, mouth, genitals, excretory) + one Mana (mind) + one Ahankar (ego, pride, arrogance) + one Pran (the vital life-giving breath; the essential vibrations of life; the rhythm and essential functions pertaining to life) + one Atma (soul) + one Buddhi (intelligence, wisdom, discrimination) + five Perceptions (sight, smell, hearing, taste, touch) + five Bhuts (earth, water, fire, air, space) = twenty-five elements. (b) *Sankhya Yoga*—This philosophy is a combination of Sankhya philosophy and Yoga philosophy. In Shwetashwatar Upanishad 6/13 it states that the Supreme Being can be known by the means of 'Sankhya Yoga', i.e. by an intelligent fusion of 'Sankhya' and 'Yoga'.

The second chapter of Bhagvata Gita is also called Sankhya Yoga. Now, let us analyse this word. It has two parts—viz. 'Sankhya' meaning learning and knowledge, and 'Yoga' meaning a union, a conjunction, a fusion. Elsewhere, e.g. 5/5, this word has been used to signify 'Gyan' and 'Karma' or a conjunction of knowledge and the philosophy of doing deed. The 'Pran Agnihotra Upanishad', 1, uses this word to mean 'intense thinking, deep contemplation or deep insight'. It is also, therefore, synonymous with 'Gyan Yoga' or the great concentration and diligent divergence of all energies of the creature to acquire truthful knowledge of the Truth and Reality behind what is apparent but not the whole truth, and what is not apparent at all.

These two paths are not separate, independent and distinct from one another. They are like the two legs by which one walks. The word Yoga also means to bring about a union between two entities, to create a synergy between the mundane and the spiritual. Here it refers to the union between the Atma and the Brahm, or the coordination of various elements of the creature's body so that congenial atmosphere conducive to spiritual upliftment and enlightenment is created for the realisation of the true nature of the 'self', which would mean realisation of the presence of Brahm inside the very own self of the seeker. To bring this about, deep concentration of mind is needed along with the focusing of all the energies of the body in one single pursuit; this is meditation and contemplation.

The word *Sankhya Yoga* therefore means a combination of both the eclectic values of Sankhya philosophy and that of Yoga. Hence, that which brings about a fusion or union between the known and the unknown, that which establishes a coordination between the creature's individual world and the cosmic world of the pure consciousness, that which brings the Atma, the pure 'self' of the creature close to the supreme 'Self' of the cosmos, that which links and ultimately brings about a merger of the single unit with its parent body, and that which helps in the creature's final liberation from the vicious cycle of birth and death, is called Sankhya Yoga.

Now the question arise how is this brought about? The answer is in the following the manifold path of Yoga besides acquisition of knowledge as expounded and espoused in the Upanishads. Yoga has basically two connotations—viz. (1) meditation and contemplation which aim in harnessing all the energy and potentials at the disposal of the creature and diverting them and concentrating them on one single goal chosen by the practitioner of Yoga; and (b) following other methods of achieving this aim as laid down in the scriptures dealing with Yoga.

These are the four paths of (i) Gyan Yoga, (ii) Bhakti Yoga, (iii) Karma Yoga and (iv) Raj Yoga.

(i) *Gyan Yoga* involves the intellect and mind to determine and delineate the true and the false; it helps to access and understand the reality and falsehood behind the manifested visible world which appears to be ‘real’ but is actually like a ‘shadow of the truth’. This Gyan Yoga helps to establish the mind firmly into seeing unity in diversity. Those following Gyan Yoga are called ‘seers’ because they can ‘see’ beyond the visible, multifarious and bewildering variety of this false world. Gyan Yoga is in the realm of the intellect and discriminating mind of a creature.

(ii) *Bhakti Yoga* refers to having devotion for a chosen Godhead who is a person’s ideal, on whom he showers all his adoration, and on whom he focuses his attention. He is emotionally and sentimentally involved with his deity. Hence, the heart is the realm of Bhakti Yoga; it helps to commune with the divine.

(iii) *Karma Yoga* expounds on the importance of doing deeds and taking actions, but with a different attitude. It stresses that we must not get ‘involved or attached’ to those deeds or action in as much as we shouldn’t be bothered about the rewards or punishments incumbent on such deeds or actions. We must do them dispassionately and with detachment. The action or deed should be treated as one’s offering to the God as well as an offering to the sacred fire sacrifice. This will ensure that the actions or deeds are not unrighteousness, corrupt or evil. On the contrary, whatever is done in which a person’s subtle sub-conscious says is not the correct thing to do will be deemed to be unrighteous, unethical and unlawful, and therefore cannot be an offering to either the God or the sacred fire sacrifice.

(iv) *Raj Yoga* is the psycho-spiritual practice of exercise and breath control; it involves the various steps involved in meditation and contemplation, as is generally understood by the term Yoga. This Yoga lays emphasis on physical training of the body and the mind, and is the subject matter of numerous Upanishads dealing with such exercises (e.g. Yog Chudamani of Sam Veda). It deals with such subjects as Pranayam, purification and activation of Naadis, kindling of Chakras (subtle energy centers in the body) etc.

These *four types of Yogas* are not mutually exclusive; they coalesce and overlap with each other and their main aim is to help the aspirant seeker in his pursuit of ‘self-realisation’.

There is another platform of Yoga as propounded by the greatest exponent of this philosophy, i.e. sage Patanjali. According to him, Yoga consists of *eight-fold path*. These are briefly the following—(1) ‘Yam’ or self restraint; (2) ‘Niyam’ or observance of certain sacrosanct rules; (3) ‘Asana’ or postures for meditation; (4) ‘Pranayam’ or breath control exercises for purification of the body and mind; (5) ‘Pratyahar’ or withdrawal of the mind and its control; (6) ‘Dhaarna’ or having a firm conviction, faith and belief on the sanctity and truthfulness of the chosen path; (7) ‘Dhyana’ or contemplation and concentration of the faculties of the mind and intellect; and (8) ‘Samadhi’ or a perpetual trance-like state in which the aspirant loses all awareness of the external world and even himself, and remains perpetually in meditation. These eight-fold path of Yoga have been listed in Varaaha Upanishad, canto 5, verse no. 12—12 ½ of the Krishana Yajur Veda tradition.

The Mandal Brahmin Upanishad of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition describes these terms in detail in its Brahmin (canto) 1, section 1, verse nos. 3-10.]

14. That supreme Brahm is not illuminated by the light of the sun or the moon or the stars. Even the fire has no reach there. In fact, it is just the reverse—i.e. that Brahm is the one who lights the sun and the other entities of the creation. The entire creation is illuminated by Brahm’s light (much like the light of the lamp illuminates the surroundings) (14).

15. There resides, in an imperceptible and invisible form, a symbolic divine Swan¹ in this world, making it its eternal abode, much like the fire element being imperceptibly

but undeniably present in water. When a spiritual seeker understands this fact and comes to be acquainted with this supreme Divinity known as Brahm residing in his own heart as the eclectic ‘true self’ regarded as a Swan, it is only then that he attains final emancipation and salvation. [This state of enlightenment is called self-realisation which paves the way to Brahm-realisation.] There is no other way (15).

[Note—¹The *Swan* referred to here is the supreme Brahm who resides as the pure conscious Atma hidden latently in the heart of the living creature much like the latent presence of fire in water. There are many instances in the Upanishads where the ‘true self’ or the Atma of a creature is compared to a Swan. An entire Upanishad called Hansa Upanishad belonging to the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition is dedicated to this theme. (It is Chapter 4 of volume 3 in this series of Upanishads).

At the beginning of creation there was only water everywhere. The earth coagulated and rose to the surface much like butter rises to the surface of milk when it is churned. The energy generated by the severe Tapa done by Brahm manifested as the latent ‘fire’ that heated this earth and kept it inherently warm. This prevented the earth from freezing cold as it resembled a huge iceberg floating on the surface of the cosmic ocean. (Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 1, Brahmin 2, verse no. 2.) Thus we see that the water, earth and fire co-exist. This was necessary from the perspective of sustenance of creation—for otherwise the water would have frozen everything into ice, and the fire would have scorched to ashes. The earth harbouring life would have died—either by being frozen stiff and getting drowned in the vast ocean, or being reduced to cinders.

Therefore, the supreme creator was very wise in first creating water and then dipping earth on it to make it float. Imagine that a hot ball representing earth—of course earth is a hot ball, for who does not know that the bowls of earth have molten lava and molten iron core which gives the earth its protective magnetic field—floats on the surface of a tub full of cold water, and this water neither boiling over nor the ball losing its warmth! What a miraculous creation has the creator unfolded.

The water element was essential to counter and offset the scorch of the fire element, because had there been no coolant the fire would have burnt everything to ashes even before the first chick symbolically representing all life forms could break through the shell of the cosmic egg. The observation that ‘fire secretly remains in the water’ is proved by the fact that we have ‘warm and hot water’ though basically water is cool and cold. This latent energy of water which makes it warm or hot is the fundamental cause why water is regarded as the harbinger and herald of life in all its form.

It is a well established scientific fact that without water as well as warmth, the latter implying the obvious presence of the fire element, no life is imaginable anywhere. Water consists of two atoms of hydrogen and one atom of oxygen, both having a high ignition value as is proved by the fact that the celestial cauldron of fire called the Sun consists mainly of hydrogen and helium, which is a relative of hydrogen created by the nuclear fusion method in the Sun’s core, while oxygen is a predominant necessity to ignite any fire and then keep it burning. It is remarkable that the molecule of water contains hydrogen and oxygen together—both ingredients associated with fire. In other words, water harbours fire element in a latent and integral form.

It is also pertinent to note here that we give ‘oxygen’ to patients whose body has lost its powers to keep warm and retain life forces inside it. This is done in order to keep the furnace of life hot and burning inside the body which is full of fluids symbolising water.

Merely mixing the two gases wouldn’t produce water, as is proved by the fact that though the two gases are abundantly present in the atmosphere, the sky isn’t flooded with an ocean. Water forms on earth simply because the latter provides the necessary ‘heat’ which helps to bind the atoms of these two distinctly separate gases

to one another. In other words, 'water' has its independent existence only as long as 'fire' is present in it as its inseparable and integral part; if 'fire element' is removed from water, not only would the atoms of hydrogen and oxygen separate from one another to remove the very cause of water's existence, but also rob the exalted stature of water as being a sustainer of life on this earth.]

16. That Supreme Being is the creator of the entire creation and the principal factor at the center or core of its being in existence¹.

He is omniscient and all-knowing (refer verse no. 17 below amongst others). He is self created (in the sense that there is no cause of his coming into being, because, for one, he is eternal and infinite, and for second, he is imperishable; so the question of 'taking a fresh birth' like other entities of creation does not arise). [Refer verse no. 7 of this Canto amongst others.]

He is the supreme Authority that inspires and regulates Kaal, and is also the cause of its coming to an end (death)². He is a treasury of all the three Gunas (i.e. all the qualities, virtues and attributes that determine the personality, character, temperaments, nature and habits of a creature have been created by him)³. Being omniscient and all-knowing, he is also the treasure of all Vidya or knowledge.

Brahm is the 'supreme' Lord who is the ultimate 'Chief Authority' in creation, and senior to both the Viraat Purush (the macrocosmic gross body of creation from whom the rest of the visible and invisible world came into existence) as well as Prakriti (Nature; the so-called 'female' aspect of creation which was responsible for its coming into being in association with its cosmic male counterpart, the Viraat Purush, and for nurturing the cosmos in its womb as the cosmic embryo)⁴.

He determines the quantum, intensity, density and proportion of the basic ingredients that are required to classify the motley collection of all the basic character traits that appeared at the time of creation into the three fundamental classes of qualities and character determining attributes that eventually came to be known as the 'three basic Gunas of creation' that are inherently present in all the living beings in this creation. [These three Gunas are briefly the Sata Guna, the Raja Guna, and the Tama Guna.]

He is the supreme regulator who controls the wheel of creation (called the Brahm Chakra—refer Canto 1, verse no. 4, 6) from start to finish. Therefore, he is the one who determines, regulates and controls whether or not the creature finds Moksha, whether it remains in shackles or gets liberation and deliverance from this deluding and artificial world of miseries and pains⁵. It is he who maintains a fine balance and equilibrium between any two extremes of creation so that the latter remains balanced and existing in a perpetual manner (16).

[Note—¹This creation has an existence because the Supreme Being is present at the helm of affairs. Just like the wheel rotates around a central axis, and if this axis is removed the wheel would fall apart and cease to be of any relevance, this entire creation revolves around this central Authority known as Brahm which not only keeps every unit in its specific place but also empowers it to carry on with its designated functions, while at the same time keeping a strict tab on its functioning. He is like the Sun around which the planets not only revolve but owe their place and location in the cosmic theatre for it is the gravitational pull of the Sun which keeps the planets in their fixed position in the sky for otherwise they would have spun out of control and ran off randomly to create uncontrolled and unstoppable chaos in the cosmos, colliding with each other and with other entities just like a ball thrown haphazardly in a sports utility shop would cause havoc in it. Besides this regulatory function, it is the Sun which provides light, heat, energy and vitality—the metaphors for 'life'—to this world, it is the Sun that controls the seasons and the rainfall, it is the

Sun that is responsible for photosynthesis in plants which help to provide the basic food to all the living organisms. Therefore, it is unimaginable to have life without the Sun.

In the context of this verse and the philosophy of the Upanishads in general, Brahm is like the illuminated celestial Sun residing in the sky, and the latter is regarded as the most visible, most powerful and most potent form of Brahm. This Brahm resides in the subtle sky of the heart of the living being as his Atma or pure consciousness. It is this Atma around which all life rotates; as soon as this Atma leaves the body, all its value and worth cease to exist. In fact, life itself would cease to mean anything without consciousness. Who would like to deal with a man who is lying un-conscious as if he is dead though he might be legally and clinically alive? Refer verse nos. 4/14, 5/5, 6/9 etc.

²*Kaal* broadly refers to the factors of time, age, period and circumstance in this creation. The word also refers to the God of death. Therefore, this stanza means that Brahm is that overriding Authority which has set the agenda for the forces of Nature defined as time, age, period and circumstance to work strictly according to set rules, and then oversees that they are obeying their mandate. In the context of these forces of Nature being deified as a God called Kaal who has been delegated the powers to regulate the function of death and fate of the creature after death, it is affirmed here that this seemingly eternal and imperishable God—eternal and infinite because he outlasts every creature's life and is present in all the future lives of this creature to decide his future fate based on all records of the creature's past lives, and therefore apparently seems never to die—would also have to die one day. When? The probable answer is 'after the last creature has died at the end of creation', as there would then be no need of this Kaal for Brahm because there would be no creature left to regulate. Brahm has delegated his authority to regulate the creation to so many Gods, and Kaal is one such subordinate to Brahm. So when he is not needed, he would also go the same way as the other Gods, i.e. he would cease to exist.

According to *Adhyatma Ramayan* of sage Veda Vyas, Uttar Kanda, canto 8, verse no.21-25, Kaal is the eldest son of Vishnu incarnated as Sri Ram. The Lord's union with Maya created Kaal first, hence he is deemed to be the first entity created in this creation. It implies that before anything is born, its end is made a certainty. To quote—"Kaal, disguised as a sage or hermit said to Sri Ram, 'Listen Sri Ram! Listen to the fact as it is (20-21). Oh Lord God! Brahma has sent me to you. Oh Lord, the conqueror of enemies! I am your elder son (22).

Oh the brave one! I was born by your union with Maya (your delusory and cosmic creative powers). I am the destroyer of all, and renowned by the name of Kaal. Lord Brahma—who is worshipped by all the celestial sages, ascetics and hermits (23)—has sent the message to you that your time has come, oh the wise one, to give your protection to the heavens. In some previous time, it was only you who had lived/survived after getting annihilated the rest of the creation (24). Then, by your union with your divine consort named Maya, you had produced me (Kaal) first (as your elder son), followed by the hooded serpent called 'Seshnath Anant' who reclines upon the water (of the legendary Kshir Sagar, the celestial ocean of milk) (25)".

³All the *three Gunas* of Sata, Raja and Tama originate from him as he is the creator of the entire creation, and these three qualities are the fundamental factors which decided the seminal qualities and characters, the nature and temperament displayed by each individual creature depending upon the proportion of these Gunas that it possessed. Refer note of Canto 4, verse no. 5 for details.

⁴This conception is in consonant with the evolution of creation according to the Sankhya philosophy as described in detail in note to verse no. 13 above. The 'supreme Lord' referred to here is Brahm, the Supreme Being from whom the cosmic egg called Hiranyagarbha was born. It was Brahm who inspired both the Viraat Purush as well as the Prakriti to initiate the process of creation by establishing an alliance between the two. In other words, he is the supreme inspirer and motivator as

expressly stressed in verse no. 1-3 of this Canto. Entire Canto 1 of Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition is dedicated to this basic idea that Brahm is the Principal Authority who is responsible for the emergence of this creation.

⁵Since the supreme Lord is the inspirer of all the creatures, it is he who determines whether a creature is a worthy candidate for being selected as a student researching for Truth depending upon the creature's past deeds and its present sincerity and spiritual inclinations. It is just like a college principal deciding whether or not to give a candidate admission to his college, keeping in mind the reputation of the institution as well as the ability of the candidate to successfully imbibe the culture of the college along with formal education, and whether the chances of him excelling in his field of study are bright or not because the reputation of any college or university also depends on its Alma Mater.

Once given admission, it is up to the student to live up to the principal's expectations, for simply succeeding in getting admission in a top notch college means nothing if the student has no aptitude and skills, or he becomes careless in his studies and consequentially fails in his exams. Similarly, the supreme Brahm initiates a sincere aspirant into spiritualism by 'inspiring him' and creating circumstances conducive to his spiritual progress, which we shall call 'chance' meeting with a self-realised and competent moral preceptor or guide who would show the aspirant the right path that leads to unfolding the Truth for him. It would be often be noted that there are certain people who have a natural affinity for things spiritual and an equal disdain for things pertaining to this material world. Such people can be regarded as being the fortunate ones who are selected by the Supreme Being to tread on the path he has determined for them. On the other hand there are people who won't do so even if prodded and repeatedly told of the horrific consequences for remaining engrossed in this material world of sensual gratification. They would suffer but would not realise the truth.]

17. That Supreme Being (the supreme Brahm) is uniformly absorbed in this creation, i.e. he has not only revealed himself in the form of the entire creation but actively controls it from within; he uniformly pervades the entire creation; he is an integral part of this creation (refer verse no. 4/11; 5/13; 6/5, 7 etc.); being a fountain of light, he even illuminates this world with his own light (as his manifestation in the form of the Sun--refer 2/1-7, 3/8, 4/11, 5/4, 6/14 in this connection).

He is the eternal and perpetual supreme Lord of all that exists. He is omniscient and all-knowing (refer verse no. 4/9 etc.). He has access to all the nooks and corners of this creation (refer 2/16); hence he can go everywhere. [This is obvious because the Supreme Being pervades this entire creation uniformly, being dissolved in it like sugar or salt in water, and therefore permeates each crevice and each surface, each nook and corner of this structure known as the world.]

He is the protector and sustainer of this world (refer verse no. 5/15 etc.). [This function of Brahm is carried out by him in his manifestation as Vishnu, the cosmic sustainer and protector. That is why whenever the living beings are tormented by cruel tyrants, depicted as 'demons' in folklore and mythology, Lord Vishnu, who is Brahm manifested in this form at the cosmic scale, reveals himself as one or the other incarnation to salvage Dharma, i.e. to give protection to those people who follow the principles of righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety and noble conduct by trouncing the opposite forces of Adharma represented by the demons.]

He is the supreme Authority who rules over the entire creation, being its only supreme controller and regulator, its only arbiter and adjudicator. There is no one to supersede him; there is no one to exercise control over him; there is no one to overturn his decisions. [There are innumerable verses in this Upanishad in this

connection, for example verse no. 9 of this Canto no. 6 which expressly states this thing. Other examples are verse nos. 1-3, 5-14 etc.]

18. He is the supreme Lord who creates Brahma, the creator of the visible world in which we live, at the time of creation (refer verse nos. 4/2, 11-14), and it is this Lord who blessed Brahma with (i.e. taught him) the eclectic body of holy knowledge that are known as the Vedas¹ (refer verse no. 4/9, 5/6 etc.).

With the desire to obtain liberation and deliverance from the shackles of this mundane, perishable and artificial word of material objects that is the cause of all delusions and pains, to attain emancipation and salvation for my soul, I humbly take the shelter of that divine Lord who illuminates the mind (so that he can light my way to self-realisation and enlightenment, and remove the dark shadow of delusions and ignorance—refer verse no. 4/21 etc.) (18).

[Note--¹In other words, what Brahma is credited with—that he has ‘created’ the Vedas because they were first pronounced by him—are not his own creation. He just happened to be the medium selected by the Supreme Being to reveal that knowledge, and therefore, to speak the truth, to call Brahma as the ‘originator or creator’ of the Vedas would be a misnomer and misrepresentation of the facts.]

19. That Supreme Being has no ‘Kalaas’ (i.e. he has no fractions and segments that can be delineated from one another because he is one single whole, being immutable and indivisible, being non-dual and uniform—refer also verse no. 6/5).

He (the Supreme Being) does not do anything and get (emotionally and sentimentally) involved in it, being just a neutral observer and witness of all that is happening around him as he is totally dispassionate and detached from everything¹.

He (the Supreme Being) remains perpetually peaceful and tranquil (because of his non-involvement in any deed, as it is only such involvements that bring all sorts of agitations and perplexities in their wake). He is without any blemishes and taints (as he is immaculately pure and pristine, and also because of this philosophy of non-involvement in deeds as it is the world which creates tainting effects, and if one remains distanced from it then the basic cause of taint and blemish is taken care of). He is not attached to anything, being non-involved, neutral, detached and dispassionate (towards everything in this artificial world of delusion and ignorance).

He (the Supreme Being) is the best fount of Amrit (the ambrosia of eternity and perpetual beatitude and felicity). He is like that brilliant fire from which no smoke rises (as he is the most glorious, illuminated, radiant, splendorous, enlightened and divine entity in creation which has no faults and impurities—because a fire originating from firewood which has no impurities in it would burn brilliantly without producing any smoke.) (19).

[Note--¹In other words, though the Supreme Being resides in the creation as its integral part, therefore appearing to ‘physically’ doing each deed, but actually he only inspires the creature to do deeds and this is how everything happens. He, as the Atma, does not personally get involved in any of them, preferring instead to remain neutral and dispassionate. This is very crucial for him as he is the final adjudicator and arbiter of the entire creation, and therefore all are equal for him. He cannot take sides with any of his offspring’s inconsequential squabbling, but intervenes only when they get at each other’s neck as it were. This is because he is the upholder of Dharma. Refer verse no. 4/9, 6/6, 9, 11 amongst other verses in this connection.]

20. If some wise man is able to wear the sky as his skin, it is possible for him then that he can overcome all his miseries and pains even without knowing about that Lord (20).

[Note—This verse has to be understood in the correct perspective. There are many connotations to it. (a) This situation points to a high level of wisdom and self-realisation because it is then that the person would have realised that his own ‘true’ self is the pure conscious Atma and not the gross body consisting of bones, veins, flesh, organs, heart, mind etc. It is the physical gross body that needs the skin as a sack to keep everything in place, ‘sacked in’ so to say, hemmed in and sewed from all the sides, with the mouth as its upper opening and the anus as its lower. But the Atma is very subtle and ethereal, and it resides in the subtle space of the heart measuring the size of a thumb—see verse nos. 3/13 and 5/8 of this Upanishad, and 2/1/12-13 of Katho-panishad. This space of the heart, called the Hridaya Akash, is like the outer covering that surrounds the Atma as its overcoat. This space within the heart and the one outside are basically ‘one’, and as soon as the person realises that the body is an artificial boundary separating the two, he withdraws his ‘own true self’, i.e. his Atma, from having anything to do with this body. This mental state when the enlightened man feels that he is as vast as the space of the sky, whether that ‘sky’ is in his heart or in the vast recesses of the cosmos outside, that he is literally surrounded by this fathomless and measureless sky, that he is virtually ‘wearing’ this sky as his outer garment, it is then that he does not need the skin to act like that sack which holds his ‘self’ from falling apart.

Let us take an example. Grain is stored in a sack, but if this storage area happens to be a small room in the granary, then the farmer empties this grain on the floor and the sack is no longer needed. Now the ‘walls’ of the storage room become the ‘sack’ of the entire stock of grain that the farmer has. Likewise, the entire space becomes the covering of the Atma of an enlightened man and not just the physical body enclosed by the skin.

(b) The basic function of acquisition of spiritual knowledge is to enlighten a person about the truth of his own Atma and the cosmic Atma known as Brahm. It is to serve this purpose that all the scriptures are studied. So, if and when a person becomes enlightened about these two entities, then it is deemed that he has obtained his final liberation from spiritual ignorance. Hence, to say that ‘one need not know the Lord’ is a metaphoric way of saying that one need not get an overall idea of who the Lord is, how he looks, where he lives, and such other questions by searching for the answers in the scriptures if one has first-hand witnessed the Lord in his own bosom. Once the lamp of enlightenment is lighted, darkness of ‘not knowing this or that’ has no relevance!

When the self-realised person has expanded his mental horizon to cover the entire space of the sky in a metaphoric manner, he virtually disperses through the length and breadth of the sky itself to be identified with it and become one with it. He therefore no longer needs to know how wide, deep or huge the sky is. So, when the self-realised man has understood that his Atma, his ‘true self’, is Brahm personified, then he no longer has to make special efforts to know Brahm—for he is personified Brahm himself.]

21. An ancient sage and seer named Shwetashwatar had come to know about Brahm, i.e. he had become Brahm-realised as a result of his severe Tapa (sincere effort and great diligence; his single-minded pursuit of truth knowledge pertaining to Divinity by means of meditation and contemplation) as well as by the blessing of the supreme Lord himself. [That is, this most eclectic, esoteric and mysterious knowledge was revealed to him during one of his meditation sessions while he was deeply engrossed in contemplation and concentrating his mind and entire being to unravel the secrets of creation and the supreme Authority which brought it all about.]

This essential eclectic and divine knowledge pertaining to the supreme Brahm is always sought and honoured by great sages and seers. So, when he came to realise it, when it was revealed to him and he had first-hand witnessed the existence of the astounding truth, magnificence, majesty and splendour of Brahm, he preached it to other seekers or aspirants (disciples) in his hermitage who were worthy and competent enough to receive this knowledge (21).

22. This profoundly eclectic, astoundingly mystical, most esoteric and sublimely divine knowledge pertaining to the eternal truth about the supreme Brahm had already been expounded and elucidated by the Upanishads in the past and preached by them in their doctrines and tenets¹.

This eclectic knowledge pertaining to Divinity and his holiness the Supreme Being who is the Lord of the entire creation should not be given or divulged to incompetent persons such as those whose inner self has not become completely peaceful, calm and tranquil (i.e. is free from all worldly ignorance-based delusions and illusive attachments leading to all sorts of attractions or distractions and their attendant restlessness for the creature). It should also not be taught to unworthy people who are not either disciples or a son² (22).

[Note--¹This means that this knowledge, as all knowledge for that matter, already existed, and this particular sage was the one who had 'discovered' or 'decoded' its secrets. He had not found anything that was not there, but had only brought it to light and in the awareness of others. In other words, since one does not know about anything, it does not mean that the particular thing has no existence for it is simply ignorance of the existence of that particular thing. But denying that thing altogether 'because it is not known to me' is a height of stupidity and incredulity.

²A disciple has come to the teacher to acquire knowledge, he stays in the hermitage willingly, putting up with all the hardships that are natural when one is away from home for long periods of time, so it would not be proper and honourable for the teacher to not divulge to him all the intricacies of the subject taught, or teach every fine point to the disciple without hiding anything from him. Similarly, a father would do injustice to his son if he hides something of great value from his own son. But it should be remembered that if top secrets of science land in wrong hands, the consequences would be most horrible and disastrous for both the teacher as well as the society at large. For example, gun powder and dynamite opened new frontiers in development because what earlier took ages to dig, such as cutting through mountain to build roads, drilling through underground mines to harvest minerals and gems, became easier and quicker with dynamite. Similarly, nuclear science opened the floodgates of an infinite source of energy as well as medical research and diagnosis, but at the same time it has caused millions of deaths during the Second World War, and possesses the potential to completely obliterate life on earth in any future nuclear war or terror attack. This is because these magnificent technologies have gone to wrong, incompetent, misguided, narrow-minded and selfish hands.

The powers of the Spirit are not less potential and powerful. Yoga or meditation has great potentials to cure innumerable diseases, but if done wrongly it would be disastrous for the practitioner and his health. Likewise, if this knowledge is taught to less intelligent disciple, or to one who is inattentive and callous in his approach to education, even if that disciple happens to be one's own son and heir, the result would be most unwelcome. For example, if the disciple interprets some principle wrongly, then he would pass on this wrong idea to his own line of disciples in future, and the truth would get distorted beyond belief. The result would be that in the future if someone wishes to put that 'truth' to the test, it would prove negative, thereby shaking and uprooting the very foundation upon which the entire faith and that particular school of thought is based. No wise and thinking man would accept things

which are not the truth just because some old man says that it is written in such and such scripture. In fact, in due course of time, the scriptures themselves would get distorted if one single error is made in their transmission from one generation to another, because in such matters one single mistake can have a cascading effect.

Besides determining the aptitude and competence of the student or disciple, the teacher also judges his sincerity and singularity of purpose, his truthfulness, willingness and diligence, his mental steadfastness, eagerness and earnestness as well as his physical health to cope with the rigors of a disciplinary life that is necessary to pursue education in a hermitage or a college. There are instances in the Upanishads themselves when the disciple had to wait for prolonged period of time because the teacher wished to test this particular angle. For example, in Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 8, Sections 7 to 11, Indra was made to wait for one hundred one year by Prajapati before he was answered fully to him about the eternal question about the Atma. A similar instance is cited in this same Upanishad's Canto 4, Sections 5 to 8 when four different entities preached about Brahm's four legs to sage Satyakam Jabal over a period of four nights. In Katho-panishad which is Chapter 1 of this volume there is an incident where Nachiketa was made to wait for three consecutive nights before he could meet Yam, the God of death (Katha Upanishad, 1/1/9). In Maho-panishad of Sam Veda tradition there is another incident where the parrot sage name Shuk who was the son of Veda Vyas had to wait for twenty-one days before king Janak granted him an audience to test his sincerity and steadfastness (Maho-panishad, 2/21-28).

It is to be noted here that age, caste and other criterions are not the deciding factors in giving and accepting knowledge. For example, sage Satyakam Jabal was of a low birth but still his teacher Gautam accepted him as his disciple, seeing his truthfulness, eagerness and sincerity (refer Chand. Up. 4/4/5). Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 2, Brahmin 1 cites the example of a Kshatriya king Ajatshatru preaching a Brahmin sage named Balaki, and even a husband (Yagyavalkya) teaching his wife (Maitreyi) in Canto 2, Brahmin 4, and Canto 4, Brahmin 5.

The quest for the correct and truthful knowledge was so intense in earlier times that even the Brahmin father who had taught his own son did not hesitate to accept his limitations, and both of them approached a Kshatriya king to enlighten themselves, without thinking twice about their exalted stature as renowned preachers of repute and what effect it would have on their own disciples when they come to know that their teacher has gone to learn something from someone else. This is proved by the fact the father-son duo, sage Aaruni and his worthy son Shwetketu, approached king Pravaahan, the king of Panchal in Chandogya Upanishad, 5/3/1-7.]

23. It is only in the bosom (inner self) of those seekers who have deep-rooted faith, sincere and steady devotion, great admiration and firmness of conviction in their heart for the supreme Lord of creation known as Brahm, and have a similar level or degree of devotion, faith and reverence for their teacher that this divine knowledge can show its miraculous effects by showing the light of wisdom, truth, self-realisation and enlightenment to these seekers. This would remove all darkness of ignorance and delusions that had been enveloping them from time immemorial. Verily, it is only in such hearts that the light of enlightenment shines brilliantly. Indeed, it is in such hearts that the light of enlightenment shines through and through! (23).

[Note--This repetition is done to emphasis the great truth about Brahm-realisation. It shows that to experience and witness the eternal light of Brahm-realisation and to drink the ambrosia of bliss and happiness dripping from Brahm like honey from a honeycomb one must have a mind-intellect complex that is conducive to it and finally tuned for it. For the rest, it would only create skepticism, confusion, bewilderment and perplexity. In other words, a deep sense of faith, devotion, conviction and belief are the pre-requisites for success in any spiritual endeavour. Even to embrace success

in worldly pursuits, virtues like diligence, steadfastness, commitment and sincerity are needed. So they must be all the more essential pre-requisites and necessary in the pursuit of spiritual matters because they relate to things that have eternal and higher value than merely the mundane affairs of the world.]

-----Shanti Paath-----

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Chapter 6

Garbha Upanishad/Garbho-panishad

This Upanishad is a rare medico-philosophical Upanishad which judiciously combines metaphysics with medical science as it incorporates embryology and anatomy while describing the process of how the elements of Nature come together to form the complex structure of the living entity known as the ‘creature’ or Jivatma. It is a wonderful sample of how, in ancient times, philosophy was mixed with hard-core science, and how the ancient sages were well versed in both. This establishes one very important point—and that is that the people who taught the Upanishads were acclaimed experts not only in the field of metaphysics, theology and spiritualism alone but also in other fields, especially those that had an empirical and scientific basis. A reading of this Upanishad would prove the fact that medical science was well known at that time, because embryology and anatomy are specialised fields of learning and it is not simply any lay man’s superficial medical general-knowledge that is being proffered here.

This Upanishad was preached by sage Pippalaad, and is in the form of five long paragraphs much like modern text books. It appears that he gave five lectures, and they were collated, edited and written down in the form of this Upanishad.

Paragraph 1 describes how the gross body is formed from the basic elements, what it looks like, which are its organs, what are their functions, etc.

Paragraph 2 outlines how the body absorbs nutrients and how they are utilised.

Paragraph 3 is embryology—it describes the formation of the embryo and its development in the womb, with step-by-step process of the moulding of the different part of the body of the creature. It outlines how the single-celled zygote metamorphoses into the complex structure of the body of the living organism. It is to be noted here that Adhyatma Ramayan of sage Veda Vyas also describes this in almost the same language in its Kishkindha Kand, Canto 8, verse no. 21-32 and 39-40. An English version by this humble author has been published separately.

Paragraph 4 describes how the fully developed and conscious creature becomes aware of the hellish condition in which it finds itself inside the mother’s womb, and regrets about his past deeds that has been instrumental in his plight. He resolves not to repeat his past follies, and once born would lead an exemplary life of righteousness so that he does not have to suffer the horrors of the womb again. It urges the creature to use the golden opportunity of being born as a human being to seek permanent redemption for his ‘self’ instead of repeating the same errors that had landed him in the hell-like fire of the womb.

Finally, Paragraph 5 describes the presence of the ‘fire element’ in the body in various subtle forms. It uses the metaphor of the fire sacrifice to drive home the point that this body is to be used as sacrificial fire-pit by the creature, i.e. his pure ‘self’, to purify himself of all the past impurities that has clung to him over many lives, and obtain final emancipation and salvation through the medium of this body. this paragraph also outlines the anatomical details of the body. Read in conjunction with the outlines of embryology in Paragraph 3, this Upanishad stands out as a unique combination of metaphysics and modern medical science.

It is to be noted that this Paragraph has a close resemblance to Pranagnihotra Upanishad’s verse nos. 18-19 (fire element in the body) and verse nos. 21-22 (doing the fire sacrifice internally in the creature’s own body). This Upanishad is Chapter 29 of this volume.

-----Shanti Paath-----

ॐ सह नावतु । सह नौ भुनक्तु । सह वीर्यं करवावहै । तेजसि नावधीतमस्तु । मा विद्विषावहै ।
-----ॐ शान्तिः । शान्तिः । शान्तिः ।!!!-----

The meaning of this Shanti Paath is given in appendix no. 1.

1. OM Salutations! This body is made up of five primary elements of creation, and each of these elements latently harbours the footprints or the codes that are needed to mould the body of the creature¹.

The body of the living creature enjoys and relishes the flavour of six types of tastes. It is characterised by attributes and personality traits that are formed by a combination of six types of Gunas (qualities, virtues and attributes). It consists of seven structural elements that help to give it its shape. It is corrupted by three faults, taints or impurities. It has two apertures called ‘Yonis’². And this body is nourished and sustained by four basic types of food.

Why is the body said to be made up of five elements? It is because the body is basically made up of five primary elements in creation—viz. earth, water, fire/energy, air/wind and sky elements. These elements were used by the cosmic creator to mould the body out of them (much like the potter using clay and colours of different hues to craft a multi-coloured pot out of it).

So, what do these five elements take in the body and what role do they play? What are the signs of the presence of these five elements in the body? What is the part of the body that can be called the earth element? What is the part that is the counterpart of the water element? Similarly, what represents the Tej or fire element, the wind or air element, and the sky or space element? The answer is this—The gross and hard part of the body represents the ‘earth’ element; the fluid part represents the ‘water’ element; the inherent warmth of the body is indicative of the presence of the ‘fire’ element; that factor which helps all movement—whether inside the body (such as circulation of blood and nourishment, peristaltic movement of the intestines, excretion and belching, closing and opening of the various valves and flaps such as the various valves of the heart, the closing and opening of the eyelids and the glottis, the rhythmic, pulsating beating movement of the muscles of the heart, etc.) or outside of it (such as the movements of the hands, legs, tongue, mouth etc.)—are symbolic of the presence of the ‘air or wind’ element inside the body; and the various spaces in the

body (such as the intercellular, intra as well as inter organ spaces present inside the body) as well as the various holes or apertures or other passages or vestibules in the body (such as the tubular ducts called Naadis—viz. the veins, capillaries, arteries, nerves etc., the anus, the urethra, the buckle cavity and the throat, the nostrils, the opening of the ears, the pores of the skin etc.) are where the sky element is present.

What functions do they have and the characteristics that they display vis-à-vis the body? The 'earth' has the characteristic function of bearing everything. [This is evident in everyday life because the entire world rests on earth. In the context of the creature's body, the outer skin as well as the skeletal and muscular parts which are made up of the earth element carries out the function of bearing the creature's entire burden of all the internal organs just like a sac does.]

The 'water' has the main characteristic that it collects things that come in along its way. [This is evident when flowing river collects all garbage along its bank and carries them along, or a bucket of water is used to wipe the floor clean of all dust and litter. It will also be observed that when water flows on the floor of the house, it would collect any bit of rubbish or shreds of paper that might be lying on the floor. On close examination we will see that as soon as the water touches them, it would literally pluck them up or pull them in towards its self and make them flow along with its stream. So the water element in the body helps to collect all the nourishment derived from food eaten by the creature and carries it through the fluid medium of the blood to all the parts of the body. It is this fluid medium present in the blood which collects all the vitality, stamina and strength as well as the characteristic traits that are so unique to a person in the form of his genes and transfers them to his offspring through the medium of the semen which is fluid in form. It is the water element that collects all waste and toxic elements present in the body and eliminates them through urine and soft stool.]

The 'Tej' or 'fire' element has the main characteristic of giving light, heat and energy. [This translates into the body's inherent vitality, stamina, strength, warmth, energy etc. The presence of the fire element in the body is evidenced also by the fact that without heat and energy no organ can function, no digestion would take place, the circulation would cease and the creature would collapse. That is why a dead body is 'cold' to touch while a body which is 'alive' is warm inspite of the fact that the man might apparently appear to be dead when he is lying unconscious or in a medical coma, or even while sleeping soundly. In all these cases, all the external functions of the body and signs of life are absent because the body is absolutely quiet and shows no movement and activity whatsoever, but it is not considered 'dead' because it is warm to touch and all its internal organs keep on going about their normal functioning. Even the digestive process is active in a sleeping man because of the fire element present inside his body. Had the working of the internal organs of the body depended solely upon physical activity and muscular movement, a sleeping man or an unconscious man would have died automatically.]

The 'air' or 'wind' element keeps everything in the body in its proper shape besides helping in all kinds of movement—both internal as well as external. [Examples of internal movement are the movement of food down the intestines with the help of the Apaana wind, the movement of the abdominal walls due to Pran wind or the process of breathing. Examples of external movement are the movement of the hands, legs, mouth, and eyelids etc. How the winds help to keep the body its shape and texture is best understood by the example of a balloon. The balloon retains its shape as long as the air is inside it, and bursts to a wrinkled mass of crumpled rubber as soon as the air escapes from it. The balloon moves and hops around because of this

‘air’ inside it and the gust of ‘wind’ outside it. The body is also like this balloon with the presence of many forms of the vital airs inside it, both in their subtle forms as Pran, Apaana, Vyana, Udaana and Samaana etc. to mention a few, as well as their grosser forms as the wind appearing as flatus, belching, abdominal rumblings, fluttering felt inside the muscles and intestines, breathing, speech etc. These winds or airs present inside the body perform many functions³. Should these winds decide to leave the body, all other organs would die.]

The ‘sky’ element gives a dwelling to everything because it is the habitat of the entire creation. [All things in creation require space to grow and develop. This is proved by the fact that bottled plants cannot grow properly because of the limited space. The entire cosmos started with one big bang and spread out in all the directions to give the universe the shape we know about, a shape that still continues to evolve and expand because of the limitless supply of space in the sky. A child who gets enough chances to express its hidden potentials and develop its talents achieves great objectives in life when it grows up to become an adult compared to an unfortunate child who passes his formative years in a suffocative environment which stifles all his inner strengths, mental development, talents and natural aptitudes. That is why we yearn so much for our ‘personal private space’ for obtaining rest, peace and quietness in the congested world where privacy is at a premium.]

Besides this, the gross body formed by the combination of these basic elements exhibits certain other specialised functions through the medium of the various sense organs that develop in it. The ‘ears’ help the body of the creature to grasp words or sound in any form, because the function of hearing is carried out by the ear. Similarly, the ‘skin’ helps in feeling anything, the ‘eyes’ in seeing things and their forms, shapes and colours etc., the ‘tongue’ in tasting various tastes and savoring different flavours, the ‘nose’ in smelling different smells, aromas and fragrances that might be appealing to the senses as well as those that are repulsive, the ‘genitals’ in enjoying and obtaining ecstasy by sexual contact as well as to procreate, and the ‘anus’ in expelling faecal matters from the body.

[The first and basic question here is this—the body is said to be gross and inane, having no life of its own, because it is just like a sack to enclose the creature’s ‘self’. In other words, this body is merely a vessel or container that holds life inside it just like an aquarium holding a motley collection of fish and other small aquatic life forms that are bound by or interned in its walls. So how does this body acquire all sorts of knowledge and perceptions which makes it seem to be ‘alive’ and so vital and indispensable for the creature? The basic questions pertaining to the body and the mysteries surrounding it—such as for example how does the creature acquire any kind of knowledge pertaining to this world, how he decides his responses to various stimuli received from the external world, how he uses the acquired knowledge and perceptions to interact with the world and to improve his own prospects of finding permanent peace and rest etc.—are being answered now.]

A living being acquires knowledge by his ‘Buddhi’ (i.e. through his rational intellect). He makes various determinations and vows, creates yearnings, desires and aspirations, and harbours hopes and expectations through his ‘Mana’ (i.e. by his emotional mind and heart). And he speaks through his organ of ‘Vak’ (speech or voice). [That is, a man first uses his intellect to understand the world, then utilises his heart-mind duo to make certain determinations and fixes some goal to be achieved in life in this world. Then he utilises his voice and the faculty of speech located in the tongue and mouth to express himself and make his wishes and intentions known to others. If he teaches, he uses his voice; if he asks question to learn and satisfy his

queries, he uses his voice; if he desires anything, he has to express himself through his voice; if he is unhappy with anyone, he uses his voice to let it be known to the other person that he is unhappy with him. In brief, the faculty of speech and its manifestation as the 'voice' is the medium by which the creature residing in the gross body expresses himself to the outside world. In other words, the voice is the 'spokesperson' of the Atma because it is the Atma that is the truthful identity of the creature and not the body which is merely a habitat of this Atma.]

[The next question is—how does the creature use his sense of 'taste' present in the body to 'experience' the world? This question is answered here.] Now, why is it said that this body has a natural inclination and habitual propensity for enjoying and relishing the flavour of six types of tastes? It is because the creature uses his body, through its faculty of taste present in the brain and functioning through the organ of taste known as the tongue, to determine things which are more to his liking or 'taste'. Taste helps him to learn about the various 'flavours' which symbolise one of the various sensations that are presented for his enjoyment by Nature.

These flavours are metaphors for different characteristics of the environment and circumstances in which the creature lives. This word 'taste' is used here as a metaphor to describe a person's 'experience' of this world. The terms 'taste' and 'flavour' are to be understood in a broader perspective. For example, a man who has had a bad experience of certain circumstance or event or interaction with another person in his life says that it left a 'bad taste in his mouth'. Obviously he is not referring to any kind of food that he had eaten when he uses the term 'taste' but uses the word as a figure of speech to express his disapproval, disgust and his negative opinion of certain things. It also helps him to express his preferences and priorities in life vis-à-vis the world with its huge array of options. Different tastes and flavours help him to judge what is suitable for him, what is fine and elegant as far as he is concerned, what would suit his individual temperament and nature, what is to his liking and fondness, what he favors and approves, and what not.

Basically, 'taste' refers to the way he enjoys the different flavours present in the world in the form of drink and food that he imbibes, and this medium of 'taste' has been primarily devised by the supreme creator to ensure that the creature eats and drinks properly so that he can derive necessary nourishment for his (creature's) own survival, development and growth. Had there not been any taste in this world, had everything been bland and 'tasteless', no one would have liked to eat or drink anything. And without eating and drinking the wheel of creation would have grinded to a creaking halt.

The various tastes or flavours in existence have been classified into basic six categories—viz. sweet, salty, sour, bitter, pungent or hot, and astringent. Sometimes acidic (vinegar) and bland are also regarded as separate category of tastes.

[Now, the question as to how the organ of hearing, i.e. the ear, is used by the body to interact with this world and form its opinion of the latter is being discussed.] The spoken words and all other forms of sound that either the body hears or literally accepts or receives from the outside world, or which it makes itself, such as when someone speaks something, or sings or hums a melodious tune, are classified into two broad categories.

The first category consists of the type of sound based on its harmonious tune, musical meters and notes, melodious value and accent, while the second category is the tone and tenor of the words spoken or sounds made. That is, all forms of sound or spoken word have two aspects—one is the subtle aspect that deal with the fundamental primary forms of sound that form the basis of classical music. The

second aspect relates to the grosser forms of sound revealed in the form of spoken words such as the adjectives used to describe the type of sound—sweet, soft, loud, harsh, irritating, soothing etc.

The first category of sound or spoken words are of the following seven types—viz. Shadja, Rishav, Gaandhaar, Madhyam, Pancham, Dhaivat and Nishaad. These represent the seven basic sound forms that are at the root of all forms of music and all types of vocal sounds made by the body. These are represented by the seven fundamental subtle notes of Indian classical music. [That is, Shadja is the first note corresponding to the sound made by the letter ‘Saa’; Rishav corresponds to the second note of classical music made by the sound of the letter ‘Re’; Gaandhar to the third note corresponding to the letter ‘Gaa’; Madhyam to the fourth note ‘Maa’; Pancham to the fifth note ‘Pa’; Dhaivat to the sixth note ‘Dhi’; and Nishad to the seventh note ‘Ni’. These are like the nouns of pure grammar or like the vowel sounds of the Sanskrit alphabets. They originate in the throat and have a nasal component; they form the basis upon which the rest of the language is founded. That is why classical music relies more on long-drawn sounds emanating from the throat and resonating in the nose or buccal cavity in which single words or letters are stretched for prolonged periods of time.]

The second category consists of three types of words or sounds—viz. Ishta (that word or sound which is welcome, pleasant, acceptable, soothing and desirable for the ear, that which is a herald of good tidings, that everyone is eager to hear and looks forward to), Anishta (that which is the opposite of Ishta, i.e. which is unwelcome and bad, that which causes repulsion, irritation and distress, that which no one would like to hear, that which portends some kind of evil and foreboding news), and Pranidhan-kaarak (i.e. that which encourages and injects a new lease of life in a hopeless situation, that which literally acts as a support and basis for life in the form of providing hopes and encouragement for a good and better future, those words which have a spiritual value such as the Mantras and holy words of the scriptures that uplift the soul). [This second type of sound or the spoken word is like the consonant in the Sanskrit language which requires the use of the tongue and lips to pronounce. They are also like the adjectives in pure grammar which qualify the noun. That is why articulate talking or speech requires the use of tongue and lips rather than merely the nasal sound or vibrations of the vocal cords.]

These ten types of words or sounds originating in this world which the body receives helps in deciding the creature’s own reaction, his own response to the given circumstance as well as how he would interpret it for storage in his memory for future retrieval and responses. These two broad categories of words or sounds determine the body’s behaviour and responses vis-à-vis the world.

It must be noted here that the process of ‘learning and responding’ is firmly based on the ability to perceive different types of sounds and understand the meaning of words spoken. For example, when one hears the trundling sound of an approaching train one immediately becomes cautious about the imminent danger of crossing the railroad line until the time the train has passed by though the train has not warned him in articulate words that there is a danger of being crushed and smothered under it. But the sound of the train itself is sufficient to warn him of the danger because the person has learnt of this type of danger when he was told and explained about it by someone else who had used articulate words to do so; he has been taught or advised that it is fatal to cross the railway track while the train is within earshot, and teaching or giving advice requires the use of clear language. This instance establishes the equal importance of simple forms of sound such as the sound made by a running train as

well as the articulate words that are formed from these basic sounds such as the words used to explain the dangers of crossing the track when the train is near. Similarly, a song needs melody as well as lyrics to become enchanting and meaningful.

[The next question is how the organ of sight i.e. the eye, is used by the living being inhabiting the gross body, i.e. the Atma or the 'true self of the creature' that dwells in the gross body, to perceive this world and see it in its physical form, and then form his opinion of the latter? This is being discussed now.] There are seven basic colours that the body sees through the medium of the sight, and these help the creature to view this world through the spectrum of this prism. These seven colours are Shukla (White), Rakta or blood colour (Red), Krishna (Black), Dhumra (Grey), Peet (Yellow), Kapil (Reddish Brown), and Pandur (Yellowish White). These are the primary colours which are perceived by the brain and the rest of the colours are formed by a combination of them.

Like in the case of tasting, smelling and hearing, this 'seeing' is also a metaphor for discerning and determining the 'actual' physical nature of the world and actually witnessing first hand what was previously only known by the way of tasting, smelling and hearing. Seeing anything is more convincing than merely hearing about it or even tasting its acceptable or unacceptable flavour or smelling or sniffing the presence of anything. Thus, 'seeing' is the greatest proof of not only the existence of the world but also its horrific nature and painful circumstances. When a person sees for himself the pain and suffering in this world, when he witnesses the agonies and torments that endlessly make all the living beings groan and suffer under their crunching weight, when he gets a firsthand experience of the miseries associated with this world of material sense objects, when he realises that no real happiness and peace is obtainable by pursuing the material objects of this world which are as perishable and transient as the world itself, he would need no other proof of the world's dangerous prospects of being associated with this treacherous and horrifying world. He realises the truth of what has been said about this world in the scriptures—about the world's ensnaring tendencies and evil character, about the world's transience and impermanence, about the world's inherent cunning nature to first trap the creature in its tentacles by showing him the honey-trap of illusionary charms and sensual attractions and then once the helpless creature is caught to endlessly torture him till he dies, and so on and so forth.

When a wise man is able to 'see' this real nature of the world, when he is able to see the world bare its fangs, it is only then that he realises the futility of pursuing it and begins to treat it as a death-trap for himself, or his 'true self' called the Atma. He would then strive to find a way out of this quagmire; he would research how he can get out of this trap and find permanent freedom for himself. Herein comes the real metaphysical meaning of the word 'seeing'—it refers not to the physical phenomenon of seeing the outward contours of the gross things in the world that are seen by the means of the physical organ designated for this purpose, i.e. the organ of the body known as the eye, but to having the 'sight of wisdom, erudition, deep insight and enlightenment' which empowers the creature to be able to see behind the external façade and peep deep inside to see the hidden truth that is not visible from the outside. It is like the case when the x-ray machine is able to see behind the covering of the skin to peep deep inside the body and find out any anomalies in the internal organs which are not visible from the outside. Once these anomalies are detected, the doctor can treat them.

In the present context of the world in which the creature lives, this insight into its truth and reality enlightens and wakens the creature up to the harsh realities of life

and the deceptive nature of this world and its charms and attractions which appear so real on the surface but are hollow from the inside. This realisation then inspires him to 'see' or research how he can get out of the muddle and find out something that is truthful and valid. Obviously, to get out of a jam one needs to 'see a way out', for a blind man cannot find or see his way out of a, say, a traffic jam. This 'seeing of the real truth' is the main purpose of having the faculty of sight vis-à-vis the world. This wisdom, erudition and enlightenment also enable the wise man to 'see' the correct path from amongst the maze of paths available to him and proceed on it with characteristic steadfastness of purpose. So this is the real implication of having the eyes and the faculty of sight in the body.

So, a man with 'proper sight and vision' tries not to repeat the errors committed in the past which has landed him in this soup, and instead he tries to see the light down the dark tunnel in the form of his spiritual salvation by leading a righteous life of auspiciousness, nobility, humility and devotion. This is the real 'seeing' of the world and its true form and nature; this is the true use of the faculty of sight that the body possesses. Seeing does not mean gazing at some beautiful scene which gives temporary pleasures to the senses lasting only for some fleeting moment on the shore of life before it vanishes for ever the next moment, leaving a sense of desire and longing for it which robs the man of his peace and happiness.

[Basically it is emphasised in this first paragraph of this Upanishad that a wise person should understand the true meaning of the term 'body' and its 'organs' and their 'functions'. All of them are meant to serve the 'true self' of the person which is his Atma residing inside the body and which uses the body to live in and to interact with the world during its sojourn in this life. If this body is properly employed or used, the Atma is sure to reach its desired destination comfortably and peacefully. Otherwise, the Atma would be enslaved by the body. This can be easily understood by a simple example. An Emperor who falls prey to sensual pleasures and various indulgences and begins to neglect his moral duties and responsibilities towards the subjects of his realm as well as the administration of his empire, the empire crumbles and dismantles one day or the other. Such an emperor becomes a puppet in the hands of his coterie of selfish ministers who literally imprison him and mark the beginning of the downfall of the once flourishing and prosperous empire. On the other hand, a conscientious Emperor is lauded in history and acquires great fame and honour while he is still alive. This concept of the body being a chariot or a vehicle for the Atma to reach its destination is explained in Katho-panishad, Canto 1, Valli 3, verse no. 3-4; and Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 2, Brahmin 5, verse nos. 15, 19.] (1).

[Note—¹This can be visualised when we see that fire is latently present in the firewood though the former is not apparently visible in the latter. It is also said elsewhere in the Upanishads that the earth and the fire elements are latently present in the water element because both of them emerged from the latter—refer Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, 1/2/2 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, and Shwetashwatar Upanishad, 6/15 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition. For example, the earthen pot is made of clay, that means the pot is inherently present in the lump of clay even before it was moulded in this shape. The only difference between the lump of clay and the pot of clay is that the former has no shape while the latter has a fixed shape. But the fact remains that the both the lump and the pot have one common factor, one common denominator—and it is 'clay'. Had this not been so, when the pot is broken, it would have reverted into something other than clay, and it would have been impossible to mould the pot out of clay as it is impossible to craft the pot say out of water or fire. This is because water and fire do not have the pot hidden in their self as their integral part.

²The word *Yoni* literally meaning a vagina or uterus like hole or opening in the body. It is through the vagina that conception takes place, it is in the womb that the embryo develops and grows, and it is through the opening of the vagina that the infant is born. Here these two openings of the body which are being referred to by this term *Yoni* are the mouth and the anus because both are essential to sustain life in the body. The mouth takes in food which provides essential nourishment to the body, while the anus helps to eliminate waste products from it.

³The various vital winds inside the body and their functions are the following--(1) *Pran*, the wind element, as breath, that is exhaled as well as inhaled, and which is responsible for infusing and sustaining life in the body; it is considered the chief wind in the whole setup because without life no other wind would be of any significance to the creature; (2) *Apaan*, the wind that passes down the intestines and is responsible for digestion of the food taken by the creature and its excretion through the anus and urinary organs (kidneys); (3) *Samaan*, the wind that is responsible for equal distribution of nourishment throughout the body, as well as in circulation of blood; (4) *Udaan*, the wind that helps the body to rise and move about, it also helps the body to expel toxic waste gases in the body through the nostrils and mouth in the form of exhalation and cough; and (5) *Vyan*, the wind that helps in maintaining equilibrium and pressure within the body, and it also controls the functioning of the other winds.

Besides the above, there are five subsidiary winds which act more like assistants to the chief *Prans*. They are-- (1) *Naag*—this junior wind which helps in exhaling breath and belching; (2) *Kurma*—this subsidiary wind helps the eyelids to open and shut; (3) *Krikar*—this creates the sensation of hunger; (4) *Devdutta*—this creates sleep; and (5) *Dhananjay*—it prevents decay and deformation of the body immediately after death for some time.

According to *Subalo Upanishad*, canto 9, verse no.1-14 of the *Shukla Yajur Veda* tradition, these ten winds have the following functions—(1) *Pran*—this controls eyes and the faculty of sight (verse 1); (2) *Apaan*—this controls ears and the faculty of hearing (verse 2); (3) *Vyan*—this controls nose and the faculty of smell (verse 3); (4) *Udaan*—this controls the tongue and the faculty of taste (verse 4); (5) *Saman*—this controls the skin and the faculty of touch (verse 5); (6) *Vairambh*—this controls speech (verse 6); (7) *Mukhya*—this controls the hands (verse 7); (8) *Antarayam*—this controls the legs (verse 8); (9) *Prabhanjan*—this controls the anus (verse 9); (10) *Kurma*—this controls the genitals (verse 10); (11) *Shyen*—this controls the *Mana* or the thoughts and emotions (verse 11); (12) *Krishna*—this controls the discrimination, intellect and wisdom (verse 12); (13) *Shwet*—this controls *Ahankar* or the notion of ego, pride, arrogance, vanity etc. (verse 13); (14) *Naag*—this controls the ‘*Chitta*’ or the faculty of concentration, memory, sub-conscious, reasoning (verse 14).

Location of the five chief vital winds, called the *Panch Prans*, in the body—(1) *Pran*—it is present in the mouth, nose, heart, navel, big toe of the leg; (2) *Apaan*—it is present in the intestines and anus, lower abdomen, thighs, knees; (3) *Saman*—it is uniformly present throughout the body; (4) *Udaan*—it is present in the hands, legs, joints of the body; and (5) *Vyan*—it is located in the ears, thighs, waist, heels, shoulders, throat. The subsidiary winds as listed above, i.e. *Naag*, *Kurma*, *Krikar*, *Devdutta* and *Dhananjay* are located in the skin, muscles and the bones.

Besides the *Upanishad* mentioned above, there are others that elaborately describe the vital winds, their locations, their functions, how they are satisfied, along with their significance. The chief amongst them are (1) *Chandogya Upanishad* in its canto 3, sections 13-18; canto 5, sections 19-23 (describes how the five winds are satisfied); and canto 7, section 15, (2) *Jabal Darshan Upanishad*, canto 4, verse no.23-24 of the *Sam Veda* tradition, (3) *Maitrayanu Upanishad*, canto 2, verse no.6-7 of the same *Veda* (which describes the functions of these winds), (4) *Subalo Upanishad*, canto 9, verse no.1-14, and (5) *Paingalo-panishad*, canto 2, verse no.3, *Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad*, 1/3/1-24, 4/1/3, 5/13/1-4, 6/1/8-14 of the *Shukla Yajur Veda* tradition; and *Taittiriya Upanishad*, 2/3 of *Krishna Yajur Veda* tradition. These vital

winds have also been elucidated upon in sage Veda Vyas' Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 4, verse no.38-39.

The Brihad Aranyak Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 3, Brahmin 9, verse no. 26 clearly lays down the pyramidal structure of the five important vital winds. It says that Pran depends and rests upon the Apan wind, the latter upon the Vyan wind, the latter upon the Udaan wind, and the latter upon the Samaan wind although all the Prans are equally important, and there is no distinction between the one and the other as to their importance as well as to the extent Brahm is present in them. We cannot start the counting from any particular entity, saying for example that the Pran wind is number one and more important than the other vital winds. In the present context, this structure is only to show that even in the realm of metaphysics, a hierarchy is maintained, and at the apex of this hierarchical triangle is the supreme entity from which the various vital winds derive their authority and powers and potentials. That supreme entity at the micro level is the Atma as a representative of Brahm who is the supreme authority at the macro level.

As for belching and flatus, they are equally important as the other forms of the air because they help the body to get rid of excess accumulation of waste toxic gases inside the body which can prove detrimental to the general health of the body if not expelled. The rumbling is like the stomach growling for attention and requests the body to pay heed to its problems.

The fact that the body cannot survive without the Pran representing all the vital winds present inside it has been clearly brought out in Chandogya Upanishad, 5/1/1-15, and Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, 1/3/1-24, 6/1/8-14.

The importance of these five fundamental elements in creation (i.e. the earth, water, fire, air and sky) vis-à-vis life and the living being are succinctly brought out in Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, 2/5/1-4, 6 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition.]

2. Now the answer to the question 'how is the gross body said to be made up of seven constituent parts, and what are those parts?' is being answered.

When a man named Devdutta has access to material objects of comfort and pleasure in this world, he is able to enjoy them. In other words, when the circumstances are favourable for him and he is able to acquire those material things in this world that gratify his sense organs and are pleasing for them, things of material comfort and those that are to his liking which keep him happy and in a cheerful mood. This includes the abundant availability of delectable, appetising and nutritious food and drink, having all the six types of basic tastes that the body desires to taste and enjoy (as mentioned above in Para no. 1).

When such food and drink are available, it is but natural that the man eats to his full and feels mentally contented. This has an extreme good effect on his metabolic activities, and his general excellent health shows his level of contentedness and satisfied hunger, when he has no desires to eat any more of anything (as compared to a famished man who hasn't had a good meal for so many days and yearns for some good appetising food, which has an adverse effect on his mental and psychological health and he remains in a state of perpetual hunger and on the look out for food instead of devoting his time to some other constructive activity).

[It must be noted here that usually it is a rich man who has access to the best of delicacies and a wide variety of food available to mankind along with the least of manual labour that would consume the maximum of energy and calories, and the maximum of physical comforts and pleasures with no dearth of leisure time to enjoy his drinks and the food eaten by him. Apparently he should be in the most robust and

pink of health, but unfortunately it is not so, for more often than not a rich man who leads an opulent lifestyle is ridden with innumerable diseases as compared to his brother who might be toiling in the fields or working on the factory floor. This is because of the quotient of mental happiness and contentedness that the latter has and the former lacks. This internal peace of mind helps to regulate the metabolism of the body and absorb the nutrients from whatever is eaten better as compared to the case when the best of food is dumped inside the body but go un-utilized, rather proving toxic instead for the body. So, merely availability of good food and the time to eat it at ease, or being able to lead a plush, princely and rich life well provided for are not the deciding factors for the body being well-nourished and well-fed as intended in this Upanishad. What is implied here is the level of one's spiritual state, the level of one's internal peace of mind and contentedness that helps the body to derive the maximum of benefit from whatever is eaten. As has been emphasised elsewhere, the body of the creature is a personification of the Viraat Purush, the Lord of creation, and the Atma residing in this body is the Brahm himself. Each morsel of food is to be regarded as an offering made to the sacred fire burning inside the body and meant to be accepted by the divine Being (Brahm) residing inside the same body. In this context, the body itself is regarded as the venue of the fire sacrifice—refer Pran Agnihotra Upanishad, verse no. 21-22. Since a fire sacrifice is a holy exercise and not some kind of office or college party to be enjoyed after a year's work, the food eaten with this conviction and idea becomes holy and well regulated; it acquires a divine connotation instead of something to be enjoyed to gratify oneself. In earlier times, great ascetics, sages and seers led an austere life full of hardships but their mental outputs in the form of scriptural and philosophical research and discourses have had no parallel; great sages and seers had families and their biological off springs had no match in their wisdom and mental prowess. This is the exact implication of this paragraph—a man feels contented and happy, he feels 'well fed and satisfied of hunger' at the mental level and not at the physical level of eating delicious food or drinking intoxicating liquids. A man undertaking abstinence from food for spiritual reasons might feel more exhilarated and fresh than a man just out of a sumptuous meal in a high-end restaurant.]

The psychological effect of a favourable meal which is delicious and eaten with relish is that it sets off a chain reaction in the body which in turn secretes some chemicals which promote good health and general well being by making the best out of the food eaten by utilizing all the nutrients present in it. In other words, these six basic tastes make the body absorb the goodness of the food and drink, and benefit from them. In other words, the tasty the food or drink is, the more nutritious it is for the body, because the body willingly accepts it and relishes it. This also results in direct building and repair of the tissues of the body, leading to its 'pink of health'. [This is proved by the fact that if the food or drink is not to our liking, then no matter what quantity of it is available, and no matter how much we eat or drink just to overcome the pang of hunger or thirst, the body would not accept it with the same enthusiasm as it does food or drink which are to its liking. The result is that the food or drink is not relished, and the digestive organs consequentially revolt and refuse to secrete digestive juices as a result of which the cells do not get sufficient nutrition and the general health declines.]

The juice extracted by the body from the food or drink are converted into blood. Blood is converted into flesh, flesh into muscles, muscles into nerves and veins, the latter into bones, bones into marrow, and the marrow into semen and its life-bearing element, the sperm. So, these seven fundamental elements in the body are

created out of the food or drink having the six attractions in the form of the tastes which make them acceptable to the body.

The subtle and sublime qualities present in what is eaten and drunk are collected and stored in the heart. [That is why a man's nature depends very much on the type of food eaten by him. If the food is basically of a 'hot' category, such as hot spices and flesh of aggressive animals, the man's basic nature also becomes aggressive, hostile, belligerent, short-tempered, restless, hot, angry and subject to bursts of tantrums in consonance with the basic nature of nutrients present in the food eaten by him, while those who eat food which is 'cold' in its inherent nature, such as fruits and vegetables, develop a more balanced, calm, compassionate and cool temperament. Even the same food having different origins has different constituent nature—for example, cow's milk is considered inherently cooler by nature as compared to the buffalo's milk which is considered hot. Similarly, those who drink wine excessively become prone to delirious, impulsive, reckless and aggressive behaviour than those who completely abstain from any kind of intoxicating drink. The impact of food and drink upon the general health and mental setup of a person is so profound that even drinking such innocuous liquids as water in the hot or cold forms effect his health and mood—for example, while hot or warm water infuses energy and vitality during winter, it is not acceptable in hot summers when the same purpose is served by cool water. So, in short, the general health and bearing, the temperament and behaviour, the character and nature, the personality and level of mental and moral development etc. of a man depend much on the type of food eaten and drink drunk by him.]

It is union of the male's sperm and the female's ova that the embryo is formed. Since this union is brought about by compatible hearts, it follows that the character of the food and drink also affects this relationship and its product, the embryo. [Since the offspring is formed from this lump of flesh called the embryo which develops into the foetus carrying the characters of both the parents, and since these characters are formed to a great extent by the food eaten or drink imbibed by the parent, it naturally follows that the fundamental character of the food or drink is passed on to the offspring and shape its personality, nature, temperament and behavioural patterns. Now, the presence of these vital characters of the food or drink in the heart is a metaphoric way of saying that they shape the environment in which the pure conscious Atma lives inside the body of the creature, because the heart is the dwelling of the Atma. This Atma is the 'true identity' of the creature, so we deduce that the atmosphere created by the nature of food eaten and drink imbibed by the body in turn moulds the character and nature of the creature by influencing the Atma. As the Atma lives surrounded by the subtle space of the heart, called the Hridaya Akash, anything that affects this space would naturally affect the Atma. For example, the sun shines in the sky, but if there are dark clouds in the sky, the bright sunshine would obviously be affected and for all practical purposes the sun itself would appear to be shrouded in a dark veil which blocks its shine. In other words, anything that pollutes the inner self of the father from whose body the sperm was obtained as well as the mother from whose body the egg was derived and from whose body the embryo derives its nourishment through its developmental phase would naturally pollute the inner self of the foetus and the infant that is born into this world.]

The heart stokes the 'fire' that burns inside the body of the living creature. [This observation has several connotations. It refers to the fact that while the heart is beating, the circulation of blood in the body continues, thereby keeping the body warm and alive. Only as long as the heart beats, the myriad functions of the body are

carried out, and this is manifested by the 'warmth' that the living body exhibits. Even a man in deep sleep or in an unconscious state has a warm body to show that all his internal organs such as the digestive organs, the liver, the lungs, the kidneys etc. are ceaselessly working. Another meaning of the word 'fire' in the context of the heart would be the passions and longings that have their origin in the heart and which bring about a union between the two opposite sexes, resulting in the formation of the embryo. Still another interpretation would be the creation of acidic and hot substances in the body such bile and other digestive juices which have acidic and hot character. This is elaborated further below.]

This fire produces the 'bile' which is hot in nature. This hot bile produces the wind or air element. [The fact that heat generates currents of air or a waft of wind is witnessed when we observe that when a fire is lit a slight breeze begins to blow, fanning the fire and helping the sparklers arising from it to fly away to some distances in every direction. This is because hot air near the source of the fire expands and rises up, creating convection current in the air around the fire. It is this reason why huge bush fires generate hot winds which only stoke the fire further and help it to spread quickly. The bile is secreted in the intestines to digest food. Gases are formed during this process of digestion and excess of hot bile and acids produce hot gases that rises up in the throat or down the intestines, producing a burning sensation in the chest and the passage of hot flatus in the anus respectively.]

The wind or air in turn helps the heart to function properly; it helps to develop activity in the heart; it makes the heart alive and active by making it beat and flutter occasionally. [That is why the heart beats and flutters. Its rhythmic beating is responsible for circulation of blood as well as the very life of the body. The fluttering sensation felt occasionally in the region of the heart is often due to accumulation of excessive gases in the body. After a heavy meal it is usually felt that the heart beats faster and more strongly just like a bird fluttering its wings faster and stronger to overcome air turbulence and resistance. According to metaphysical concepts, there are certain forms of winds present inside the body which are responsible for its normal functioning. These have been outlined in the note to Paragraph 1 above. Since the heart is the only internal organ whose activity can be physically verified by the virtue of its regular beating and occasional fluttering, it follows that it is virtually showcasing the ability of the vital winds in the body to create movement and activity.]

3. When conception is effected during the period of menses in the female by the union of the male sperm and the female ova, then within one night the formation of the one-celled Zygote commences. This develops into the froth-like Morula. This transforms into the Blastula or Blastocyst during the next fifteen days. This finally becomes more robust as the Gastrula within one month. The head appears within the second month, the legs within the third month, the ankle bone, abdomen and waist region are discernible in the fourth month, and the spine is formed in the fifth month. During the sixth month, the apertures of the head appear—i.e. the mouth, nostrils, eyes and ears make their appearance.

The embryo gets its first sign of life in the seventh month. In the eighth month, the embryo is deemed to be fully developed and acquires all characteristics of the would-be infant.

If the male sperm is more potent, the child is a male, while if the female genital fluids are in excess, more potent than the male reproductive fluids and denser

in viscosity, then the offspring is a girl child. If both are equally potent then the offspring is a hermaphrodite or eunuch.

If the sexual intercourse is done with an agitated and restless mind, then the offspring is blind, hunch-backed, deformed or dwarfish. [That is, they are deformed, and have abnormal physical characteristics because of the flawed and stunted growth of the embryo and foetus in the mother's womb.]

If the sperm is divided into two due to being buffeted by the air or wind element, then it results in the conception of twins.

When the gross body made up of the five gross basic elements (earth, water, fire, air and sky) is ready in the womb, it becomes conscious of life in the form of five senses of perceptions that are discerned by the mind (brain). This helps the creature to acquire knowledge of the various sense objects of the world that correspond to these respective sense perceptions. For example, the creature's perception of smell located in the nose helps him to learn about certain aspect of the world by identifying and receiving the stimuli known as 'smell' that would immediately help him to identify this individual thing in future. It also helps him to decide whether or not this thing is to his likings or not, and therefore whether or not to accept it in future. This perception of smell is like a piece of the composite mosaic that helps the creature to form an image of the world in his mind. The other 'pieces' of this mosaic are the perceptions of sight, taste, touch and sound. Together they act in concert to help the creature to receive the world and respond to it. It is like the case of using five colours to paint a picture of a bouquet of flowers—one type of colour would not serve the purpose because a rose is pink while the sunflower is yellow.

These sense perceptions are those that are related with the five sense organs of the gross body, such as the sense of sight which is related with the eye, the smell with the nose, the taste with the tongue, the hearing with the ears, and the touch and feeling with the skin. These five sense perceptions help the organism to realise that it is 'alive'; it has some intelligent capability which distinguishes it from inert and inane entities, and that the physical world does indeed exist because these sense perceptions have their origin in the external world of material objects.

While living in the womb, the unborn creature's consciousness or its pure self which is in a foetal form begins to meditate on OM, the monosyllable ethereal sound. [This is a symbolic way of saying that it starts to 'breathe' in a subtle manner because during formal meditation OM is pronounced silently within one's own mind while one slowly inhales and exhales breath in an imperceptible manner. This is also to highlight the importance of the fact that even while in its most primitive and primary form, even while it is still in the mother's womb in a nascent stage of its life, the creature had learnt to meditate and contemplate in order to acquire strategic mystical powers and potentials that would transform an otherwise formless and helpless piece of lump of flesh, muscles and bones into a formidable creature who would be born in this world do so many deeds that would turn the shape of the world in future. No one can imagine that the small embryo lying helplessly in the womb would one day turn out to be a formidable conqueror who would reduce to rubble entire civilizations under his ruthless cruelty, or a great scientist or a great sage and seer or prophet for that matter who would give new direction and vision to the world, who would show mankind light down the dark tunnel of hopelessness and despair. This meditation is also done by the 'embryonic' creature (the foetus) to break free from the hellish condition of the womb in which it finds itself. This is corroborated by Paragraph no. 4 below. Further, this OM represents the vibrations generated in the cosmic ether prior to the evolution of creation; it was the first sign that there was an activity and that this

activity would produce some sort of consequence—and as it happened, this ‘consequence’ was the unfolding of this vast creation. These vibrations produced a subtle sound and the cosmic sound was like the distant rumbling of clouds or the trundling of a train. Ancient sages who could perceive this sound during their meditation thought over the matter and decided upon the word OM as being the nearest in sound as that distant cosmic vibration. It is believed that the entire creation can be traced to this single event; the entire creation is encrypted in the four letters of this word OM, i.e. A, O, U and M.]

This meditation infuses the body of the embryonic creature (i.e. the foetus) with other signs of life—such as the acquisition of eight ‘Prakritis’ or the physical characteristics and basic nature that qualifies a creature and entitles him to be called a ‘living being’ or a Jiva. They help to establish his independent identity and personality. [These eight Prakritis are (a) the basic nature and temperament, (b) the fundamental exalted stature of the pure consciousness or Atma which is the real self of the creature, (c) the subtle ego and sense of pride that become integral to the character once the creature become aware of his own basic greatness and potentials, and (d) the five sense perceptions of sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch or feeling. $(1 + 1 + 1 + 5 = 8)$. These eight Prakritis are related to the creature at the subtle level of his existence.

Now we come to the sixteen faults or flaws that the embryonic body of the creature (i.e. his foetus) acquires—they are (a) five organs of perception (eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin), (b) five organs of action (legs, hands, mouth, genitals and excretory), (c) five gross elements (earth, water, fire, air and sky) which constitutes its basic framework and which leave their own peculiar stamp of characteristic qualities and virtues on the body in which they are present in different ratios, and (d) the Mana or mind and heart, or the emotions and thoughts that the creature possesses. $(5 + 5 + 5 + 1 = 16)$.¹ [There is another reason for listing items as ‘faults or flaws’. The embryo is an indistinguishable mass of flesh and blood and other body fluids. But what makes it so special and different from others such tumor-like structures in the body is the fact that the embryo harbours the spark of life which others do not have. This embryo would produce a living being capable of reproducing itself—a rare and magical feat. This ‘life’ in the otherwise lifeless vulgar bundle of blood, body fluids and flesh is called the ‘consciousness’ that most had surreptitiously found its way in it. This is the miracle of creation! This ‘consciousness’ would eventually become the ‘true self’ of the creature when the mature foetus comes out from the dark-cavernous interns of the womb into the outside world as an infant. Now we would observe here that this ‘consciousness’ is untainted and faultless because it is independent form both the parent whose union has resulted in the creation of the embryo. But unfortunately this ‘consciousness’ has to live in a filthy environment and surrounded by the sheaths that cover it from all sides. These sheaths or the different structural features of the embryo have come from the parent and not from outside. Thus it is obvious that the primarily immaculate consciousness now becomes ‘tainted’ due to circumstances. As the embryo becomes ‘solidified’, and as the time passes the organs begin to take their shape, the ‘consciousness’ finds itself firmly encircled and shackled and entrenched in a prison from where it is almost impossible to escape now. It is like the case of a convict condemned to life imprisonment!

There is another reason why these are called ‘faults or flaws’. It is because initially the embryo was a rounded uniform mass which had no distinguishing features. Anything which can be distinguished from the other must have certain characteristic features which either are in excess or lesser than the thing with which it

is compared, for if it is not so there can be no distinction between the two entities. Therefore, none of them is perfect, because they would appear to have some abnormality or anomaly in them when viewed from the perspective of the other entity. For example, if 'A' is deemed to be a perfect sample, then 'B' is imperfect, while if the latter is perfect then the former is imperfect. The best way to understand this concept of the organs being imperfect and ridden with some or the other type of fault is the fact that the hands only receive and give but cannot take the body to some place which is done by the legs, but the latter can't accept or give. Similarly, the eyes can only see and do nothing else, the nose can only smell, the skin can only feel, the excretory organs can only eliminate, the genital can only reproduce, etc. In short, each of these organs has a very limited role and they seem to be very jealous in guarding their territory of influence. The eyes won't allow the ear to see, and vice versa, so on and so forth. In other words, none of these organs are perfect, but the 'consciousness' is perfect; the latter can do everything at the same time while the organs have specific functions allocated to them.

The Yogtattva Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 12-13 presents a list of faults or imperfections that afflict the creature and thereby taint its otherwise immaculate Atma. This Upanishad is Chapter no. 17 of this volume.]

The food and drink taken by the mother goes to nourish the embryo through the various ducts of the mother's body, i.e. through her veins and capillaries to reach the developing embryo in her womb to satisfy its hunger and thirst. [The placenta is the tubular duct that links the creature in its primitive form to the mother. When taken at the cosmic level it implies that the individual creature is linked to his cosmic mother, i.e. Nature, through the various characteristic attributes, qualities and virtues that he inherits and which decide his primary nature and basic personality traits. That is why the two are spelt the same way—the former with a capital 'N' as Nature, and the latter with the smaller 'n' as nature.]

In the final month, i.e. in the ninth month, the foetus is fully developed with all the sense organs in place. At this point of time the creature remembers its past life, and all the deeds done by him in it, whether they were good or bad, flash back into his memory (3).

[Note—¹According to modern embryology, the ectoderm of the developing embryo forms the outer skin and other external organs of the physical body. The middle layer called the mesoderm forms the flesh, muscles, genital organs and the other internal organs of the body. The inner most layer, the endoderm, forms the alimentary canal, digestive organs, liver etc.]

4. When the living being (in his ninth month in the mother's womb and when he is ready to be born in this world) has a flash back of his numerous past lives, he begins to ponder, 'I have seen (experienced and witnessed) thousands of my previous lives during which I ate so many things and drank so many drinks, and I went around wandering in so many wombs, suckling milk from so many mothers. I was repeatedly born and I repeatedly died. Whatever good or bad deed I had done for my family and my kith and kin have landed me here (in this hell like environment of the womb), and I am suffering from their consequences. All those who benefited from those efforts of mine have long gone away, leaving me alone to suffer the horrendous consequences of my evil deeds. Here I am lying in an ocean of miseries and sorrows, with no solution or end in sight. If I manage to get out of this hellish womb, I shall take the

refuge and shelter of the great Lord Maheshwar (literally Lord Shiva, but here referring to the Supreme Being in any of the manifestations in which he is worshipped and adored by the devotee). This would help me to overcome and destroy all the evil effects of my misdeeds and sins, and pave the way for my liberation and deliverance from their horrors, and provide my soul with emancipation and salvation for good, because the divine feet of Lord Maheshwar has the potential of providing such boons.

Indeed, if I manage to get freedom from this hellish womb, I shall take the refuge and shelter of the great Lord Narayan (referring to the Lord Vishnu who is also known as the Viraat Purush, the almighty, all-pervading and all-encompassing macrocosmic form of the Supreme Being or Brahm; Lord Vishnu is the sustainer and protector of this creation). This would help me to overcome and destroy all the evil effects of my misdeeds and sins, and pave the way for my liberation and deliverance from their horrors, and provide my soul with emancipation and salvation for good, because the divine feet of Lord Vishnu has the potential of providing such boons.

Indeed, if I manage to get freedom from this hellish womb, I shall diligently practice Sankhya and Yoga¹. These two are powerful tools and potent enough to terminate a creature's sufferings that accrue to him as punishment for his past evil deeds, and instead provide liberation and deliverance to him from their horrible consequences.

If I indeed manage to find liberation from the sufferings of this womb this last time, I will meditate and contemplate upon the supreme Brahm. I shall always remember the Lord and spend my life in honouring him'. [This shows that the creature has made a solemn promise of leading a noble, virtuous, auspicious and righteous life if he is pardoned for his past sins and given one last chance to atone for his past misdeeds and mend his ways. It is like going out from a prison on parole and mending one's life so that one does not have to suffer the torments of jail any more. The Lord is so gracious, benevolent and magnanimous that when the creature thus makes the solemn vow and appeals to him in earnest, the Lord gives him one more chance, and so he is allowed to come out of the womb into the world. But it is so disgraceful and shameful of this wretched creature that once set free from the hell-like prison of the womb, he forgets all his promises and righteous intentions, jumps bail, and goes about his dirty old ways with all the more vengeance that he can command!]

After that, he is allowed to reach the gates of this womb (which is like reaching the gate of the prison before he is allowed to go free into the world outside). Once there, he is squeezed out of it with great difficulty. [Even his final coming out is not without its own set of troubles, its own torments. The creature is literally pushed out from a small hole which is too small for his comfortable exit.]

As soon as he puts his head out, he is touched by the wind called 'Vaishnavi', which is a metaphor for the enchantment created by 'Maya' or worldly delusions which virtually sweep over him and takes him along its current. The creature begins to hallucinate and think that he would not have to go back to the hell-like womb representing the prison-like womb any more. The touch of this magical wind of Maya (ignorance of reality and creation of worldly delusions in its stead) has such a mystical hypnotic effect upon the creature by immediately creating an aura of delusions that he instantly forgets about his past lives and the numerous cycles of deaths and births that he has had to undergo. This gust of wind called Maya is so overpowering that it also removes all memory and knowledge of deeds, whether good or bad, that the creature had done in those lives, and the lessons that he had learnt from them. He also forgets about the horrible torments in the womb as well as the numerous promises he had made to the Lord there. That is why he cannot distinguish

between one deed as being bad and one as being good in his current life although he has had a lot of experience of doing such deeds in his numerous past lives and the consequences that they have, their results that makes one suffer so much. So, the creature repeats the same errors, the same set of misdeeds, and commits the same stupid follies that he had been committing in the past and which had caused him so much pain and suffering all along over so many lives.

[It is like a man emerging out of the high walls of the prison to jut his head into the sunshine of freedom and enjoy the first breeze of liberation blowing caressingly across his face. It titillates him no end, and he feels a flow of ecstasy radiating in his veins and nerves. And in this temporary exhilaration and joys of freedom, the creature forgets what he is out on parole and he has to mind himself, for if he does not live up to his promises, the court can cancel his bail and he would be back to square one once again. He forgets about the harsh realities of the womb and the fact that he has been allowed out on certain bonds, and therefore he must be aware and careful lest he would have to undergo the same horrors in the confines of the prison walls once again if he does not keep his part of the bargain. And what is that bargain? Obviously that he would lead a righteous, auspicious and noble life, not allowing himself to commit any misdeeds and sins, and spend his time in search of the Truth which can give him permanent peace and salvation. Hence, rejoice he can for finding freedom from the horrors of the womb but not at the cost of his long term goal of finding permanent means of not reverting to another womb in future.] (4).

[Note—¹The philosophy of *Sankhya Shastra* has been elaborately described in Chapter 5, Shwetashwatar Upanishad, Canto 6, verse no. 1-3 and 13.]

5. [This part of the Upanishad has a close resemblance to verse nos. 18-10 (fire) and verse nos. 21-22 (fire sacrifice done internally in the spiritual seeker's own body) of the Pran Agnihotra Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition which is Chapter 29 of this volume.]

Why is the gross lump of muscles and fibers called a 'Deha', or the physical body of the living organism? The answer is because the 'fire element' in its three subtle forms—such as 'Gyanagni' or the fire of knowledge, erudition, wisdom and enlightenment, 'Darshanagni' or the fire which lights up the world with its light and resides in the faculty of sight (both the physical sight located in the physical organ of the eye as well as the ability of deep insight which enables one to penetrate the surface and see things in their natural and truthful form by the use of intelligence and wisdom), and 'Jatharaagni' or the fire that stokes hunger by keeping the oven of digestive organs burning and consuming fuel in the form of food—exists in this body; these fires take shelter in this body.

Amongst these three forms of fires, Jathraagni is one that digests anything that is eaten, drunk, licked or sucked. Darshanagni is one which enables one to see things. And Gyanagni is the one which helps to discriminate between what is good deed and what is not.

The divine 'fire' has three other forms also. Their locations in the body are as follows—the 'Ahavaniya' fire resides in the mouth, the 'Garhyapatya' fire lives in the abdomen, and the 'Dakshinagni' has its abode in the heart¹.

[Now, a symbolic way of worshipping the divine 'fire element' by treating this 'body' as a metaphor for the various components of a formal fire sacrificial ritual is being described.] The Atma (the pure conscious true 'self' of the creature) is the

Yajmaan (the chief patron on whose behalf the entire fire sacrifice is performed and who is supposed to be the beneficiary of the entire ritual) of this symbolic fire sacrifice.

The Mana (mind and heart; emotions and thoughts) is like the chief priest known as Brahma who presides over the fire sacrifice. [This is because it is the sincerity of devotion and faith in the fire sacrificial exercise that bears positive fruits for the patron. As any endeavour needs concerted efforts to succeed, the involvement of the mind and heart are the pre-requisites for success in this spiritual enterprise as well. Though the word 'Mana' is usually used technically to mean the mind only, here the heart is also included in its ambit to present a comprehensive picture of things.]

'Lobh', which refers to the various types of greed, desires and yearnings pertaining to this material world of sense objects, are like the sacrificial animals. [This implies that one should symbolically sacrifice all his worldly greed and desires in the order to achieve success in this spiritual fire sacrifice. This symbolism is based on the practice of sacrificing animals during the fire sacrificial rituals. It is more important to sacrifice all evil tendencies and burn all worldly taints in order to actually benefit from such religious activity than merely killing innocent animals to fulfill certain obligations, because blood-letting and causing pain to others for selfish motives is in no way conducive to spiritual enhancement.]

The symbolic 'Diksha' (the investiture ceremony whereby the chief patron performs certain rituals and is formally initiated into this religious sacrifice by making certain vows and undertaking to observe certain strict norms to the accompaniment of chanting of Mantras; it requires amongst other things that the patron would engage in this religious ritual with full devotion and faith) are acceptance of the sacrosanct principles of 'Dhairya' (patience, forbearance, tolerance, courage and fortitude) and 'Santosh' (a perpetual sense of contentedness and satisfaction in whatever is available, and not being rapacious, greedy, desirous and lustful towards anything).

The sense organs of perception in the body (such as the ears, eyes, nose, tongue and skin) are the symbolic pots used during a fire sacrifice. Similarly, the organs of action (such as the legs, hands, mouth, genitals and excretory) are the symbolic offerings, called 'Havi', to the sacrificial fire.

The head, called the 'Kapaal' (literally the skull), is the water pot or bowl, also called a 'Kapaal', used to keep the offerings to be made in the sacred fire; the hairs represent the green grass called 'Kusha' (which is used to make the mat upon which one sits during such rituals as well as the brush used to sprinkle water for purification during rituals); and the opening of the mouth is the pit of the sacred fire.

Since the head has four holes (such as the nostrils, eyes, ears and mouth) it is like the Kapaal, or a pot with four holes used during fire sacrifice rituals, while the row of teeth is like the Kapaal with sixteen small corrugated legs upon which it stands (because there are sixteen teeth in one row). [Liquid offerings are poured into the sacred fire through the holes in the pots referred in this stanza. The four organs present in the head, such as the eye, ear, nose and mouth, are like holes in these pots. Further, these pots are so designed that their lower half have a base which is serrated like the blade of a saw—hence they represent the lower row of teeth in the mouth.]

[Now the anatomy of the body is being outlined.] This body has one hundred seven sensitive points or locations. It has one hundred eighty joints, one hundred nine main nerves, seven hundred nerve endings or ganglions, five hundred sites of marrow, three hundred eight bones, and four and a half crore (4.5 x 10 million) hairs.

The heart weighs eight 'Pal' (1 Pal = 1 Tola = 12 grams; hence 8 x 12 = appx. 96 grams). The tongue is twelve 'Pal' (12 Tola = 12 x 12 = 144 grams appx.). Bile

weighs one 'Prastha-maatraa' (= appx. 930 grams). Mucous weighs appx. one 'Aadhak-maatraa' (= $2.5 \times 930 = 2325$ grams appx.). Semen is appx. one 'Kudav-maatraa' (= 250 grams). And fat or marrow weighs two 'Prastha' (= $2 \times 930 = 1860$ grams appx.).

Besides this, the quantity of urine and stools in the body varies according to the food or drink that the body takes in.

The knowledge contained in this Upanishad was first revealed and enunciated by sage Pippalaad. Hence it is named after him as 'Paipalaad Moksha-shastra'. It is the scripture that has the potential to provide one with liberation and deliverance. [This is because it warns the spiritual seeker of the various pitfalls of being ignorant of the horrors of remaining engrossed in this world and forgetting about the horrible experiences of the hell-like womb and the solemn promises that one had made there before emerging in this world, promises that one usually forgets once he is out of the prison gates of the womb. The knowledge of how he has come into being, how his body and its organs are formed, who he grew and developed in the hellish environment of the womb, and under what circumstances he was born etc. fills a wise man with great revulsion for his origins and he then decides not to repeat the experience again. Once he takes this decision he strives to find out a way to achieve this end by consulting the scriptures and other wise men. He then discovers the great Truth and then fixes his attention on it. He strives to do everything possible not to re-enter this hellish cycle of birth and death again, and finds that it is actually possible. This wisdom and enlightenment is the stepping stone for his ultimate liberation and deliverance from this world.] (5).

[Note—¹The *three fires* mentioned here have been elaborately described in Chandogya Upanishad, canto 4, section 10 to 13. Actually there are five formal divine fires — (a) 'Garhyapatya' (the fire of the household hearth), (b) 'Dakshinagni' (the fire used as a witness to making charities or any other religious festivity), (c) 'Ahavaniya' (the fire to invoke the Gods during a ritualistic sacrifice), (d) 'Sabhya' (the fire of the Vedic period which was continuously lit) and (e) 'Awasathya' (the fire of the later Smriti period). Worship of the three important fires have been described in Chandogya Upanishad, canto 2, section 24, while canto 5, sections 4-10, 19-24 explain their great symbolic metaphysical significance.

The *Garhyapatya fire*—This is the householder's fire. A householder has land and farm representing 'earth' in which he grows food. This food is grown with the help of the light of the Sun, and it is cooked in the fire of the fire-place in the house. Hence, the Garhyapatya fire, or the householder's fire, is intrinsically present and is implied in these 4 entities. It is an integral part of these four. The earth has the 'fire element' because without heat and warmth, no seed would germinate and no life can survive on this earth. The food has fire present inherently in it because it is the energy inherent in food which helps to energise the creature that eats it. The presence of heat in the sun does not need to be explained because it is very evident.

The *Dakshinagni fire*—is a witness to making of charities when some water is poured as libation to the Gods. It signifies that the Gods are offered water to drink. To give water to the thirsty is the greatest form of charity. Therefore, this fire is symbolically present in water, and when it is poured, it signifies that the heat produced by sins committed by the person has been doused. Charities and donations make a man famous and renowned, hence the allusion to directions of the earth. His glory shines like the bright moon and he is called a star among human beings. He is the most exalted amongst his peers and compatriots even as the moon is most prominent amongst the stars in the sky.

The *Ahavanīya fire*—is lit to invoke Gods, and the Gods live in the heaven; hence the reference to the sky, heavens and electric. Since Pran is the best form of the vital winds, the allusion means that the Gods are the most exalted forms that exist in

creation. The ‘electric’ is a metaphor for immense strength, potent and power, which of course the fire possesses. This inherent quality of Electric that it possess most stupendous powers and strength is likened to the presence of Brahm in it even as the great power and strength present in a man is due to the Atma or Pran present in him. Even as a man is useless without the presence of Pran in him, the Electric would lose its importance if there was no Brahm present in it which gives it its punch and strength.]

-----Shanti Paath-----

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Chapter 7

Narayan Upanishad/Narayano-panishad

Dedicated to Lord Narayan, also known as Vishnu and Viraat Purush, this Upanishad expounds and elucidates the great metaphysical and spiritual importance and significance of this form of transcendental Divinity. Narayan is the primary cause of creation, and therefore of whatever that exists in it; he has manifested himself in everything that exists, being immanent and omnipresent. Narayan is a manifestation of the Supreme Being's (Brahm's) glorious virtues of providing sustenance, protection and nourishment to the creation created by none other than the Lord himself. The etymology and other details pertaining to the Lord known as Narayan or Vishnu are given as note at the end of Paragraph 1 of this Upanishad.

There are in all five paragraphs. Paragraph 1 narrates the fact that Lord Narayan is the Supreme Being who has created the entire world, including the Gods. Paragraph 2 highlights the all-pervading and immanent facet of the Lord besides his transcendental nature and form. Paragraph 3 describes the eight-letter Mantra of Lord Narayan, and the stupendous mystical powers that it possesses which gives the worshipper all he desires. Paragraph 4 outlines the metaphysical significance of the ethereal divine word OM and the benefits of doing Japa (meditation by constant repetition) with it. This paragraph also stresses the fact the all the divine forms or manifestations of the Supreme Being are nothing but the various forms of Lord Narayan. Paragraph 5 finally concludes the exposition by eulogizing the glorious potentials of this Upanishad and the great good it can bestow upon the faithful if read diligently and with firm conviction.

It is to be noted here that each paragraph of this Upanishad concludes by saying that what has been said in it is the summary of the basic doctrines of a particular Veda. For example, Paragraph 1 says that what is said in it is the essence of the Rig Veda, Paragraph 2 summarises the teaching of the Yajur Veda, Paragraph 3 is the essence of the Sam Veda, and Paragraph 4 of the Atharva Veda. To enhance the beauty of these paragraphs, a brief introduction of these four divine Vedas has been included at the end of each paragraph as note.

There are two devotional hymns dedicated to Lord Vishnu and Lord Narayan, called the Vishnu Sukta and Narayan Sukta respectively. They have been included as two separate appendices nos. 3 and 4 at the end of this volume.

-----Shanti Paath-----

ॐ सह नावतु । सह नौ भुनक्तु । सह वीर्यं करवावहै । तेजस्वि नावधीतमस्तु । मा विद्विषावहै ।
-----ॐ शान्तिः । शान्तिः । शान्तिः ।!!!

The meaning of this Shanti Paath is given in appendix no. 1.

1. OM Salutations! By invoking the divine name of the Supreme Being, the narration of this great Upanishad is being commenced. Verily, it is Lord Narayan¹ who reclines peacefully and blissfully in the bosom of all living beings as their Atma or their 'true self', which is pure consciousness.

Before this visible creation came actually into being, Lord Narayan decided to initiate the mystical process of creation, and so he resolved 'Let me create living beings and a creation that has 'the mystical and esoteric factor of life' in it'².

It is from Narayan that the all-pervading and immanent life-giving and life-sustaining Pran³ has emerged. It is from Narayan that Mana (mind) and the various organs of the body emerged. The fundamental primary elements of creation, such as the sky, the air or wind, the fire or energy, the water and the earth which bears the entire living world, are all born from Narayan.

It is from Narayan that Brahma, the creator, is born. It is from Narayan that Shiva, the concluder, has come into being. It is from Narayan that Indra, the king of Gods, is born. All the Prajapatis⁴, the legendary guardians of creation and regarded as the first manifestations of the Lord as 'living beings' of the visible creation from whom the rest of the creatures were born, also have Narayan as their parent.

It is from Narayan that the twelve Adityas⁵ (the celestial suns and the Sun God) are born. It is from Narayan that the eleven Rudras⁶ (the various forms of Lord Shiva), the eight Vasus⁷ and all the Chandas (literally the poetical styles in which the hymns of the Vedas were composed, but here implying the Vedas themselves) have come into being.

Everything in existence has its origin in Narayan; everything goes about doing its assigned tasks on the orders and inspiration of Narayan; and it is in Narayan that they finally take their rest at the time of conclusion.

This is what the first of the Vedas, i.e. the Rig Veda⁸, unequivocally asserts and affirms (1).

[Note—¹Lord Narayan and Vishnu are synonymously treated in the scriptures. The etymology of the word *Narayan* is—the primary one who has his abode in the primordial causal waters of the cosmos; one who is the abode of all living creatures; one who has his residence in the bosom of all living beings as their Atma or pure self or consciousness; one who is the final goal of all spiritual pursuits. When the transcendental Supreme Being decided to initiate creation, his first revelation was Hiranyagarbha which represented the macrocosmic subtle body of creation, and from it emerged the *Viraat Purush* who is the macrocosmic gross body of creation. This 'Viraat' is literally the vast, infinite, measureless, fathomless and colossal form of the supreme Brahm, a form which is all-pervasive, all-encompassing, all-inclusive, immanent and omnipresent in creation. The 'Purush' is literally an entity that lives inside a dwelling, here referring to as the pure consciousness that lives as the Atma of all the living beings. (Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, 2/5/18-19). This Viraat Purush is therefore the vast and all-inclusive cosmic Consciousness that entered the gross body of the creature and found a comfortable a ode in the heart as his Atma. This Viraat

Purush at the macro level of creation is known as *Vishnu*, the one who lives immanently in this creation, inseparable from it and forming its integral part.

Since Narayan or Vishnu is the term used to imply the Viraat Purush who is Brahm personified at the macrocosmic level of creation, it follows that Narayan or Vishnu is the supreme Lord of creation. It is from him that the rest of the creation has emerged. All forces of creation, right from their origin till their conclusion, have this Narayan representing Brahm as their primary source. It is Narayan that is the eternal fountain from which they all the dynamic forces of creation derive their independent strengths, abilities, authorities, potentials and powers. The primary forces are represented by Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, protector and nourisher, and Shiva the concluder. The other elements of creation are the sky, air, fire, water and earth. Indra represents the chief force that controls all other unit forces of creation, and therefore he has been depicted as the 'king of Gods' because all the Gods are deemed to personify one or the other aspects of the divine forces of creation which are responsible for controlling the various facets of the multifarious and varied creation. For example, Aditya or the Sun gives light, heat and energy to the creation in their twelve forms, including the visible Sun in the sky. The Vasus represent the essential assets that are needed to sustain all forms of life on this earth. Rudras represent the dynamic and forceful nature of a creature that helps it be pro-active and assertive in this world, to protect the assets generated by him and give protection to the society and his dependants by the use of force if necessary. And so on and so forth.

Lord Narayan or Vishnu is said to recline on the *Kshirsagar* which is the celestial ocean of milk indicating Amrit or the ambrosial fluid of eternity and bliss. That is why he is immortal and blissful, being surrounded by it. This ocean also indicates the primordial fluid from which the rest of the creation is formed, and hence it is the 'causal water' or the causative factor which is at the foundation of all living creation coming into being; it is the wellspring of life in all its varied forms. The scriptures describe that earlier there was water everywhere, and from this primordial fluid emerged the earth and the fire element that kept this earth warm, making it habitable and enabling it to harbour life forms. This fact has been affirmed in Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 1, Brahmin 2, verse no. 2, and the Old Testament of the Holy Bible, the Book of Genesis, verse nos. 9-11.

Narayan or Vishnu has dark blue hue as his complexion, symbolising the *blue colour* of the endless sky which implies that wherever there is sky Lord Narayan is invariably present at the place. He has four arms signifying the four quarters or quadrants of the compass, implying that the Lord controls all the corners of the creation. His *Chakra* (discus) stands for the cosmic mind (because like the mind, the Chakra also flies off on the instructions of Vishnu to pursue its target relentlessly), the *Gadaa* (mace) stands for the cosmic intellect (because it acts to forcefully subdue the opponent in the form of the wayward mind and organs of the body), the *Padma* (lotus) stands for the continuously evolving world (because lotus springs forth from water, and this world also springs forth from the causal waters of the cosmos), and *Shankha* (conch) stands for the five elements such as sky, air, fire, water and earth. There are two more weapons in the hands of Narayan or Vishnu—viz. the bow called *Saarang* symbolising cosmic senses, and the sword called *Nandak* symbolising wisdom.

Let us analyse how the Shankha or conch stands for the five elements as observed here. The conch is hollow from the inside, indicating the sky or space element. It produces sound when air is blown into it, indicating the presence of air element. The snail had this as its dwelling, indicating the fire element because it is this fire that helps a creature to live. The conch is formed in water and not on dry land like trees and terrestrial animals—indicating its origin in water element. The body of the conch is hard calcium like the rocks and solid surface of the earth, indicating the presence of earth element as its integral part.

The vehicle of Narayan or Vishnu is the bird called Garud (eagle or heron), and it symbolises the faculty of speech. This is because a man's wisdom and erudition are known when he speaks. Speech and the spoken words give 'wings to a man's ideas'; his inner thoughts are made known to others only when he speaks. Words and ideas are transmitted from one person to the other like the bird flying off from one tree and perching on another. That is why speech is likened to the bird. Garud is regarded as a personification of the knowledge contained in the Vedas because this knowledge is transmitted through the means of speech. Besides this point, there is another way of looking at this aspect. The knowledge contained in the Vedas help a wise man to reach his spiritual destination much like Lord Vishnu employing the services of Garud if he wants to go any place.

Narayan or Vishnu is said to recline on the bedstead of *Sheshnath* or the legendary serpent of thousand hoods. The word 'Shesh' means 'leftover or remainder'. At the time of conclusion of creation, 'something' remains from which the new creation would come into being. This 'something' is the 'seed' represented by Shesh. So Sheshnath represents the sum total of all the souls in their subtle forms which have been leftovers from the previous generation or cycle of creation, hibernating and waiting for the opportune time to remerge as a new creation. In this context, the Kshirsagar or the ocean of celestial milk called Amrit, upon which this Sheshnath floats, is like the preservative ambrosial fluid which sustains life and gives it nourishment during the time it is in hibernating phase before the commencement of new creation or springing forth of a new generation of living organisms.

Lord Vishnu has one of his names as *Vasudeo* because he is the sustainer and protector of creation, signifying his lordship over all the essential elements in Nature, called the Vasus of which there are eight in number, created to help sustain the forthcoming creation.

The Yogtattva Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 2 describes Vishnu as a Maha-Yogi, Maha-Bhut and Maha-Tapa.

The Subalo-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, in its Canto 6 also describes the omnipresent and all pervading form of Narayan. The *Paingalo-panishad* of the Shukla Yajur Veda, in its Canto 1, verse nos. 6 and 10 describes Vishnu in the context of the genesis of creation.

Vishnu appears in the Vedas as follows—Rig Veda—1/154-156; 5/3/3; 7/99/1-3; 7/100; Sam Veda—222; 1625-27; Yajur Veda—5/15; 6/4; Atharva Veda—3/27/5.

²The word Pran refers to the vital winds that not only infuse life in the gross body but also sustains it. This Pran is the all important 'breath' which is like the spark of life in this creation, for without Pran no life is imaginable. When the creator created the gross body of the creature in his likeness he found that this body showed no signs of life—i.e. it did not move, it did not talk, it did not showed any other signs of life. So the creator 'breathed life' into this lifeless and inert body lying like a dead piece of log on the ground. This 'breath of life' is Pran. The word henceforth came to be synonymous with all the other vital winds that lend life to the living being. There are five main vital winds and they are Pran (breath), Apaana (the wind that controls digestion and excretion), Samaana (wind responsible for circulation and equal distribution of nourishment in the body), Vyan (wind which maintains equilibrium), and Udaana (which helps the body to get up and move about).

³At the very beginning of creation there was no sign of 'life', or any kind of other activity. There was complete quiet and calmness. The 'one who was present then', i.e. one who existed even before the rest of the creation came into being, is called Brahm or the Supreme Being. Since nothing can come into being without the existence of some primary source, because matter and energy can only change their form and nature but simply cannot appear from thin air, it follows that there must have been some 'source' from which the rest of the creation evolved. This 'source' was the one point where everything collapsed at the time of the end of the previous creation, only to emerge at the proper time as a new creation. Again, since only something which is

inherently alive and has latent energy present in it can show signs of life and activity, since only something which is conscious and intelligent can ‘think’ and make ‘decisions’, the fact that Narayan ‘thought’ that he must start creation, and then went about ‘actually doing’ it proves that he had consciousness and intelligence even prior to the emergence of living creatures. He pre-dated and post-dates this creation. The concept of creation has been elaborately described in a number of Upanishads. To summarise—(a) Rig Veda tradition—Aiteriyo-panishad; Mudgalo-pansishad, Canto 2-4; (b) Sam Veda tradition—Chandogyo-pansishad, Canto 3, Section 19; Canto 4, Section 17, verse nos. 1-3; Canto 6, Section 2-10; (c) Shukla Yajur Veda tradition—Trishikhi Brahmin, Canto 1; Painglo-pansishad, in its Canto 1 and Canto 2; Subalo-pansishad, Canto 1-8; Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 1, Brahmin 1-2, 4-5; Canto 6, Brahmin 4; (d) Krishna Yajur Veda tradition—Panch Brahm Upanishad; Kath-rudra Upanishad, verse nos. 17-26; Shwetashwetar Upanishad, Canto 4; Canto 5, verse no. 5; Canto 6, verse no. 1-3; Taittiriyo-pansishad, Valli 1, Anuvak 7; Valli 2, Anuvak 1-2 and 7; Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 10-11; Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 8-12; Shaarirko-panishad; Yog Kundalini Upanishad, Canto 3, verse nos. 20-23.

⁴*Prajapati*--Shwetashwatar Upanishad, 4/11-13, and 5/3 of Krishna Yajur Veda states that the Supreme Being who created this world had also created the different *Prajaptis* to take care of this world. The ‘Prajapati’ is the guardian of the world appointed by the supreme creator to take care of the mundane affairs of running the world. They have taken two forms—one that of the *Gods* at the cosmic level, and the other that of the *Manus*, the first humans, at the level of this mortal existence on the earth.

There are *twenty four Devtas or Gods*, and they are the following—Aagneya (Fire), Prajapati Brahma, Soma (Moon), Isha, Savitri, Aditya (Sun), Bhrihaspti, Varun, Bhag-dev, Aryamaa-ishwar, Ganesh, Twastaa, Pushaa, Indra, Vayu, Vamdeo, Maitraa-Varun Dev, Vishva-dev, Maatrikaa, Vishnu, Vasu-Dev, Rudra Dev, Kubera and Ashwini.

The *fourteen Manus* of mythology, who were the forefathers of the entire creation, are the following—(i)Swaayam or Swaayambhuva, (ii) Swaarochisa, (iii) Aautami or Uttam, (iv) Taamas, (v) Raiwat, (vi) Chaakshush, (vii) Vaivaswat, (viii) Savarni, (ix) Daksha Savarni, (x) Brahm Savarni, (xi) Dharma Savarni, (xii) Rudra Savarni, (xiii) Dev Savarni or Ruchi/Raucha Savarni, and (xiv) Indra Savarni or Bhaum.

‘Vaivaswat or Vaivaswat Manu’ is the 7th Manu and the legendary progenitor of the current living beings on this earth. The word ‘Vaivaswat’ means coming from the Sun or belonging to the Sun, or relating to or belonging to Yam (the God of death and a judge of a creature’s deeds done by it during the life time). It also means the planet Saturn as well as one of the Rudras. In the present context of this text, Sri Ram means the Vaivaswat Manu who is the forefather of the human race in general and Sri Ram’s ancestor in particular because he belongs to the Solar race.

The word ‘Swayambhu’ refers to the primal man represented by the creator Brahma as well as the Viraat Purush who were both born from the Lord called Narayan who is deemed to be their father. Swayambhu was the male aspect of creation, and his female counter part was Mother Nature. The word means ‘someone who was born out of his own free will’. So, Viraat Purush and Brahma are generally regarded as Swayambhu, because both were born out of their own free will as a manifestation of Brahm. ‘Swayambhu Manu’ was the first male born on earth and from him the rest of the creation was born.

The word ‘Swayambhu’ also means ‘self existent’ and refers to Brahm, while ‘Swayambhu Manu’ is Brahma, the Prajapati or the Lord and sustainer of the subjects of this creation; he is a representative of the Male aspect of creation, the Viraat Purush, and is primal male par excellence; he is the divine father of the human race. The name ‘Manu Swayambhu’ is especially applied, in the context of the Purans of

which Ramayan is a part, to fourteen successive mythical progenitors and sovereigns of the earth and who create and sustain this world through successive long period of time called 'Kalpas'. The first such mythical progenitor is known as 'Manu Swayambhu' as the one who sprung (created or manifested) from the self-existent Brahm. He is regarded as a secondary creator who commenced his work of creating by producing 10 Prajapatis, of whom the first was 'Light' called Marichi. To this Manu is ascribed the celebrated code of conduct called 'Manu Smriti' and two other ancient Sutra work on Kalpa and Grihya, i.e. the sacrificial and domestic rituals. He is also known as Hiranyagarbh and Prachetas.

The other five Manus are called Swarochish, Uttam, Taamas, Raivat and Chakshush. The 7th Manu is called Vaivasvata Manu the son of the Sun God, and he is regarded as the progenitor of the present race of living beings. He is like the Noah of the Old Testament of the Holy Bible, is said to have been preserved by Vishnu or Brahm in the form of the legendary great fish from being drowned in the great deluge of the dooms day. This Manu is also called as one of the twelve Adityas, the author of Rig Veda, VIII, 27-31, as the brother of Yam (the God of death and a judge of a creature's deeds done by it during the life time), as the founder and first king of Ayodhya, and as the father of Ila who married the son of the Moon-God named Budha. This makes two great dynasties—the solar and the lunar races to which Sri Ram and Krishna respectively belonged—related to each other. The 8th Manu, or the 1st of the future Manus according to Vayu Puran, III, 2, will be Savarni, the 9th would be Daksha Savarni, the 10th would be Brahm Savarni, the 11th would be Dharma Savarni the 12th would be Rudra Savarni, the 13th would be Raviya or Deva Savarni, and the 14th would be Bhautya or Indra Savarni. The life of one Manu is equivalent to roughly 311,040,000 years.

⁵*Adityas*—There are many versions describing these twelve Adityas or mythological Suns as follows—(a) The twelve Adityas are the mythological Suns and appear as patron Gods who (i) take care of the world (Rig Veda, 2/27/4); are like the heads (Taiteriy Brahmin, 1/2/3/3) and eyes (Jaimini, Uttar. 2/1/2/3) of all the creatures. These twelve Adityas appear first in the Rig Veda 1/41/4-6 and 2/27. They are the sons of Aditi, the mother of Gods (Atharva Veda, 8/9/21). They are the following—the eight Vasus + Indra + Sun + Vishnu + Shiva = twelve in number.

(b) According to Brihad Aranyak Upanishad 3/9/5, the *twelve months* of the year represent these *twelve Adityas*, one month for one Aditya. In this Upanishad, sage Yagyavalkya draws a parallel between the twelve months of a year and the twelve Adityas for the following reasons—First, with the passage of one complete year, a corresponding number of years are subtracted from the total number of years that a person is supposed to live in this world. That is, death comes so much the nearer to him. The passage of the sun across the sky from dawn to dusk is used as a symbolic way of depicting the passage of the life of a man from his birth till his death. Since there are twelve mythological suns and twelve months in a year, a parallel is drawn between them and the life of a man.

Second, the whole life of an individual creature as well as the entire creation as a whole depends upon the various seasons that appear in a year. If even one of the seasons is disturbed, the entire cycle of life is disturbed correspondingly. For the smooth functioning of life, all the seasons must appear in a rhythmic and systematic manner, and it is a scientific fact that the seasons, upon which the life on earth is so dependent, also themselves depend upon the sun. That is why the Adityas are termed as being synonymous with the twelve months of the year as well as with the life cycle of creation.

(c) According to Vishnu Puran, the twelve Adityas are the following— Dhata, Arayma, Mitra, Varun, Ansha, Bhug, Indra, Vivaswan, Pusha, Parjanya, Twashta and Vishnu.

(d) Sun God or *Surya*—appears first in the Rig Veda, 1/50. He is one of the chief Gods that sustain life. He is closely related to the Fire God; the Sun is a visible

manifestation of the fire element. The sun is regarded as the 'eye' of the Viraat Purush. The Sun God watched the deeds done by all the creatures (Rig Veda, 1/50/2). It is like the Atma of all the creatures (Rig Veda, 1/115/1; Shatpath Brahmin, 14/3/2/9).

(d) Aditya or the Sun God has been repeatedly regarded by the Upanishads as a manifestation of the Viraat Purush who himself is the macrocosmic gross body of Brahm. For example, Chandogya 1/6/3, 5, 6; 1/10/7; 2/9; 2/14; 2/24/12-14; 3/1-11; 3/18; 5/13; 6/4/2 etc.; and Brihad Aranyak 2/1/2; 2/5/5; 3/7/9; 3/9/5; 5/15 etc.

⁶*Rudra*—(a) Lord Shiva has eleven forms called Rudras. The eleven Rudras are the various manifestations of Lord Shiva. They are the following:--(i) Mannu, (ii) Manu, (iii) Mahinas, (iv) Mahaan, (v) Shiva, (vi) Ritdwaj, (vii) Ugrareta, (viii) Bhav, (ix) Kaal, (x) Vamdeo, and (xi) Dhritvrat. The eleven Rudras appear in Rig Veda 1/43/1, and Taittiriya Brahmin 3/4/9/7. They are regarded as the father of the Wind God or the Maruts (Rig Veda, 2/33/1). The word Rudra means one who is angry, terrible and wrathful. Amongst the Rudras, Lord Shiva is regarded as the most senior and enlightened.

(b) The eleven Rudras according to Vishnu Puran (1/1/15) are the following—Har, Bahuroop, Trayambak, Aparaaajeet, Shambhu, Vrishakapi, Kapardi, Raivat, Mrigvyadh, Sharva, Kapaali.

(c) Lord *Shiva* has eleven forms, and one of them is *Rudra*, which literally means anger, wrath and vehemence. The Lord is considered to be the most enlightened of the Trinity Gods, and is therefore called *Maheshwar*. He always remains in a meditative posture, always contemplating and meditating on the supreme Soul and the Truth. But still he shows anger and mercilessness, because one of his tasks is to punish the evil and sinful ones by ruthlessly slaying them in order to protect the good and righteous souls in the creation. Further, when his meditation and peace is disturbed he also becomes angry. He remains aloof and disinterested in the world, because he is very wise and enlightened, and he stays in the form of an ascetic. Ordinary people think that he is proud, arrogant and haughty because he does not give a damn to worldly formalities and niceties of behaviour. Shiva's failure to conform to set norms of proper and sane conduct makes him look most odd God. The word 'Rudra' is used as a metaphor for anger, wrath, vehemence and cussedness.

⁷*Vasus*—These 'Vasus' are the various patron Gods who preside over the essentials of life; they are eight in number—Vishnu is the sustainer, Shiva who is the annihilator, Kuber who is the treasurer of the wealth of the Gods, the Sun, Water, Fire, Wealth represented by gems and gold, and 'Ray' representing glory and fame. The element 'Fire' is the most potent, prominent and essential force in creation, because without fire the world would freeze to death. Hence, the Fire-God is said to be the chief amongst the Vasus. The 'fire' element is the active force in creation and is primarily responsible for kindling the cosmic cauldron that set in motion the process, and once having set it in motion it then sustained it and would finally annihilate it by burning it to cinders. On the other hand, Lord Vishnu is the passive force of creation represented by his other form of Viraat Purush which is the primary male aspect of creation. Lord Vishnu, who is the sustainer of the creation, is the Lord of Laxmi who is the Goddess of wealth, and is the supreme creator because Brahma, the old patriarch of creation who created the visible world and its creatures, was himself born atop the divine lotus that emerged from the navel of Lord Vishnu. Lord Vishnu utilizes the services of Laxmi who is the personification of the active forces of creation to create, sustain and annihilate the world. The Vasus are symbolic Gods who represent those essentials aspects of creation without which life would be difficult to conceive and sustain and finally conclude.

The eight Vasus are the patron Gods who provide succour and a dwelling place for the whole creation. They symbolise those primary necessities of life without which existence is not possible. They are— (i) Kuber (the God of wealth and prosperity), (ii) the Sun God (who provides energy and food) and his rays and

radiance (i.e. sunlight and the energy that it provides), (iii) Shiva (the concluder or annihilator of the creation), (iv) Vishnu (the sustainer), (v) the Water God (called Varun), (vi) the Fire God (called Agni), (vii) any body of water such as a pond, a river etc., and (viii) holy and pious people (who give advice and guidance to the creatures of the creation). According to Brihad Aranyak Upanishad 3/9/3, the Vasus are the following-. Fire, Earth, Air, Antariksha (the space of the solar system), Aditya (Sun), Duloka (heavens), the Moon, and the Nakshatras (the stars and the planets).

According to Purans, the eight Vasus are the following—Dhruv, Dhar, Som (the sap of an elixir-providing plant called Som which is used during religious ceremonies as sanctified liquid offered to the Gods), Aap (water), Anil (wind), Anal (fire), Pratush and Prabhas.

These eight Vasus are the semi-Gods who symbolise the various types of assets needed to sustain this world. They therefore represent such assets as jewels, precious stones and gems, gold and other forms of wealth and property. Vasus also refers to the fire and water elements as well as their grosser forms as the terrestrial fire and water bodies such as ponds and lakes; to the virtue of radiance, splendour and glory; to the ray of light; to Kuber (the treasurer of Gods), Shiva, Sun, Vishnu, and a simple and pious gentleman.

⁹The *Rig Veda*—The word Veda is derived from the root ‘vid’ meaning ‘to know; to be enlightened; to be aware and learned’. Therefore, the Vedas represent the vast body of esoteric and sacred knowledge concerning eternal spiritual values and metaphysical matters regarding the Absolute Truth and Reality of creation. They were revealed to great sages and seers during their meditation and contemplation sessions. The Vedas are the highest canonical literature in Hinduism. As to the rough date of their revelation, a consensus amongst scholars is that it is roughly the period between 10000 and 1000 B.C.

The Vedas are called ‘Srutis’ because they were orally transmitted and were ‘heard’ from one generation to another. Fundamentally, the Vedas honour the divine forces of Nature which govern all aspects of life in this creation by personifying them as deities or Gods who were offered respect in the form of offerings made during the fire sacrifice which was deemed to be the best and the most sacred form of religious activity since early times. That is why the hymns of the Vedas—which were initially one composite mass of verses—were divided into four divisions according to the convenience and use they were put to by the priests who performed these elaborate fire sacrifices.

Hence, the liturgical hymns used by the priest called the ‘Hota’ to invite the various deities to the sacrifice became the Rig Veda. Those hymns used by the priests called the ‘Adhvaryu’ who was the chief executor of sacrificial rites were brought together as the Yajur Veda. Collection of all the hymns that were musical chants that could be sung and had melodious intonations were grouped under the Sam Veda. These musical intonations were used during special fire sacrifices called the Soma Yagya where the extract of the Soma plant was used as offerings to the sacred fire. The priests that performed this sacrifice were called ‘Udgaatar’. The rest of the hymns, which were like the appendix and addenda, were collated in to the Atharva Veda, and the priests who used them were called the Brahma. They were the senior priests who presided over the whole sacrificial ritual.

It was sage Veda Vyas, known as Krishna Dvaipayana Vyas, who divided the Vedas into four types, and taught them to his four chief disciples—Paila was taught Rig Veda, Vaishampaayana was taught the Yajur Veda, Jaimini was taught the Sam Veda, and Sumantu was taught the Atharva Veda.

The Vedas are classified into two sections—Mantras and Braahmans. The collection of Mantra is called the Sanhita. The Braahman have two more divisions—viz. the Aranyaka and the Upanishad. The Sanhita is a pure collection of hymns in poetical style of composition while the Braahman is a liturgy in prose format. The Aranyaka may be described as basically symbolical interpretations of the liturgical

rites included in the hymns and they are based on meditation and contemplation. The Upanishads are metaphysical discussions and philosophical treatises on the esoteric and mystical meaning of the Vedic hymns, and they deal with the practical problems of life vis-à-vis the different tenets and various doctrines that form the integral part of the Vedic canons.

Taken in their purest form, the Vedas refer to the Sanhitas—the collection of hymns. The Brahmins are considered as appendages. This is probably because the main use of the Vedas in earlier times were fire sacrifices and it was not until later period that emphasis was laid on their utility and importance from the philosophical angle and the practical application to answer the problems of life and the final way to get rid of them.

Since Veda Vyas had four disciples and each of them had their own line of disciples, it is natural that the Sanhitas got edited and readjusted down the line. It is also due to the fact that they were transmitted orally, with no written standard text. So the chances of edition, readjustment, distortion, insertion, interpolation and unilateral changes, minor and major, in the origin body of Vedas was inevitable. The influence of local customs and circumstances over the thousands of years that the Vedas survived also had a great deal of role to play.

The Vedas are said to be not man-made but revealed texts, and therefore called 'Aparushya'. Their language and terminology is difficult to comprehend, and hence many subsidiary texts called the Up-vedas came into existence. These are called Vedangas or limbs of the Vedas. They are the following—Shiksha (deals with learning the hymns and how to chant them), Vyaakarana (grammar), Chandas (poetical styles of composition), Nirukta (meaning and explanation of Vedic texts), Jyotisha (astrology and astronomy) and Kalpa (formula or aphorisms called the Sutra). The Kalpa has 4 branches—viz. Shrauta, Grihya, Dharma and Shulba. This deals with all sacrificial rites and even those that are done at home by an individual householder.

The *Rig Veda* is the oldest Veda revealed over a long period of time (10000-4000 B. C.). Hence there is a variety of languages, grammar, ideas and compositions styles noted in this Veda. Two methods are used to divide this Veda. In the first method, the Sanhita is divided into eight Ashtakas, and the latter is divided into Adhyayas, the latter into Vargas, and the latter contains the Mantras. The number of Adhyayas in each Ashtaka, the number of Vargas in each Adhyaye, and the number of Mantras in each Varga is more or less the same. Therefore, there are total of 8 Ashtakas, 64 Adhyayas, 2024 Vargas, and 10552 Mantras.

The other method is that the entire Sanhita is divided into ten Mandals or sections or divisions or chapters. These Mandals are then divided into Anuvakas, the latter into Shuktas, and these Shuktas into Mantras. The number of Anuvakas is 85, and the Shuktas are 1028. The total number of Mantras are however the same as stated above—i.e. 10552. This latter method is now accepted as the norm.

The topics dealt with in the *Rig Veda* fall roughly into three broad categories. The first deals with worship of personified forces of Nature as deities such as Agni (fire), Varun (water), Indra (the king of Gods and the controlling deity of rains) etc. The second topic deals with philosophy of creation and the real nature of human life. The third topic deals with mundane subjects like marriage, wars, the virtues of generosity and magnanimity etc.

There are said to be a long chain of sages and seers belonging to the *Rig Veda* tradition, and according to some estimates their number is 800.

Basically, the *Rig Veda* deities are 33 in number—viz. the 8 Vasus, the 11 Rudras, the 12 Adityas, Indra and Prajapati. [Refer Narayan Upanishad, Verse no. 1 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

There are 10 Upanishads in the *Rig Veda*.]

2. [This Paragraph presents a very holistic view of the Supreme Being known as Narayan. He is depicted as the all-inclusive supreme transcendental Being outside of whom nothing exists, whether it is good or bad.]

Lord Narayan is perpetual, truthful and eternal. The creator Brahma is no one else but Narayan. The concluder Shiva is also no one else but Narayan. The king of Gods, Indra, is similarly no one but Narayan. The God of death and time, Kaal, is likewise none other than Narayan.

The different directions of the celestial globe (i.e. the north, east, south and west) are the different revelations of the same divine Lord known as Narayan. The angular directions (lying between the four cardinal points—such as northeast, northwest, southeast and southwest) are also manifestations of Narayan (for the same reason). Narayan is the Zenith (the upper point; the apex) and the Nadir (the bottom; the lowest point). Narayan is the inside and the outside of everything. [In other words, there is no location in the entire creation where one would not find Lord Narayan because he is immanent, omnipresent, all-pervading, all-incorporating and all-encompassing. Not only this, whatever that exists in this creation is one or the other form of Narayan. Nothing exists that is not Narayan.]

Whatever has happened in the past, whatever is happening in the present, and whatever shall happen in the future—everything is nothing but Narayan.

The only entity in creation which is without any blemishes, taints, faults and shortcomings is Narayan. He has no alternatives, comparisons and parallels. He is so stupendous, magnificent and grand that it is not possible to describe him in the slightest (or, he is beyond the scope and reach of the faculty of speech and comprehension of the mind).

Verily, he is the most immaculate and pure, the most holy and divine Lord of creation. Indeed, there is no one other than him in this creation. [That is, he cannot be compared with anyone in this creation; no one can supersede him; no one can undermine his authority.]

A wise person who knows these facts in the way they stand becomes one like Lord Vishnu. He indeed becomes Vishnu personified. [This is because Narayan or Vishnu are manifestations of Brahm who resides in the heart of all living beings as the Atma or pure consciousness. And once a wise man realises this fact, once he becomes ‘self-realised’—which entails his becoming aware of this basic fact that everything in this creation, including himself, is a manifestation of Brahm and nothing but Brahm, and the fact that his ‘true’ identity is his Atma which in turn is Brahm personified—it would automatically mean that he realises that he is a personification of the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic all-inclusive form of Brahm who is known as Vishnu in this cosmic form. Thus, a wise, self-realised and enlightened man is personified form of the Viraat Purush or Vishnu at the microcosmic level of creation.]

Verily, this is what the Yajur Veda¹ asserts and affirms; this is what it teaches; this is the profound doctrine enshrined in this Veda (2).

[Note—¹The *Yajur Veda*—The word ‘Yajus’ means a liturgy of hymns chanted during the fire sacrifice. The Yajur Veda has been classified into Krishna and Shukla branches. It would be pertinent and interesting to add a brief note here on why the Yajur Veda has come to be known as Krishna and Shukla, meaning ‘black’ and ‘white’ respectively. The Yajur Veda Sanhita (a collection of Mantras or hymns) is classified into these two types for a variety of reasons. One of the probable reasons for this Yajur Veda having two names is that the collection in the Sanhita that came to be known as ‘Krishna’ had a mixture of prose and poetry, and hence considered ‘impure and corrupted’. This is because primarily the Vedas were composed in poetry form with the verses structured according to one or the other methods of poetical

composition called 'Chandas'. Prose as style of composition came later on and was regarded as an interpolation, interposition or juxtaposition which is all tantamount to corrupting the original method. Hence, that text which had both the poetry and prose was deemed to be 'corrupted and impure form of the Vedic text', and therefore called 'Krishna'—the dark one. On the other hand, the Sanhita which had only poetry was considered un-adulterated and pure form of the Vedic text, and hence called 'Shukla' or the white one, the colour 'white' being the colour of purity, immaculacy, divinity and holiness.

Since the primary use of the hymns of the Vedas in earlier times was for incantatory chanting during religious fire sacrifices, the poetical mode of composition was more suitable than the prose model. That is why these hymns were composed in 'Chandas' which are the different styles in which Sanskrit verses are composed. Later on, when these verses were also being used for purposes other than the fire sacrifices, the prose model evolved and developed. The Upanishads are mainly in the prose model because they are philosophical treatises and not ritualistic incantatory chanting.

Another plausible reason is that the verses of the Krishna Yajur Veda are more difficult to understand than those of the Shukla Yajur Veda. Hence, the former were called 'dark' or Krishna because of the difficulty in their comprehension and explanation as compared to the more easier ones classified as 'white' or Shukla. The Krishna Yajur Veda Sanhita was more prevalent in the south of India while the Shukla was more common in the north of the country.

The third reason is that the original classifier of Vedas was '*Krishna* Dvaipaayana Veda Vyas' who taught the text of the Yajur Veda to his disciple called Vaishampaayana. Hence, the original version of the text was named 'Krishna' in order to commemorate this fact.

There is a fourth probable reason as outlined here. The chief exponent of the Yajur Veda is regarded as the ancient sage Yagyavalkya. He was one of the several disciples of sage Vaishampayana. Once the teacher asked his disciples to perform the 'Brahmavadhya' sacrifice (a type of elaborate penance) for him. Yagyavalkya was so confident of himself, his knowledge and competency that he offered to do it all by himself for his teacher. The teacher thought that he was haughty and boastful. So, disowning or disinheriting him from his line of disciples, he commanded that Yagyavalkya should return all that he had learnt from his teacher. The sage returned all the Mantras of the Yajur Veda that he had learnt from his teacher by 'vomiting' them out. The rest of the disciples were very cunning; they transformed themselves immediately into partridges, called Tittars, and gobbled up everything. From that developed the Krishna Yajur Veda's Taittiriya branch. It is called 'Krishna' after the teacher and 'Taittiriya' after the partridges. Also, since they were 'vomited products' they were regarded as polluted and impure. Such body of knowledge came to be known as 'Krishna'—the impure one.

Now, not to be demoralised so easily and determined to get back his lost knowledge and wisdom, Yagyavalkya worshipped the Sun God who blessed him with a fresh set of Mantras of the Yajur Veda. Since it came from a 'bright source' represented by the sun, this set of Mantras was called the 'Shukla Yajur Veda'. [The word 'Shukla' means 'bright or light or illuminated'.] The sage revised this into fifteen sub-texts, called the Vaaj-sanei, i.e. those belonging to the horse race. This is because the Sun God had assumed the form of a 'horse' to teach him, and the word 'Vajis' means a horse.

Yagyavalkya had fifteen disciples (e.g. Kaanva, Maadhyandin etc.) who mastered one each of these fifteen sub-text created by Yagyavalkya. [Vishnu Puran, 3-5; Vayu Puran, 60-1.] The list of sages and seers who excelled in the Shukla Yajur Veda branch has been given in Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 2, Brahmin 6, and Canto 4, Brahmin 6.

There are 19 Upanishads in the Shukla Yajur Veda, and 32 in the Krishna Yajur Veda.]

3. [This Paragraph describes the divine Mantra of Narayan and how one should worship it, besides outlining the great benefits the devotee gets as a result of this worship.]

One should first invoke divinity and blessings of the Supreme Being by pronouncing the ethereally divine, eclectic and holy word OM. It is to be followed by the word 'Namaha' (indicating submission and paying of greatest of respects and homage to the deity worshipped). This is followed by the word 'Naaraayanaaye' (referring to Lord Narayan to whom this prayer is being offered).

OM is one lettered word (i.e. it is a monosyllable word), Namaha has two letters (Na + Maha = 2), and Naaraayanaaye has five letters (Naa + Raa + Ya + Naa + Ye = 5). Therefore, the entire Mantra of Lord Narayan is 'OM Namaha Naaraayanaaye', and it has eight letters in all.

Verily it is certain that a person who does Japa (repetition of the Mantra while meditating on the chosen deity, which in this case is Narayan) with this Mantra is blessed with great glories, magnificence, virtues and renown; he is endowed with all the worldly fame and majesty that one can expect to possess. He lives a full and fruitful life, has lordship over other creatures, enhanced wealth and prosperity, an abundance of livestock such as cows, and is blessed with a happy and prosperous family with wife, sons and other kith and kin.

Finally, at the end of his life he is able to access the eternal fount of Amrit (which is the eternal ambrosia of eternity and bliss). He indeed finds Amrit. [That is, when he dies he obtains emancipation and salvation for his soul; he finds liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death. He goes to the abode of his object of worship, i.e. the abode of Lord Narayan, where he gets eternal peace and happiness, eternal beatitude and felicity.]

This is indeed the proclamation, the unequivocal assertion and solemn affirmation of the Sam Veda¹; it is the essence of its teaching; it is the truth that it propounds in its tenets (3).

[Note—¹The *Sam Veda*—The Sam Veda is basically musical chanting of hymns, and it is basically the hymns of the Rig Veda set to music. All such Mantras of the Rig Veda which were useful for singing purposes by the Udgata priest have been brought together as Sam Veda. There are said to be 1000 Shakhas or branches of Sam Veda, but only three survive—viz. the Kauthuma, Raanaayaniya, and Jaiminiya.

The Sam Veda is divided into two parts—Aarcikaa, and Uttaraarchika. The former contains 585 Mantras and the latter 964 Mantras, bringing the total number of Mantras to 1549. Out of these, it is believed that 1474 Mantras are taken from the Rig Veda Sanhita and only 75 are original to the Sam Veda. Then, about 272 Mantras have been repeated twice. If these repetitions are taken into account, then the total number of Mantras becomes $1549 + 272 = 1821$.

Since these hymns are meant to be sung melodiously, they have been set to musical meters and notes. Thus, they have 7 musical scales called the Swars which correspond to the seven meters of classical music. These are Saa, Re, Gaa, Maa, Pa, Dha, Ni.

This Sam Veda has 9 Brahmans. Out of them, the Taandya Mahaa Braahman is the largest and the most important. Only one Aranyaka is known now, and it is called Jaiminiya.

There are 16 Upanishads in the Sam Veda.]

4. The subtle and sublime form of the Supreme Being who is called Brahm-Purush is eternally and inherently blissful and peaceful. Beatitude and felicity are integral facets of Brahm. This divine, eclectic and holy Being has three 'Matras' or sublime forms

which are very subtle and are symbolised by the three letters ‘A’, ‘U’ and ‘M’ of the Sanskrit alphabet. Though these individual letters are separate from one another and have their own independent existence, but when these are brought together their combined form, their united form, their holistic form is revealed in the form of the ethereal word OM¹. By doing Japa with this Mantra (i.e. by repetition of this Mantra known as OM while meditating and contemplating upon ethereal form of the divine supreme Brahm), the spiritual aspirant is able to free himself from the bondage of this world which entails a continuous cycle of birth and death.

Certainly, those who worship the divine and holy Mantra ‘OM Namaha Naaraayanaaye’ (as described in paragraph 3) would go to the heaven called Vaikunth where the Lord whom he worships, the Lord who is the object of his adoration and respect, i.e. Vishnu or Narayan, resides.

This divine abode of Lord Narayan is symbolically represented by the Lotus flower. It is the fount from which all wisdom and enlightenment has sprung in this creation. Hence, it appears to be as radiant and splendorous as electric symbolising the dazzling source of light which is a metaphor for knowledge and wisdom.

Lord Krishna, the incarnation of Vishnu born (in Vrindavan) as the son of Devki, is favourable towards Brahmins² (or those who are devoted to Lord Brahm; who are learned, holy and pious; who lead a righteous, auspicious and noble life; who are well versed in the basic tenets of religion and understand what religion actually stands for instead of being religious bigots and orthodox fanatics; who yearn for breaking free from the endless cycle of birth and death by sincerely repenting for their past misdeeds and atoning for their sins). Indeed, Lord Madhusudan (another name of Lord Krishna) is favourably inclined to such Brahmins. Lord Vishnu who is known as ‘Pundarik’, or one who has eyes like the lotus flower, is indeed favourable towards Brahmins. Lord Vishnu who is ‘Achut’, or one who is imperishable, eternal, permanent, immaculate and beyond any taints and tarnishes, who is eternally exalted and supreme, who cannot be pulled down from his noble and highly exalted position, is favourably inclined towards Brahmins.

Lord Narayan is the only cause for the entire creation coming into being. He is the Lord who not only created the basic ‘Bhuts’ or the primary elements (sky, air, fire, water and earth) but also resides uniformly in all of them as their inherent virtues and characteristic qualities. Since the creation is formed from these primary elements as its building blocks, it follows that Narayan has permeated in this entire creation as its integral part and is its fundamental form.

Though Narayan is the cause of the rest of creation, he himself is without any cause. In other words, there is no source from where Narayan (i.e. the Supreme Being; Brahm) has come into being. [This is simply because he is eternal, imperishable and infinite, outlasting the previous creation which collapsed into him at the end of its tenure, remaining in a hibernating state till the time Narayan decided to reveal it once again. It is like the case of the wave in the ocean—the wave arises from the water of the ocean, lasts its full term, and then collapses back into the surface of the ocean. Obviously, the ocean lasts even after the wave has subsided and it pre-dates its re-emergence as a new wave. The ocean is continuous while the wave is fractured; the ocean is eternal and infinite while the wave comes and goes.]

And this supreme Divinity is represented by ‘OM’. This is the exposition and affirmation of the Atharva Veda³; this is what it essentially preaches; this is the doctrine and tenet of this Veda (4).

[Note--¹That is, though these letters or alphabets of the Sanskrit language in which the Vedas were revealed have their independent existence in their own right but when

they are brought together they virtually attract each other and then coalesce into one another because of their mutual affinity. When this happens, the resultant sound is that of OM, and then it becomes difficult to identify these individual letters from each other. The best way to visualise how this might actually happen is to consider the colour orange for example which is produced by mixing red and yellow colours. These two constituent colours have their independent existence in their own right, but when brought together they transform themselves to assume a complete new identity known as 'orange'. Then it would be difficult to segregate the red from the yellow.

²*Brahmins*—Traditionally the Brahmins are regarded as the priestly class who presided over religious exercises, such as fire sacrifices. But there are many instances cited in the Upanishads and elsewhere where the word is meant to imply a person who is wise, erudite, scholarly, learned, self-realised and enlightened. He is a moral guide and teacher for the society, and is looked upon by people for sage guidance. The salient features of Brahmins are the following—they should possess these noble qualities—(1) 'Riju'-be expert in the Rig and the Yajur Vedas, (2) 'Tapa'-should be involved in doing penances, observing austerities and enduring sufferings for the welfare of the soul and the society, (3) 'Santosh'-be contented and satisfied, (4) 'Kshamaa'-to be forgiving and tolerant, (5) 'Sheel'-to have such virtues as good character, dignity, decorum and virtuousness, (6) 'Jitendriya'-to have self control over the sense organs, (7) 'Data'-to be a giver, one who sacrifices his own interests for the benefit of others, (8) 'Gyani'-one who is well learned, wise, enlightened and erudite, (9) 'Dayaalu'-to be merciful and compassionate. [Shatpath Brahmin.] An entire Upanishad called Vajra-shuchiko-panishad, belonging to the Sam Veda tradition is devoted to the subject. The eclectic virtues of Brahmins have been expounded in Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 3, Brahmin 5 as well as in Canto 3, Brahmin 8, verse no. 10.

³The *Atharva Veda*—The Atharva Veda is also known as Brahma Veda since it is assigned to the Brahma priest during the fire sacrifice. The Atharva Veda Sanhita deals with more mundane things of life as compared to the Rig Veda. The composition style is more sophisticated as compared to the earlier Vedas, and therefore modern scholars conclude that the Atharva Veda is of later period origin.

The Atharva Veda has 9 Shakhas (branches) but only two are extant—viz. the Pippalaada and Shaunak.

The Atharva Veda Sanhita is divided into 4 books called the Prapaathakas comprising 20 chapters or Kandas. Each Kanda is divided into hymns or Shuktas, and the latter into individual verses or Mantras. There are a total of 4 Prapaathakas (books), 20 Kandas (chapters), 736 Shuktas (hymns) and 6077 Mantras (verses). The last Kanda, i.e. the 20th is borrowed heavily from the Rig Veda Sanhita.

No Aranyaka of this Veda has come to light so far, and only one Brahman is known—and it is the Gopath Brahman.

A major part of the Atharva Veda is concerned with the rituals of the fire sacrifice that can alleviate diseases, foster longer life, fulfill one's desires and aspirations, bring favourable environment for construction of buildings etc., matters such as economy, trade, commerce, agriculture, statecraft, penances, repentance, austerities, black magic rituals such as Tantric and other occult practices. But that does not mean that this Veda is devoid of metaphysical and spiritual philosophy as it contains 31 Upanishads.]

5. [This Paragraph describes the great glories of this Upanishad as well as its stupendous potentials to benefit those who read it with due understanding.]

A person who reads and recites this Upanishad with due faith and devotion as well as sincerity and diligence in the morning is able to destroy the sins and misdeeds of the previous night. Similarly, by reading and reciting it in the evening, the sins and misdeeds of the day are eliminated. A person who reads and recites this Upanishad

twice a day, morning and evening, is able to destroy or overcome the accumulated negative effects of the sins and misdeeds that he might have done in some past time, and consequentially he is absolved of their horrendous effects.

A person who reads and recites this great Upanishad during the noon hours while facing the Sun God is able to free himself from the five great horrors¹ of life as well as other subsidiary horrors that accompany them. He is able to reap the benefit of reading and reciting all the Vedas (because this Upanishad summarises their tenets and principles in one place as mentioned in each of the above paragraphs). At the end, i.e. at the time of death, he is able to obtain the form of Mukti (liberation and deliverance; emancipation and salvation) known as 'Sayujya'² whereby he finds redemption for his own soul in the form of its ultimate union with the supreme Soul of creation known as Narayan who is none other than the supreme transcendental Brahm manifested as Lord Vishnu or the Viraat Purush. Indeed, one who knows this fact is able to find oneness with Lord Narayan (5).

[Note—¹The five type of torments or horrors that the creature faces in this world are the following—(a) Avidya (ignorance); (b) Asmita (vanity, ego, pride, arrogance, hypocrisy and haughtiness; according to the philosophy of non-duality, to regard the Atma and the subtle body consisting of mind-intellect complex as one); (c) Raag (attachment, infatuation, desire etc.); (d) Dwesh (ill-will, enmity, malice, hatred, confrontationist attitude etc.) and (e) Abhinivesh (fear of death). Refer Adhyatma Ramayan of sage Veda Vyas, Lanka Kanda, Canto 10, verse no.61.

²There are basically three types of Muktis or liberation and deliverance that the soul gets according to its sincerity of worship of the Lord and its own wishes which the Lord fulfills. These are (i) *Saalokya* which refers to finding an abode in the supreme divine abode of the chosen deity of the seeker; (ii) *Saayujya* which refers to become one with the Lord; to merge one's own identity with the Lord so that one becomes inseparable from his Lord; this form of salvation is very similar to the one that which comes under the definition of Kaivalya; it is also called the 'Param Pad' or supreme state of being one with the Lord. (iii) *Saamipya* which refers to being able to reside near the Lord to serve him.]

-----Shanti Paath-----

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Chapter 8

Amrit Bindu Upanishad/Brahm Bindu Upanishad

This Upanishad has two names—viz. Amrit Bindu and Brahm Bindu. Both are indicative of the fact that it describes the path by which the spiritual seeker can reach that one cardinal point of eternal beatitude and felicity which is known in the fields of spirituality, metaphysics and theology as 'Brahm'. This one fount or wellspring of elixir called Amrit is the quintessential object sought by the soul of the creature, and once it is reached, nothing remains further to be searched or researched.

It elucidates how the mind and the heart are the cause of all bonds and fetters that shackle a creature on the one hand, and can provide freedom to him on the other hand. It then goes on to enunciate how to control this Mana (i.e. the thinking mind

and the emotive and sentimental heart) and how it can be made an instrument of attaining Mukti (liberation and deliverance; emancipation and salvation).

The next point explained is how to attain the 'unknown and undefined' supreme transcendental Brahm, the universal eternal Truth in creation that is pure Consciousness, through the medium of the 'known and defined' manifestations of Brahm, such as the presence of the 'sound' element which is characteristic of the 'living' world because the dead don't speak or make any sort of noise for that matter.

The Atma or pure consciousness, it emphasises, is eternal, universal, immortal and truthful, and it is the only 'truth' that prevails in the three states in which the creature has its existence. All the misconceptions and illusions that the creature has are due to it being surrounded by Maya, or delusions that surround the creature and cast a dark veil of ignorance around the creature's Atma's immaculate and glorious form. When this dark veil is lifted, then one sees that his own Atma and the supreme Atma of the creation known as Brahm are one and indivisible entities.

This realisation of the pure, eternal and truthful nature of the 'conscious self' known as the Atma and its oneness with the Supreme Consciousness of creation known as Brahm is possible by steady and painstaking effort done with sincere diligence involving meditation, contemplation and constant research, just like butter, which is an integral part of milk, is made evident only by vigorous churning of the latter.

What is true Gyan and Mukti (knowledge and liberation respectively) have been succinctly narrated (verse no. 2-10) along with the various states of existence of the consciousness (in verse no. 11). Emphasis is laid on understanding the real meaning of the scriptures instead of getting bogged down in their too literal interpretation (verse no. 16-21).

This Upanishad uses the analogy of the same image of the moon appearing to be numerous when reflected in different vessels full of water to bring home the point that the same Atma resides in all the uncountable number of bodies that the living beings have (verse no. 12). It also cites the example of the presence of the same sky element both inside as well as outside the clay pot to establish the fact that the universality and uniformity of the Atma is not affected by the presence of the physical gross body of the living organism (verse no. 13-14). There is the example of the bee drinking nectar in the flower and getting trapped when the flower closes to describe how the creature gets trapped in this world by the latter's charms (verse no. 15). Then there is the analogy of the butter remaining hidden inside the milk to describe how the consciousness and wisdom remains hidden inside every living being, and just like the churning of this milk brings out the butter the hidden consciousness and wisdom can be highlighted by constant practice and diligent effort (verse no. 20). The universality of the consciousness is illustrated by the example of the milk having the same colour no matter from which cow it is taken (verse no. 19).

In brief, this Upanishad, in its twenty two Mantras or verses, summarises great metaphysical truths in a very effective and convincing manner. It shows the creature the correct path to follow if he wants to reach the Truth and the Reality of existence.

-----Shanti Paath-----

ॐ_सह_नाववतु_।_सह_नौ_भुनक्तु_।_सह_वीर्यं_करवावहै_।_तेजस्वि_नावधीतमस्तु_।_मा_विद्विषावहै_।
 ॐ_शान्तिः_।_शान्तिः_!!शान्तिः_!!!

The meaning of this Shanti Paath is given in appendix no. 1.

1. The Mana (implying both the thinking mind as well as the sentimental and emotional heart) of a creature can be of two types—one that is called ‘Shudha’ (literally meaning pure, immaculate, uncorrupted, unadulterated, untainted and untarnished), and the other that is called ‘Ashudha’ (literally the opposite of Shudha—i.e. one which is dirty, tainted, corrupted and influenced by extraneous considerations).

The Mana which has numerous desires, yearnings, longings, greed, hopes, expectations, aspirations and volitions pertaining to this world is called the Ashudha Mana. On the contrary, the Mana which lacks all these negative traits, the Mana which is pure and immaculate, which is not shackled by any of the worldly considerations is called Shudha Mana. [The Shudha Mana is obviously calm and peaceful, rested and contented. It is conducive to spiritual practices as it is uncorrupt, untainted, holy, pious and pure. On the other hand, the Ashudha type of Mana is restless and fidgety and therefore not conducive to spiritual practices.] (1).

2. The Mana is at the root of all types of bondages that tie down the creature in fetters. At the same time it is the Mana that provides the creature with his freedom from all bondages and unshackles him. That is, it is the Mana that is the main cause of all shackles on the one hand, and freedom from them on the other.

The Mana which is emotionally tied to or sentimentally attached to the various objects of sensual pleasure and comfort that exist in this material world and remains ever engrossed in self gratification and various indulgences is said to be the cause of all fetters that shackle the creature to this artificial and deluding world.

On the contrary, the Mana which is free from such entanglements, that makes no volitions and has no yearnings, which remains free from all desires and expectations of obtaining any pleasure and comfort from this world is said to be liberated from such bondages. It is this latter type of Mana that is said to be instrumental in liberation and deliverance of the creature from all fetters that tie him down to this world (2).

[Note—When a man desires any material thing, when he begins to long for it, he spends all his energy, mental and physical, in achieving success in obtaining this thing. Once this thing is obtained, the man begins to derive and enjoy the physical and mental pleasures and comforts that it offers to him. This achievement and possession becomes all the more attractive for him because he has spent so much effort in achieving success in obtaining it. So he becomes emotionally attached to his new acquisition, which he would protect with his life, so to say. It does not stop here as now he, having tasted success and the physical comforts and gratifications that accompany such successes, yearns for more, and then still more. Then he gets bogged down in the quagmire of enhancing this pleasure and comfort by acquiring newer and better things, and then in making arrangements for their safe keeping and perpetual existence. This sets off a chain reaction of sorts whereby his entire life is totally consumed in satisfying the desires and aspirations of his Mana, which however has no end like the futile attempt of trying to empty the ocean.

Further, these objects of the material world are all perishable simply because the world itself is perishable, and therefore no matter how hard he tries he can never be sure of their safety and continuity. Naturally and obviously therefore he loses all his mental and emotional peace, and that is why he is like a man under bondage

who is bound under obligation to serve his master and keep his orders without asking any questions of him. This master in this case is the Mana.

It naturally follows that a man who has controlled his Mana and leashed it in, who has blanked out all his longings, desires, yearnings, greed, aspirations, hopes and volitions form the radar of his Mana would be absolutely at peace with himself. Only a free man is in such an envious state of existence when he need not obey any commands of any master or lord whatsoever. This is why a man with a corrupted Mana is deemed to be like a serf or slave, while he who has an untarnished Mana free from all negative influences originating in this world is as free as a bird. A 'bonded man' yearns for freedom, while a 'free man' would never wish to be under any bondage. That is the difference between the two. A 'bonded man' would bargain everything he has for his freedom, while a 'free man' would not need to bargain for anything because no one can force anything upon him as he is already free.]

3. When the Mana is freed from any desire to derive any sort of enjoyment, pleasure and comfort from the objects of this material world, it is then said to be freed from all its entanglements with the world, and consequently it is deemed to be liberated from the fetters that shackle an ordinary creature to this deluding world of artificiality and ignorance. This entanglement and involvement with the world robs the creature of his peace and tranquility, while disentanglement and non-involvement would obviously eliminate all causes of discomfiture for him.

Hence, those who seek liberation from the fetters of this deluding world and obtain deliverance from its torments and miseries should always ensure that the Mana keeps a safe distance from all the entangling allurements proffered by this world of material comfort and sensual pleasures which nevertheless are transient and illusive in nature. They should diligently restrain their Mana from getting involved in any of the sense objects of this world (3).

4. With constant practice, a state comes when the Mana is perpetually freed from all its natural tendencies to first get attracted to and then get attached with the sense objects of this material world. In other words, the mind and heart of the wise man develops a sense of total detachment and dispassion towards this deluding world of artificiality (because it has realised their transient, artificial, deluding and entangling nature). It is then that the spiritual aspirant is able to concentrate his attention on his heart, i.e. become introspective and contemplative. It is then the man realises that the peace and happiness that he has been seeking from the outside world was misleading and deluding, and that true bliss is to be found in one's own heart (where the Atma or pure consciousness has its residence).

Such a realised man is consequentially able to attain the supreme state of perpetual beatitude and felicity when he discovers the 'truthful' fount of bliss, happiness and peace that is eternal and infinite as compared to the temporary peace and transient happiness that he had got from the material objects of this world.

In other words, when the man is able to control his Mana and teach it to become dispassionate towards the attractions of the sense objects of the world, it is only then that the wise man is able to attain the supreme stature called 'Param Pad' which is the state of absoluteness and truthfulness (4).

[Note—Refer also to verse no. 10 below in this context.]

5. A wise and erudite man should endeavour to control or restrain his Mana and train it to inculcate dispassion towards the deluding and entrapping attractions proffered by the sense objects of this material world only till the time the Mana has not been

trained to remain focused on the heart and the eternal fount of bliss and happiness that resides in it. When the Mana becomes one with the heart, i.e. when the emotions and thoughts are concentrated upon one object without pulling the creature in opposite directions, it is obvious that peace and bliss are obtained by him.

The dissolution of the Mana in the heart¹—i.e. when the creature is successfully able to keep his attention focused on his inner self where the fount of eternal bliss known as the Atma resides and prevent the mind from wandering in the external world and attempting to find the illusive peace and comfort there—is tantamount to obtaining Gyan and Mukti by the creature.

Everything else, all other interpretations and connotations of the terms Gyan² and Mukti³ are merely elaborations of this great metaphysical, theological and spiritual truth as expounded in and enunciated by the scriptures. [In other words, turning the Mana away from the material world of impermanence and delusory charms, and instead diverting its energy and efforts to the inner self where the eternal, divine and glorious Atma representing the supreme transcendental consciousness known as Brahm resides, is the main aim of studying and hearing the scriptures. This is the main aim of the scriptures and their teaching, and if this aim is achieved successfully, then the rest become redundant. Otherwise, one can go on reading reams of paper, debating the scriptural texts and listening to decades of innumerable lectures and still achieve nothing worthwhile.] (5).

[Note—¹Once the Mana plunges into the ocean of bliss, contentedness, happiness and peace bubbling over in the subtle heart where the pure conscious Atma resides, it discovers that these virtues exist there in a much finer, more refined and glorious form that is eternal and infinite as compared to their crude and temporary form it had encountered while it remained engrossed in the external world. Since the Mana had remained attached to the world not for the world's sake but because the latter gave it comfort and pleasure as well as bliss, peace, joy and happiness, when it discovers that these charms of the world are transient and illusionary compared to the new discovery of these same virtues but in a more glorious and splendorous form in the heart itself, it naturally abandons the former and swerves towards the latter. To remain engrossed in something that is attractive is the natural habit of the Mana. So it now gets hooked, literally, to this eternal fount of beatitude and felicity—which are more profound and everlasting as compared to the external ones—present in the creature's own bosom. For searching comfort and pleasure outside, the creature had to make so many strenuous physical labour, but meditation and contemplation required no such strenuous physical labour, so it was all the more attractive to him because the creature has a general propensity to do the least and gain the most from the least physical effort.

²Gyan means truthful knowledge, wisdom, erudition and enlightenment. In the present context it would be the understanding by the spiritual aspirant that truthful bliss, peace, happiness and joy are not available in the material objects of the external world, but in the deep recesses of the heart when contentedness is obtained by inculcating a high degree of detachment and dispassion. Gyan entails that the wise creature has come to realise that the comfort and pleasures of the world are transient and impermanent, and that true happiness is obtainable by realising the truthful nature of the eternal and conscious Atma which is present in the heart of the aspirant himself as his 'true self'. Gyan prepares him to realise that this 'true self' of his is distinct from the gross body as well as the subtle mind which are only meant to serve his 'self' represented by this Atma. The concept of Gyan has been explained elsewhere in other Upanishads also—such as for example the Paingalo-panishad in its Canto 4 and the Niralambo-panishad in its verse no. 14 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition; the Tejobindu Upanishad in its Canto 6, verse no. 60; the Yogyattva

Upanishad, verse nos. 17-18, and the Sarwasaaro-panishad, verse no. 12 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.

The seven steps to Gyan have been elaborately described in Mahopanishad, canto 5, verse nos. 21-47 of the Sam Veda tradition.

There are two other relevant concepts—Gyan Yoga and Gyan Shakti. (a) Gyan Yoga involves the intellect and mind to determine and delineate the true and the false; it helps to access and understand the reality and falsehood behind the manifested visible world which appears to be ‘real’ but is actually like a ‘shadow of the truth’. This Gyan Yoga helps to establish the mind firmly into seeing unity in diversity. Those following Gyan Yoga are called ‘seers’ because they can ‘see’ beyond the visible, multifarious and bewildering variety of this false world. Gyan Yoga is in the realm of the intellect and discriminating mind of a creature. (b) Gyan gives sufficient power, strength and wisdom to the creature which enlightens it about the good and the bad, about what is beneficial for it and what is ruinous for it. It is the empowerment obtained as a result of acquisition of knowledge, wisdom, erudition, enlightenment, sagacity, scholarship and expertise. This is called Gyan Shakti, simply because merely wish and determination wouldn’t suffice if a person does not have the required knowledge and skill, the expertise and wisdom to accomplish his objectives successfully.

³*Mukti* literally means freedom, liberation and deliverance. A related concept is Moksha which would mean ultimate emancipation and salvation. Both concepts are almost identical in import vis-à-vis the creature’s Atma is concerned. Mukti in the present context would mean freedom from delusions and ignorance about the truth that tie down the creature to this entrapping world and its attractions of material objects; to obtain liberation from the fetters of delusions and ignorance and thereby obtain deliverance from the endless cycle of birth and death and their attendant miseries and torments. The creature erroneously thinks that the pleasures and comforts that the world gives are permanent and real, whereas the fact is just the opposite. This is the great delusion pertaining to this world which keeps everyone tied down to it. Once Gyan or truthful knowledge dawns on the mental horizon of the creature that he is being taken for a ride, either by becoming aware of this fact through the reading of the scriptures or by hearing about it when spoken of by some wise man, it is then that he embarks on the path of finding the truth himself and the way to break free from this shackle. The scriptures and other wise men show him the path, and finally he is successful in his spiritual quest. This is Mukti.

Basically there are said to be three types of Muktis—viz. Jivan, Videha and Kaivalya. The following list summarises the Upanishads that deal with these three varieties of Muktis.

(1) Jivan Mukti—(a) Krishna Yajur Veda tradition—Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 4, verse no. 18-33; Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 3; Katho-panishad, Canto 2, Valli 2, verse no. 12-13, and Canto 2, Valli 3, verse no. 4, 6-15; Akchu-panishad, verse no. 32-39; Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 1-32. (b) Shukla Yajur Veda tradition—Paingalo-panishad, canto 3, verse no. 5, and canto 3, verse no. 9-11; Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 1/4/3-4; 2/3/6-7; 2/4/5-6; Adhyatma Upanishad, verse nos. 12 and 4-47; Muktiko-panishad, Canto 2. (c) Atharva Veda—Ram Rahasaya Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 11-17; Annapurna Upanishad, canto 2.

(2) Videha Mukti—(a) Krishna Yajur Veda tradition—Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 33-81; Sarwasaro-panishad, verse no. 2; Akchu Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 32-40. (b) Shukla Yajur Veda tradition—Paingalo-panishad, canto 3, verse no. 12, and Canto 4, verse nos. 7 and 15; Mahopanishad, canto 2, verse nos. 36-73, and canto 5, verse nos. 23-41.

(3) Kaivalya Mukti—It has been described in Paingalo-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, in its Canto 4, verse nos. 7 and 15.

(4) The *three paths* of Mukti have been described in Advai Tarak Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse nos. 4-13.]

6. When the spiritual aspirant treats all subjects requiring attention with the greatest of equanimity and indifference, when he does not distinguish between a thing that has any charm for the mind, which is alluring for the mind and fascinates it, and a thing that is repulsive, offensive and puts off the mind, it is only then that it can be said that his mind remains truly neutral, dispassionate and detached. The mind would treat both the circumstances, both the objects that attract the attention of the creature, equally, without showing any special favours or bias towards any one of them. The mind would not be prejudicial or partisan in its attitude towards any given object or thing or circumstances that requires its attention. [That is, detached, dispassionate and neutral mind is that which remains calm and poised even during the greatest of adversities and unfavourable circumstances. It will never lose its cool and composure; remain even-keeled and balanced no matter what is the provocation. For such a mind, both the opposite emotions of sorrows and pains on the one hand and elation and joys on the other mean the same thing. A creature with such a mental bearing never becomes bewildered, perplexed or vexed under difficult situations.]

It is under this state of total neutrality and detachment of the mind, of absolute equanimity and dispassion of the mind, of complete non-involvement of the mind that the creature attains the state of Brahm realisation¹ (6).

[Note--¹This is because Brahm is like the supreme Emperor, and for him all are equal. Without this peculiar special attitude and bearing of the mind, one cannot judge any circumstance or object with objectivity, because if the mind is prejudiced and inclined to make pre-conceived notions about any given thing or circumstance or situation, then all its judgments and decisions would be tainted, influenced, biased and corrupted. Since Brahm stands for pristine purity and highest form of truth that entails total neutrality and equanimity in dealing with anything, whether it is favourable or unfavourable, likeable or unlikable, it follows that only the mind that has attained this state of neutral existence, or the mind that is absolutely non-involved, is one that is sufficiently fine-tuned to receive the glories of Brahm.

There must be compatibility between the instrument and medium used in researching for any hidden and unknown treasure, and that treasure itself. For example, if we search for a needle in a stack of hay, we must use a simple bar magnet that has a natural affinity to iron so that as soon as it comes in proximity of the iron needle hidden from view, it would immediately pull it out of the hay stack. It is a worthless wasting of time and energy in trying to pull out that iron needle using, say, a compass which also has magnet but is meant for different purpose, or even a metal detector which would tell that the needle is indeed in the stack somewhere, but wouldn't pull it out.

Likewise, the fine-tuned mind—when it is focused on realising the supreme transcendental Truth of creation which is pure consciousness, which is most divine, holy, august and auspicious, and which is a fount of eternal beatitude and felicity known as Brahm—becomes an effective instrument and medium in achieving success in this spiritual endeavour of self-realisation, of Brahm-realisation and of Truth-realisation.

Like the example of the magnet cited here, the Mana can virtually pull out the hidden glory of consciousness ensconced in the bosom of the individual creature once it focuses its attention on it. In other words, a diligent mind can unravel the mystical secrets of the creation by bringing to the fore the hitherto unknown and hidden glory of Consciousness present in one's own bosom. This is called 'self-realisation' and 'enlightenment'.

The mind can remain steady in its spiritual pursuit and be focused on its aim only when it is unruffled, calm and tranquil, and this is made possible only when none of the stimuli originating from this material world are able to disturb its peace and poise.

This state is obtainable when the mind is totally neutral and indifferent to everything external, whether it is most enticing or most reprehensible.]

7. The sound element in creation is represented by the ethereal word OM, also known as Pranav. The sound of OM incorporates in its three letters, A, U and M, the entire spectrum of creation¹. Therefore, sound, in its primary form as OM, helps the spiritual aspirant to become aware of the existence of the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm in its manifested or revealed form. [Sound is the first and primary as well as the subtlest form of Brahm in its manifested and revealed form which is most sublime and subtle. Pranav or OM is the nearest analogue for Brahm².]

But there is another divine and superior form of Brahm which transcends this known form represented by sound (of OM and Pranav), no matter how sublime and subtle the latter form is. That transcendental eclectic form of Brahm is most esoteric and mysterious; it is beyond either comprehension or description; it is without any attributes, qualities and manifested forms.

So a spiritual aspirant should first witness and experience the presence of the holy form of the supreme Brahm which is revealed in the form of this vast creation by meditating and contemplating upon it by using the medium of the ethereal sound OM or Pranav, and then graduating as it were to reach the higher state of Brahm-realisation when he is able to experience the existence of that supreme entity which is indescribable but an irrefutable Truth and an unequivocal Reality of existence in the form of pure consciousness. In other words, he should progress from witnessing Brahm in the form of the visible and manifested existence to a higher state of realisation when he experiences the existence of the all-pervading, all-encompassing, all-incorporating, omnipresent cosmic Divinity in the form of pure Consciousness. This latter form of Brahm is beyond the scope of words to be described; it transcends even the subtlest form of all existence represented by sound and symbolised by the monosyllable OM. [In other words, a spiritual aspirant should use the Mantra OM as a medium of concentration of his mind during meditation and contemplation. Then gradually this practice would help him to elevate himself to a higher plane of spiritual existence that is called the transcendental state of the Absolute and complete neutrality. In this state he experiences the bliss and happiness that come when one is fulfilled and complete, and this feeling is Brahm-realisation.]

That eclectic, esoteric and enigmatic Supreme Being can be realised, experienced and witnessed only through the medium of firm faith, conviction and devotion, and not by being skeptical, doubtful and shaky in one's conviction of its existence. If one lacks firmness of faith and steadfastness in his beliefs, he can never succeed in realising something that is impossible to describe in words though it is irrefutable, unequivocal and universal Truth and an absolute Reality. This mysterious and enigmatic entity cannot be found in any books, including the Holy Scriptures, where he tries to research it out. That unique Truth (Brahm; pure consciousness) has to be experienced by the spiritual aspirant himself first hand before he can stand as a witness for its immanent, unequivocal and irrefutable existence³ (7).

[Note—¹The word OM has three basic sounds represented by the three alphabets A, U and M. 'A' stands for initiation, 'U' represents development, and 'M' is symbolic of conclusion of this creation. Further, the Narayano-panishad, which is Chapter no. 7 of this book, point out, in its paragraph no. 4, that the word OM consisting of these three letters is a representative of Brahm known also as Pranav.

²The concept of OM: Refer also to verse no. 16 below.

³This is because lack of conviction and faith leads to doubts and confusions in the mind, making it flummoxed and an ideal breeding ground for perplexities and

vexations. A mind bewildered and confused achieves nothing because it begins to flounder, waver, stagger and stumble every now and then, leading ultimately to its final downfall. And with this main instrument of Brahm-realisation failing and crumbling under the unrelenting onslaught of ignorance-induced delusions and doubts, the spiritual aspirant loses his only faithful companion and comrade-in-arm, a viable and potent medium which can lead him to the citadel of the ultimate Truth, not only of creation but also of his own self. Therefore, a wise spiritual aspirant should not only train the mind but also keep it in tight leash much like one keeps his pet dog who is said to be his best friend and companion. This dog will become wild if not properly trained or pampered too much. The same thing applies to the mind.]

8. That supreme transcendental Brahm has no different forms or aspects or fractions called Kalaas because it is one single indivisible and non-dual entity that is eternal, infinite, uniform, immutable and universal. This Brahm is without a second, a parallel or an alternative, being one of its only kind. It is without any taints, flaws, shortcomings and faults, being immaculate, incorruptible and pristine pure.

When the wise and enlightened aspirant realises the fact that this Brahm is he himself, when he sincerely understands the profound spiritual import of the truthful statement of the scriptures regarding the true identity of the creature when they describe the creature as 'I am Brahm', he (the spiritual aspirant) indeed becomes one with Brahm. There exists no distinction between such a self-realised aspirant and the supreme Brahm¹ (8).

[Note—¹When the aspirant realises that his own truthful identity is not the body but the pure conscious Atma or soul residing in his own bosom, and that this Atma is a microcosmic form of the supreme Consciousness known as Brahm that exists in the macrocosmic scale of creation, he is indeed speaking the truth when he affirms that 'I am Brahm'. He has understood the truth of the statement that everything that has consciousness in this creation is nothing else but the same universal non-dual supreme transcendental divine Brahm or Cosmic Consciousness revealed in that specific form which is one amongst other such myriad forms of Consciousness.

This statement 'I am Brahm' is one of the great truths expounded by the scriptures. These universal truths are called *Mahavakyas*. Mahavakyas are the great universal sayings, declarations, commandments, tenets, or the axioms and maxims of the Vedas which are absolute truths and sum up the essence of their teachings with the reference to the Supreme Being known as Brahm and his counterpart the Atma or soul, which is pure consciousness residing in the bosom of the living being. They are as follows—(i) 'Brahm Is Consciousness' (Pragnanam Brahm) appears in Aiteriya Upanishad of the Rig Veda. It means that Atma/consciousness, which gives life to the material layers consisting of the five sheaths of the creature, is the same as the Supreme Reality/Truth behind the entire universe/creation called by the name of Brahm; (ii) 'That Thou Art' (Tat Twam Asi) is found in the Chandogya Upanishad of the Sam Veda. It means that the infinite, all-pervading, omniscient Supreme Truth/Reality is the consciousness or pure self in you. It is also called a statement of advice to the seekers in as much as it contains advice addressed to the seeker that the supreme reality is the self within him; (iii) 'This Self Is Brahm' (Ayam Atma Brahm) is found in the Mandukya Upanishad in the Atharva Veda. It means that the Atma which is self illuminated and the Supreme Reality/Truth are one and the same (i.e. identical); (iv) I Am Brahm (Aham Brahm Asmi) is found in the Brihad Aranyak Upanishad of the Yajur Veda. It proclaims that the conscious principle/element in an individual is nothing other than the total consciousness. This is the statement made by the seeker after attaining self realisation.

There are a number of other Upanishads that describe these great sayings of the Vedas, called the Mahavakyas. Some of them are the following:--

(a) According to Paingalo-panishad, 3/2 of the Shukla Yajur Veda, they are the following—(a) ‘Tattwamasi’—that art thou, or ‘that truthful essence is you’; (b) ‘Twam-Tadasi’—you are that; (c) ‘Twam-Brahmasi’—thou art Brahm; and (d) ‘Aham-Brahmasi’—I am Brahm.

(b) According to Mandal Brahmino-panishad, of the Shukla Yajur Veda, they are the following—(a) ‘That is me’, or ‘that is I’ is mentioned in Brahmin 2, section 2, verse no. 5; (b) ‘I am Tej or I am energy personified’, ‘I am Pragya or personified knowledge’, ‘I am one and immutable’, ‘I am pure and non-dual Brahm’—these are mentioned in Brahmin 2, section 4, verse no. 4; (c) ‘I am the eternal and immaculate Parmatma’, ‘I am that essence’, ‘you are me’, ‘I am you’ are mentioned in Brahmin 3, section 1, verse no. 6; (d) ‘I am Brahm’ appears in Brahmin 3, section 2, verse no. 1; and finally (e) ‘You are me’ appears in Brahmin 3, section 2, verse no. 2.

(c) According to Shuka Rahasayo-panishad, 21/1-4 of Krishna Yajur Veda, they are the following—(1) OM salutations! Enlightenment and knowledge is Brahm and vice versa; (2) OM salutations! I am that Brahm; (3) OM salutations! Verily, that is you; (4) OM salutations! This Atma is Brahm. Other Upanishads that highlight the fundamental tenets of the Vedas are Atmabodho-panishad of Rig Veda, and Atmo-panishad of Atharva Veda amongst others.

(d) According to Kaivalyo-panishad, verse no. 16 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, the Mahavakya is ‘That Brahm is you; you are it’. Verse no. 17-23 of this Upanishad also affirms that the truly realised person is one who sees ‘his own self in every aspect of this creation’ simply because the entire creation is nothing but a revelation of one single immutable and truthful entity known as Brahm.]

9. [This verse describes some of the eclectic virtues of the supreme transcendental Brahm.] The supreme transcendental Brahm is unique and without any alternatives or parallels; he is without an end because he is imperishable and eternal; he has no cause for his existence or for anything that he does; he is beyond the faculty of sight as he is invisible and most subtle though perceptible by the deep insight obtained by self-realisation and enlightenment; he is free from all worldly artificialities, falsehoods, delusions and illusions as well as all notions of deceit, conceit, ostentations and pretensions; he has no beginning as he is eternal and infinite; and he is an embodiment of auspiciousness and well being of the highest order.

When a wise, realised and enlightened man comes to be acquainted with this eclectic divine Being, he becomes freed from all fetters that have been shackling him till this realisation of the profound and eternal Truth dawns upon his mental horizon¹ (9).

[Note—¹This is because Brahm realisation is equivalent to realising the true nature of one’s own self, which is immaculate, truthful and pure consciousness, which is imperishable, ever contented, inherently wise and enlightened, and which is a fount of eternal bliss and peace. This realisation also implies that the aspirant understands the perishable nature of the entire external visible creation which he had till now been considering to be the ‘real’ thing. Once he has had access, by means of self-realisation and Brahm-realisation, to an eternal fount of bliss, peace, happiness and comfort—the basic reason for his being attracted to this deluding and artificial world and then remaining engrossed in it because this world had been luring him into its honey-trap with this bait of providing him with these glorious achievements, and once he realises that these virtues available in this world are not only transient but also false as compared to the availability of the same virtues with their eternal quotient that comes with Brahm-realisation, the wise and erudite aspirant would abandon the artificial world on his own account without any more prodding and beseeching, because who would not like to grab anything of a permanent value instead of something that is perishable and transient?]

10. [This verse describes the state of total dispassion and neutrality which is attained by maturity of Gyan. Refer also verse no. 4.]

For a truly wise, erudite, self-realised and enlightened man who has truthfully realised the true nature and real form of his 'true self' as being the Atma which is pure consciousness and Brahm personified possessing the divine and eclectic virtues and qualities mentioned in the preceding verses understands that this divine and holy entity is beyond the purview of such concepts as having an end or conclusion or having a birth (because the 'true self' representing the supreme transcendental Brahm is imperishable, eternal and infinite).

Similarly, the 'true self' has no such thing or concept as being bound to anything or of remaining free from it (because these notions exist only when the creature is deluded and thinks that there are any fetters that can tie him down, and there is some reason for getting shackled by them, but for the soul that is eternally free this situation does not arise). Therefore there is no desire for any freedom or deliverance from any kind of fetters or getting rid of any shackles (because the eternally free Atma or soul has never been under any bondage in the first place)¹.

Consequently, for a wise, erudite, self-realised and enlightened man there is no notion of an independent state of existence that is liberated, freed and delivered vis-à-vis an existence that is tied by fetters and bound to shackles. In other words, since the Atma is eternally free and liberated, there is no question of it having a bonded existence from where it can seek liberation and deliverance.

When one becomes firm in one's conviction of these unequivocal and irrefutable universal truths (about the 'self' and the reality of the Atma), emancipation and salvation is not to be had separately, for this knowledge and enlightenment itself is called the Principal Gyan or the truthful and knowledge of the Essence and the Absolute (10).

[Note—¹There is no separate concept of 'freedom' for the soul or the Atma that can be distinguished from a situation where the soul is 'not free' or bound by fetters on any kind whatsoever. This is because the soul which is cosmic Consciousness known as the Atma is the ethereal Spirit which can never be bound or limited by any artificial boundaries and parameters. An entity that is never tied or bound obviously is always free—and therefore the notion of it ever having to find freedom from imaginary bondages is a fallacious, incredulous and ridiculous proposition.]

11. [This verse describes the higher state of existence when the wise creature sees the same eternal and universal Atma or pure consciousness as being uniformly present in its three states of existences—i.e. in the waking, the dreaming and the deep sleep states of existences.] One should inculcate the wisdom that there is only one universal Atma, the essence of existence which is pure and truthful consciousness, that is present in all the three states in which the creature's body lives in this world. These three states are respectively called the waking or Jagrat state, the dreaming or Swapna state, and the deep sleep or Sushupta state of existences¹. In other words, an enlightened man should realise that the only truthful entity that matters in all these three states of his existence is the Atma or his pure and truthful consciousness.

Any person who is able to transcend these three states of existences, or who has reached the fourth state called the Turiya state of permanent beatitude and felicity, is the one who does not have another birth² (11).

[Note—¹All living beings have three basic states in which they live their existential life in this world. The first is the waking state when the creature interacts with the world in its wakeful state, when all the external organs of the body, viz. the five

organs of perception such as eye, ear, tongue, nose and skin, and the five organs of action such as mouth, legs, hands, genitals and excretory, are active and involved in the interactions of the creature with the external world. The second state is the dreaming state when the external organs are inactive because the physical gross body is resting or sleeping, but the mind is as active as before, and in this state the creature lives its life in the imaginary world created by the active sub-conscious part of the mind. Since the mind is the cause of this entire existence itself, so there is very little difference between the two states, except that in one case the gross body is actively involved and in the other it is not. But it ought to be noted that the mind is fully involved in both these two states of waking and dreaming.

The third state is the deep sleep state when the mind becomes inactive, and therefore the Atma of the creature, which however is the latter's truthful identity, become independent of any external interferences or influences. This is the actual inherent state of existence of the Atma if it is left to its own accord. That is, the pure consciousness does not actually need the body and the mind to remain active and alive; it has its independent existence free from the domain of the body and the mind. But since it has to live in the gross body and has to take the help of the mind in its interactions with the external world in which it lives, it is forced by circumstances to deal with these two servers.

A wise man understands this fact that it is his Atma which is actually been served by this body and the mind, whether it is in the waking state or in the dreaming state. The physical gross body has no life of its own, and neither does the subtle mind. It is the pure conscious Atma living in the 'causal' body which 'caused' them to become active and show signs of life. So this boils down to the fact that what really matters in the three states in which the creature lives is the 'consciousness', and neither the gross body nor the subtle mind.

The subtle mind and the gross body are only the medium or instrument or vehicle used by the Atma to perceive the world and interact with it. But in practical terms the Atma becomes dependent on them and relies on them for its interactions with the world. Herein lies all the problems faced by the creature—the fact that he is 'dependent' on others. Obviously, such an Atma loses its independence and would yearn for freedom. Therefore it follows that the man who is self-realised needs no freedom, while only a deluded man would need freedom. This is because the self-realised man knows that his 'self' is the eternally free, ethereal and pure conscious Atma, while the deluded man thinks that his 'self' is the gross body having the intelligent mind to govern it.

Now, a worldly man is given a ray of hope for obtaining this eternal freedom when he is advised to read the scriptures and come in contact with wise people. He then comes to know about the 'truth' and the 'non-truth'. If he is wise and clever he would immediately take steps to rectify the errors of the past and find ways to obtain eternity that is so normal for enlightened people. He would henceforth ensure that he does not do anything that would further pull him down in the bog, but would endeavour to do everything possible to extricate himself from the already existing one. Once wisdom and self-awareness dawns on him, once he realises the truth about himself, he would exult in the discovery of the eternal Truth as proclaimed in verse no. 8 above.

Since the 'true self' of every creature is the Atma, once enlightenment dawns upon him he feels himself free and liberated. The Atma would regain its original pristine form and immaculate nature that will no longer be influenced by tug and pull of this deluding world and its artificial charms. Such a wise and enlightened Atma would no longer be influenced by the cunning overtures of the mind and the selfish gestures of the body. It would keep them under tight leash like one keeps one pet dog. The Atma would realise that the body and the mind are meant to serve it, and that it should not allow itself to become a puppet in their hands, for if these so-called low-level employees of the kingdom are able to get the better of their King (the Atma) it

would be most devastating for the kingdom. The Atma of a self-realised man remains calm and unruffled; it is not at all affected by the constant nudging and prodding of the restless body and the fidgety mind. It bears them with stoic neutrality and poise as mentioned in this verse.

Ordinarily, the creature oscillates between these three states—he remains awake, goes to sleep and dreams, goes past his dreams to sleep peacefully for a fleeting moment during the deep sleep state of existence, only to retrace its steps back to the waking state. The peace and relaxation that it had found in its sleep is short-lived as it wakes up to the realities of the physical world of worries and problems.

²There is a miraculous fourth state of existence called Turiya which transcends these three states, and comes after the creature crosses the third state of deep sleep. It is one of ‘permanent and irrevocable’ bliss. When this state is realisation is reached, when an enlightened creature has crossed the threshold of deep sleep state, it would create a mystical state of existence when the creature might come back to the first state of wakefulness, but his ‘true self’ is not involved in this wakeful state of the body but in the transcendental state of Turiya. Such a creature lives in this world and goes about his normal duties, but with total detachment and dispassion as if in a trance-like state of blissfulness and ecstasy. This is because the ‘consciousness’ is eternal and imperishable as well as constant and steady, not transient, fleeting and shifting in nature like the earlier three states.

The word *birth* is very significant in this verse. It refers to the awareness of the Atma of the presence of the physical body and its active role in this world. The Atma is a ‘spirit’ and has no physical shape of any kind. When it assumes a body, it acquires a shape, and since this Atma with a body conceived in a mother’s womb emerges in the outside world as a living being, it is said to have taken a ‘birth’. Being conscious of the external world, this state of existence of the creature is like the waking state of existence described above. After birth, it lives its term and sees the myriad colours of this fascinating world, experiencing its joys and sorrows. This is like the dreaming state because this world is false and illusionary like the mirage seen in a desert. When the creature finally dies, it is like going to the third state of deep sleep, because in this state he has no more pains and worries left.

But the unfortunate part is that if the creature is not enlightened and wise enough, it would treat the ‘dreaming and waking’ states as real, and gets influenced by their deluding effects. As a result, it does not cross the third state into the fourth state of no return, but literally wakes up to enjoy this world once again by assuming another body in a new womb. This is taking fresh birth. A realised soul would actually find ‘eternal rest’ once the Atma is able to shed the cuticle of this body when it dies, and enter a state of Turiya from which there is no return; it does not take birth again.

In this context it is worthwhile to note that there is a fifth fourth state of existence of the consciousness called the Turiya-Teet state—one that goes beyond the fourth state of Turiya; one that transcends Turiya. It is a higher level of Turiya just like we have many levels in the atmosphere around the earth. If Turiya is equivalent to remaining within the magnetic pull of the earth, the Turiya-teet would be like going beyond it in the deep recesses of the cosmos from where the earth would not be able to get hold of it any longer.

Amongst the various Upanishads that deal with this topic, the following are noteworthy—(1) The three states of existence of the consciousness have been described in the following Upanishads amongst others—(a) Shukla Yajur Veda—Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad 2/1/16-20, 4/3/9-38. (b) Krishna Yajur Veda—Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 11. (2) The four states of existence of the consciousness have been described in the following Upanishads amongst others—(a) Shukla Yajur Veda—Subal Upanishad, Canto 4 full as well as Canto 9, verse no. 1-7; Paingal Upanishad, 2/11-15; Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 2/4-2/5; (b) Krishna Yajur Veda tradition—Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 61-64; Canto 2, verse no. 61-64; Brahm Upanishada, verse no. 1, 20-21; Kaivalya Upanishad, verse no. 12-14;

Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 93/12-93/15; Sarwasaar Upanishad, verse no. 4; Shaarirak Upanishad, verse no. 14. (3) The five states of existence of the consciousness have been described in the following Upanishads amongst others—(a) Shukla Yajur Veda—Turiyateet Upanishad; Subal Upanishad, Canto 9, verses 1-7; Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, Brahmin 2, section 4, verse no. 1; Paingal Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 11-15. (b) Krishna Yajur Veda—Dhyanbindu Upanishad, verse nos. 93/12—93/15.]

12. The pure conscious Atma which is present in the heart of one living being is also present in the heart of all the other living beings in this creation (because the Atma is one indivisible and uniform divine entity which cannot be partitioned or fractioned into components; because it is all-pervading, all-encompassing, all-inclusive and all-permeating, being immanent and omnipresent; because it cannot be limited to any specific place and bound by any specific definitions).

It is like the case of viewing different images of the same glorious moon as it is seen being reflected in a number of different vessels filled with water. [Here, the moon is the universal consciousness called the Atma, while the images seen in different vessels of water are like the presence of same consciousness in myriad number of countless creatures in this existence.] (12).

13. The space symbolising the sky present inside the hollow of the earthen pot appears to be completely separate and distinct from the space present outside the body of the pot, but when the pot is broken all differences and distinctions between these two spaces automatically vanish without leaving any trace. When the earthen pot is broken it is only the pot that gets destroyed but the space element present inside its hollow cavity is absolutely unaffected; it simply merges with its counterpart present outside the pot. Once the pot is broken, no one would be able to distinguish between the two spaces; no one can delineate or draw a line between the space that existed inside the pot and the one that existed outside the body of the pot.

Likewise, this Atma is compared to this space while the body of the living being is like the clay pot. When the perishable body dies or is subjected to any kind of decay and ruin, nothing happens to the eternal and imperishable Atma even as nothing happens to the sky element when the clay pot is broken. Rather, in this eventuality, it is set free to become one with the universal cosmic Consciousness present everywhere (13).

14. The bodies that all the living beings have are like this earthen pot which is made and broken repeatedly. [The gross body is moulded from the earth element much like the earthen pot. The body is made or moulded in the mother's womb much like the pot is moulded by the potter. The body takes birth, is used by the Atma as long as it lasts, and when the body gets old and decrepit the Atma abandons it to take residence in another new body. This is like the making and breaking of the pot.]

This inherently perishable body, which is gross, inert and inane, does not know or is unaware of the fact that it is the habitat of the eternally conscious supreme Atma residing inside its own self, and that it is the presence of this Atma which is the causative factor that has made the body acquire so much importance.

On the other hand, the Atma is consciousness personified; it is wise and enlightened because it is inherently omniscient and all-knowing. This Atma is fully aware of the presence of the body. This Atma representing the supreme transcendental Brahman knows everything (and that is why the body begins to 'feel, see, taste, hear and touch' as soon as the conscious Atma becomes active in it, otherwise it remains in an

‘un-conscious state of coma or paralysis’ as it were). This is the basic difference between the body and the Atma. The Atma can make the body ‘live’, be conscious, become active and acquire its worth, but the body cannot do the same to the Atma. The body can’t survive without the consciousness residing inside it, but the consciousness can do without the body (14).

[Note--In other words, the body has any importance at all as it is the abode for the Atma and is used by the latter to perform its duties in this world. Without the vehicle of the body, the Atma would not be able to carry out its wishes in this gross and physical world of material objects because the Atma is a ‘spirit’ and so subtle, sublime and microscopic that it is impossible for it to interact with this world which has just the opposite characteristics. There is no compatibility between the ‘pure, truthful, sublime, subtle, eternal and conscious spirit’ and the ‘gross, dense, inane, lifeless, transient and illusionary world of perishable material things which are hollow from the inside and lack any worthwhile essence and pith’.]

15. As long as the creature’s Atma remains surrounded by the veil of Maya, or covered by the shroud of delusions and ignorance about its true nature, making it erroneously think that it has a name and form in the shape of the body, it is only till then the creature remains like a trapped insect inside the closed lotus flower. When this darkness of ignorance is removed, when this veil of delusions is shed off, the creature is set free in the light of knowledge (much like the lotus opening its petals during the day time and setting free the trapped insect which remained in a hibernating state during the dark period of the night when the lotus remained closed)¹.

It is in this bright light of enlightenment that the wise creature is able to see the oneness between the true ‘self’ called the pure conscious Atma of the individual creature, and the supreme Self which is the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm. [The analogy of the clay pot cited above in verse no. 13 and of the moon in verse no. 12 would fit in well here.] (15).

[Note—¹A bee alights on a flower to drink nectar. It so happens that it becomes engrossed in the bliss and enjoyment of the taste of that flower’s nectar that it forgets that the petals close at nightfall. When the dark night arrives, the flower closes its petals and the insect gets trapped inside, spending its night remaining submerged in its blissful state. At the crack of dawn the petals reopen and the bee flies off to another flower, only to discover that the nectar is as tasty and blissful here as it was in the previous flower.

This example would sum up what is said in this verse. The night indicates the darkness of ignorance and delusions which traps the insect into thinking that the flower on which it has alighted is the only flower in the world, and the cavity of the flower is all there is to it in this world because it is unable to see anything due to darkness of the night. When the light of day symbolised by wisdom and enlightenment dawns upon the mental horizon of the bee, it is then able to see the vast world of so many other flowers in the garden which have the same nectar to offer to it, and numerous bees hovering over flowers or actually drinking nectar from numerous flowers that outstrip the number of bees. It then realises that it is only a small speck in the entire garden, and from the cosmic point of view all the bees and the flowers are the same.

The bees and the flowers are linked together by the common denominator of the nectar. Similarly, the individual creature and the objects of the world are linked together with the Atma—it is the Atma that keeps the creature alive and makes it interact with this world, and it is a living world having consciousness that keeps attracts the creature towards it for no one would want to deal with dead entities. The creature remains engrossed in this world but when he is fed up with the latter, he endeavours to find out the reason for his uneasiness. It is then that he discovers that

he had been trapped by the delusions created by this world because the he had sought to derive the bliss so typical of the Atma from the world. The creature would then research what that eternal fount of bliss is, and discovers that the Atma is that fount and that it is very much inside his own self.

In this example of the bee, the light of enlightenment is like the daylight which opens the petals of the flower to enable the bee to fly off to freedom. Till then, the bee is trapped inside the closed flower which had attracted the insect with the bait of the nectar. The nectar is like the various charms and enticements offered by the entrapping world of delusions and material sense objects to trap a creature. A creature who remains engrossed in enjoying this world is like the bee engrossed in drinking the nectar and getting trapped in the closed flower, while a wise and enlightened man who has seen the truth is like the bee which flies off after drinking the nectar without getting trapped by the closing of the flower.]

16. There are two entities called ‘Akchar’. This word literally has two connotations—one meaning a letter of the alphabet or a monosyllable word, and the other meaning something that is imperishable, immortal, indefinite, infinite and eternal; that which does not decay and die. The former meaning is applicable to the ethereal divine word OM which stands for the supreme transcendental Brahm, while the latter meaning applies to this Brahm itself.

The ‘word’ may perish; it might be forgotten and become unknown over long periods of time in history. But the ‘Brahm’ is eternal and everlasting as it is steady and omnipresent as the universal Truth and Absolute Reality. ‘Truth’ never perishes and it is evergreen by its basic nature. Therefore, out of the two forms of ‘Akchars’, the latter form, i.e. Brahm, is the real ‘Akchar’ as it is not only imperishable and immortal, but also represented by the ethereal word OM. Hence, Brahm fits in with both the connotations of Akchar.

In other words, when these two entities are weighed against each other or compared with each other, it is found that one (i.e. the ‘word’) might fade over time, but the other (i.e. Brahm) is eternal and infinite. Therefore, Brahm is honoured by the epithet ‘supreme and transcendental’ as nothing supersedes Brahm, nothing goes beyond it, but Brahm is beyond everything in existence, it goes beyond definitions and comprehension.

A wise, erudite and enlightened man who seeks real peace and tranquility should constantly contemplate and meditate upon that supreme transcendental Divinity known as Brahm that is ‘Akchar’ in the real sense, i.e. it is infinite, eternal, immortal and imperishable in the truthful sense of the word (16).

[Note—The eternal word OM made up of the basic elements of sound in the cosmic ether is called ‘Akchar’ meaning a monosyllabic word. Likewise, the supreme transcendental Brahm which is pure cosmic consciousness is also called ‘Akchar’, meaning something that is imperishable and eternal. These two entities are usually treated as one because of this linking factor of ‘Akchar’ which creates a synergy between the ethereal word which pervades the entire creation in a uniform manner and the cosmic consciousness which also pervades the creation in equally uniform manner.

But a situation may arise when there is completely no sound whatsoever, and then there is absolute silence, absolutely no activity. That which remains in this situation is the ‘truthful and real’ imperishable entity; it is an entity that is undoubtedly and irrefutably eternal, and it is indeed ‘Akchar’, or something that is imperishable and eternal in the truthful sense of the word.

Any sound is heard in the background of silence, and the cosmic sound represented by the monosyllable word OM has its origin in the waves that are generated in the cosmic ether. Friction in these waves cause the generation of energy and this is manifested as sound. Anything that has even a rudimentary form of life in it will show activity and the latter needs energy. Since vibrations in ether were the first signs of activity and hence of life, it is deemed that any form of basic sound is the subtlest and the confirmed form of existence of life anywhere. To understand this concept we may take this example—when a patient had been terminally ill and in a state of coma for a long time but is on the way of recovery, the doctor sees the ability of the patient to respond with verbal answers to questions put to him as the surest sign of his gaining consciousness. Mere wiggling of toes or moving of lips is not sufficient evidence for the patient regaining full consciousness.

The very fact that ‘some kind of energy’ existed in the cosmic ether to produce the subtlest manifestation of life as ‘sound’ is indicative of the existence of life in an invisible and imperceptible nascent form even before sound came into existence. This ‘primary entity’ predated even sound, and it is from it that the first signs of life gradually made themselves evident. This mystical, esoteric and mysterious entity which is the forefather of even sound and the rest of the creation which rolls out after this first cosmic appearance of energy is known as the imperishable and eternal Divinity or cosmic Consciousness called Brahm. It is this Brahm that is being referred to as the ultimate ‘Absolute’ one that is called ‘Akchar’—i.e. one that is really, truthfully and without doubt imperishable, immortal, infinite and eternal. The cosmic sound represented by the word OM may be Akchar in the technical meaning of the word because any word has letters and this OM specially fits the bill as it is a monosyllabic word, but it is not ‘absolute and infinite’. Any word can be pronounced, it can be transmitted by oral method, by writing and by speaking, it can be analysed and explained—and so it is subjected to some definitions and criterions. But Brahm is an entity that defies analysis, comprehension and definitions. So naturally Brahm is ‘transcendental and supreme’ as compared to the word OM or any word for that matter.

The appearance of cosmic sound cause by frictional energy in the cosmic ether can be compared to the roar of the ocean waves. These waves are generated by the energy dissipated by the varying speed of different layers of water currents flowing in the body of the ocean. These waves rise high, move at astounding speeds like colossus walls of water, and then when their life ends or their energy dissipated, they collapse back into the surface of the ocean. The ocean outlasts the waves and pre-dates them. From the perspective of the wave, the ocean is the eternal and real truth that exists even after the life of the wave ends and from which a new generation of waves emerge.

In this analogy, the fathomless and measureless ocean is the supreme infinite and transcendental Brahm and the wave is the new sequence in creation, while the sound generated by the heaving ocean is the cosmic OM which exists in the background of everything. Even a blind man who cannot see the ocean learns about its existence by hearing that typical ‘roar of the ocean’, and therefore even though one cannot actually see the presence of Brahm, the latter’s existence is certified by the presence of the cosmic Naad or sound represented by the monosyllabic word OM.

Again, even as a man can know the direction in which the ocean is present by hearing the roar, an aspirant can make out the general location of the cosmic Truth known as Brahm when he hears the cosmic sound called ‘Naad’ when he meditates. Yoga texts preach that this Naad can be heard inside one’s own self during meditation, and this establishes that Brahm is located inside one’s own bosom as one’s pure consciousness or Atma, and not in some far away mythological imaginary heaven.

It must be noted in the example of the ocean cited here that though one can know about the ocean by hearing its roar, it is not possible to measure or fathom the ocean

by just being aware of its presence. Even by actually seeing the ocean and undertaking extensive research on the ocean no one can ever truly measure or fathom it. Likewise, OM may help one to become aware of the cosmic Consciousness but it is impossible to measure it or completely know it.]

17. [This verse is a sort of an extension of verse no. 16.]

There are two forms that divine spiritual knowledge takes—one is known as ‘Shabda Brahm’ and the other is ‘Param Brahm’.

The Shabda Brahm is the spiritual knowledge that pertains to the Divinity known as Brahm which is obtained by the medium of letters which form numerous words (‘Shabda’) that endeavour to outline the special characteristics, attributes and virtues of the truthful entity in the creation that is most mystical, very esoteric, purely consciousness, and absolutely supreme (‘Brahm’). Hence, all the scriptures that are based on words are a manifestation of the Shabda Brahm.

The ‘Param Brahm’ on the other hand is the spiritual knowledge that pertains to the Divinity known as the supreme transcendental Being who is the ultimate Truth and Authority in creation (i.e. Param Brahm) that cannot be confined to letters and words formed by these letters. This Param Brahm cannot be restricted to the scriptures and goes much beyond their reach—this is because words have their own limitations and are subjected to interpretations and distortions. [This is the reason why there are so many scriptural texts, and there are more commentaries on them than there are scriptures.]

One must have a systematic approach to learn about anything, and this applies to the knowledge of Brahm as well. So, one must first resort to understanding that esoteric, enigmatic and mysterious entity by studying about it in the ‘words’ (Shabda) of the scriptures and hearing about it in the ‘words’ spoken by other wise and Brahm-realised persons who are deemed to be experts in this field and who have already succeeded in actually witnessing Brahm first hand. This is the practical and intelligent way to the understanding of, to the researching of and to the accessing of the unknown and the undefined. By adopting this systematic and intelligent approach, the aspirant succeeds in realising and gaining access to the knowledge pertaining to the supreme transcendental Divinity known as ‘Param Brahm’. [This systematic way to learning and becoming educated is prevalent even today.] (17).

[Note--Obviously, when we go to an unknown place or meet an unknown dignitary, we first gather knowledge about that place or dignitary by reading and hearing all that we can about them. This is a modern and rational approach in dealing with the unknown. So, when a researcher wishes to be fully aware of Brahm himself, he must be adequately prepared to unravel the secrets of this esoteric Divinity. Reading of scriptures and hearing of discourses, consulting others and removing doubts before hand makes the aspirant well prepared, more ready and enlightened about the reality which he is about to unravel. When eventually he succeeds in accessing that divine fount of scintillating energy he is fully prepared to receive its blast and not get blinded by the dazzle and stunned by its stupendous and splendorous presence. So the pre-preparedness is not only welcome but a wise and intelligent way of researching and accessing Brahm.]

18. A wise and scholarly man is one who extracts the essential spiritual knowledge contained in the scriptural text books (such as the Vedas, Upanishads, Purans etc.) and then discards the books themselves even as a farmer harvests the paddy crop, separates the grain from the husk, and then accepts the grain and takes it away to be stored carefully in his granary while leaving the husk behind.

In other words, after learning what is to be learnt from any scripture, a wise, prudent and erudite scholar should concentrate his energy and focus his attention more in putting that knowledge into practice and benefiting from it, rather than getting bogged down in futile and endless debates and discussions on those texts, or referring other texts to verify the truthfulness of what he has studied in the previous text. If the knowledge contained in the scriptures is not used for one's spiritual enhancement and spiritual well being which is the intention of studying them in the first place, if one learns by rote and does not understand what is actually being said and what is the real intention of whatever is said in these great spiritual and devotional texts, then the entire exercise is futile and goes in vain, leading to a waste of time and energy (18).

[Note—Refer Amrit Naad Upanishad, verse no. 1 which is Chapter 9 of this volume.]

19. The colour of different samples of milk would remain the same notwithstanding the different colour of the skin of the cows from which they are milked. Similarly, a wise, erudite and learned man sees, tries to understand and benefits from the underlying eclectic philosophy and principles, the basic tenets, the fundamental doctrines and the spiritual intention of whatever has been said in the scriptures that guide the faiths and beliefs of different traditions, sects, religions and communities in this world instead of getting confused, perplexed and misled by their superfluous and erroneous interpretations, external appearances, formal rites and ritualistic practices¹ (19).

[Note--¹That is, just like the milk is always white in colour no matter the breed of the cow and the colour of its hide, the basic tenet and teaching of all religions and their offshoots are universally the same, because they all speak about one single Truth. Therefore, one should not fight over external signs and other paraphernalia of different religions as this is a stupid and ignorant way of looking at things which are divine, holy, pristine pure and sublime in nature and essence. Getting entangled in such things as insignia, symbols, rituals and formalities of religious practices of various dispensations without peeping deep into their basic meaning and understanding the underlying philosophy is like predicting the colour of the milk by merely looking at the colour of the hide of the cow or breed of the animal without actually making efforts to know what the milk actually looks like and what are its benefits. It must be noted here in this context that geography, circumstances, era of time and history, language and communities etc. all play a combined role in how the ancient sages, seers, prophets or angels have revealed the same Truth in so many varied forms as they exist today—in different languages, using different idioms, examples, phraseology and terminology etc. to suit the prevailing environment, circumstances, situations, era, geographical considerations etc. For instance, a sage who resided in a land where there were rivers, green fields, verdant forests and lofty mountains naturally would differ in his citations than another sage who lived in areas where there were dry deserts and no rainfall. Then the level of social development was also a major factor as was the type of students and their mental aptitude that had to be factored in. Contemporary examples can prove this point however—a student of today would easily understand what a Mobile Phone, an I-Pod, a Computer, a CD (compact disc) or an MP 4 music player is but he would not understand anything about a rotary phone, a turn-table gramophone record player, or what is meant by a 'LP record' of yesteryears.]

20. Even as butter is inherently present in fat-rich milk as its integral part, consciousness representing Brahm and its accompanying enlightenment and wisdom are inherently present in the bosom of all living beings, forming their integral part and their true self.

Just like one vigorously churns milk to extract butter from it, a wise man should treat his mind as the churning rod and constantly contemplate and meditate upon the pure conscious 'self' in order to gain access to the divine and eclectic entity known as the supreme transcendental Brahm hidden inside his own bosom as pure consciousness known as the Atma which is the ultimate essence and absolute 'truth' in creation. [This is like extracting butter from milk.] (20).

21. Once the aspirant is able to acquire the subtle and sublime vision that helps him to have a deep and penetrating insight into the mysteries of the glorious, splendorous and supreme Brahm residing in his own bosom as the pure and radiant consciousness, it becomes clear to him that this Brahm is his own Atma or his truthful 'self'. True spiritual wisdom and enlightenment envisages that such an aspirant is fully convinced of this eclectic fact that this Brahm—which is free from all sense of duality, which is free from all factionalisms and divisions, which is without any taints, blemishes and faults, which is constant and steady, and which is most peaceful, tranquil and serene—and the 'self' (Atma or soul) are one and the same entities. That is, Brahm and Atma are one and non-dual entities known as the 'self'.

This realisation is called true spiritual enlightenment and wisdom; it is the truthful learning and scholarship in the scriptures; it is the essential teaching and benefit derived from following any religious doctrine and philosophy. [That is, the main purpose of studying the scriptures is to become aware of the spiritual 'truth' that is 'absolute and undiluted'. So when the aspirant is able to sincerely realise—without any kind of pretensions, deceit and conceit—that his 'true self' is the Atma, the pure consciousness personified, and that this Atma is nothing else but Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness, it is deemed that the aspirant has not only studied the scriptures but understood their essence and fundamental principles. He has 'drawn the milk from the scriptural cow' as it were; he has extracted the butter from their milk.] (21).

22. I (the pure conscious Atma which is the truthful 'self' of the spiritual aspirant) am that Vasudeo (one of the names of Lord Vishnu, the sustainer, nourisher and protector of creation) in whom all the creatures have their dwelling and find their final resting place. It is me who resides in the bosom of all the living creatures in this creation (as their Atma or soul). And it is me who is famous because of my basic nature of being most benevolent, magnanimous, kind and gracious towards all the creatures in this creation.

Indeed, that supreme transcendental Brahm known as Vasudeo who lives in the bosom of all the living beings as their pure conscious Atma or soul is none other but 'me' (because my true identity is also pure conscious Atma, and since 'truth' can be one and not two, it follows that my self and Vasudeo are one and the same divine entities). Verily, I am that Vasudeo. This is what this Upanishad teaches; it is its profound tenet and doctrine; it is the great truth that it affirms and proclaims (22).

-----Shanti Paath-----

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Chapter 9

Amrit Naad Upanishad/Amritnaado-panishad

Belonging to the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, this Upanishad is based on the philosophy of Yoga or meditation by which a spiritual aspirant establishes a union between his individual self and the cosmic supreme Self known as Brahm. It has thirty nine verses.

This union between the individual 'self' and the cosmic 'Self' results in the individual being drowned in the ethereal vibrations present in the fathomless and measureless cosmos, vibrations that generate a subtle reverberating cosmic noise called Naad. These vibrations completely submerge him and virtually massage his nerves so much so that the practitioner of Yoga hears nothing else but this Naad all around him. This result in his feeling an overwhelming wave of ecstasy overflowing him which in turn gives him the much sought after sense of bliss and happiness of the highest order. It is something that can neither be conveyed or preached or explained; it is only experienced first hand.

It regards the ethereal divine word OM that is universally used during meditation as a vehicle for concentration of the mind as a chariot (a vehicle) which can take the spiritual practitioner to his destination of attaining supreme state of enlightenment. The divine, spiritual and eclectic value of OM, which is also known as 'Naad', the cosmic ethereal sound that is all-pervading and all-encompassing as the background sound present in the cosmos and heard by an ascetic during his meditation, is elaborated upon in a very succinct manner.

Verse no. 2 beautifully uses the analogy of the chariot to describe how OM can be used as a vehicle to reach the supreme state of extreme bliss and ecstasy that is conventionally regarded as the state of existence that accompanies Brahm-realisation.

It goes on to describe the various limbs or branches of Yoga, and the most acclaimed of all meditation exercises that is known as 'Pranayam' which entails control of the vital winds inside the body and diverting their energy towards spiritual upliftment. The benefits of Yoga are outlined in this context. This Upanishad is one of the major ones dealing with the concept of Yoga.

Finally, this Upanishad deals with the vital winds called the various Prans which sustain and protect the body. It describes their importance, location and symbolic colours. It concludes that when an ascetic who practices Pranayam manages to concentrate his vital life forces called Pran in the head, he finds final deliverance from the shackling effects of this gross body when he dies, and therefore he does not have to take birth again. Hence we can summarises that this Upanishad prescribes the path of Yoga as a means to fulfill the spiritual aspirations of a wise person.

-----Shanti Paath-----

ॐ सह नावतु । सह नौ भुनक्तु । सह वीर्यं करवावहै । तेजस्वि नावधीतमस्तु । मा विद्विषावहै ।
ॐ शान्तिः । शान्तिः । शान्तिः ।

The meaning of this Shanti Paath is given in appendix no. 1.

1. A wise, erudite and sagacious man should constantly study the scriptures, ponder upon their profound truthful tenets, and actually practice them in his life (i.e. implement them). He should realise that this life—which is like the transient streak of lightening or the meteor flying across the dark sky for a fleeting moment only to vanish in the next moment—is a golden and unique opportunity given to the soul to acquire truthful and eclectic knowledge of the supreme transcendental Divinity known as Brahm. Therefore, a wise man should not let go of this opportunity and make the best use of it. He should not fritter away his life in the pursuit of things that are perishable and worthless. Instead, he should spend his life in accessing what is immortal and a provider of eternal peace and happiness (1).

[Note—This verse essentially emphasises the fact that a human body, especially a life as a wise and intelligent man who has favourable circumstances and gets all the opportunities for his spiritual upliftment such as the chance to study the scriptures under the aegis of a learned teacher, a healthy body, a conducive environment for spiritual pursuits, and reasonable availability of worldly necessities and comforts so that precious time is not wasted in their procurement etc. is not obtained so easily and repeatedly. So a truly wise man is one who utilises this golden opportunity to ensure that his soul finds redemption for its self and breaks free from the endless cycle of birth and death in numerous lives, wandering in countless wombs and subjected to horrors of unimaginable magnitude. A wise man should strive to salvage his soul while there is still time, i.e. while his body has not become old and decrepit, and he still has control over its vital functions. It is like an advice given to a school student by his wise and loving father that he must be very careful in his formative years and concentrate upon his studies and character building, because if he loses his chances to do this now, he would repent for this lost opportunity for the rest of his life. Refer Brahm Bindu/Amrit Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 18 which is Chapter 8 of this volume.]

2. [This verse describes the vehicle that the spiritual aspirant should use to attain the supreme citadel of self-realisation which is akin to having access to the supreme Brahm. Two versions are presented here.]

A wise and erudite person who embarks upon the spiritual journey of self and Brahm realisation aiming to reach the abode of Brahm called the Brahm Loka¹ should board a chariot or vehicle symbolised by OM² (the monosyllabic ethereal word standing for Brahm), make Lord Vishnu his charioteer³, and fix his attention on the target of Brahm-realisation by emulating Lord Rudra or Shiva⁴ who remains always in a state of Samadhi or a trance-like state of meditation where one enjoys perpetual bliss and ecstasy. [In other words, a wise aspirant who wishes to attain success in obtaining the eternal fount of bliss and eternity represented by Brahm, called Brahm-realisation, should be devoted to Lord Vishnu by leaving his destiny in the Lord's hand which is symbolised by making the Lord his charioteer. Since mediation is regarded as the medium of attaining spiritual success, Lord Shiva is invoked as the deity because Shiva is the patron God of ascetics. OM is the Mantra universally used in meditation, so this becomes a vehicle for attaining the state of Brahm-realisation.]

There is another way of interpreting this verse. One should ride upon the symbolic chariot of OM, and make Lord Vishnu its charioteer. Astride this glorious and divine chariot, he should investigate and explore the vast kingdom of Brahm, the Lord of creation. That is, the spiritual aspirant should research the actual 'truth' in existence behind the façade of illusions and delusions by using the divine Mantra OM and being devoted to Lord Vishnu. While doing this, he should retract his mind from

everything else and remain perpetually in a state of Samadhi (which is a trance-like state of complete bliss and detachment) like the one obtained by Lord Rudra or Shiva. [Lord Shiva also happens to be the God of death and conclusion. So it implies that the aspirant always keeps in mind the fact that this life and the rest of the world would surely come to an end one day because everything that has a birth and existence is certainly destined to decay and die one day or the other. This would help him to remain always vigilant and alert against falling prey to the enticements of the deluding world which is mortal and perishable; it would prevent him from going astray from his spiritual path of seeking the Truth which is immortal and imperishable.] (2).

[Note—¹The word 'Brahm Loka' refers to the state of existence where the self-realised person becomes one with Brahm. It is the finding of the eternal fount of beatitude and felicity, the attainment of liberation and deliverance of the soul from the endless cycle of birth and death. It is like reaching the citadel where the supreme transcendental Divinity known as Brahm is attainable. It is to be noted that this Brahm Loka is actually not located somewhere in the hypothetical corner in the universe called the Heaven, but in the spiritual aspirant's own heart where his Atma lives, because this Atma is a personification of Brahm.

²OM is the divine Mantra used during meditation as clearly laid out in Yogchudamani Upanishad of Sam Veda tradition in its verse no. 71. Further, verse nos. 72-89 of this Upanishad describe the metaphysical importance of OM as an embodiment of Brahm. Refer also to verse nos. 20-25 of this present Amrit Naad Upanishad below which emphasise the use of OM as a medium of doing Yoga.

Now let us see what this OM refers to. The word OM is the ethereal divine word representing the supreme transcendental Brahm which is the only and absolute Truth in creation. This word is used as a Mantra or a group of letters combined together to enable the aspirant to symbolically witness the entire spectrum of creation, right from its conception thorough its expansion till its conclusion.

OM has been treated as the nearest analogue of Brahm which is the only 'truth' in creation and therefore eternal and infinite, because 'truth' has these characteristics. Since the wise aspirant has already become aware that his 'own true self is pure consciousness', and that it is the same as the 'cosmic supreme Consciousness and the universal Truth known as Brahm', he finds a resonance and sync between these two entities. Truth is always eternal and imperishable as compared to falsehood and delusions. Study of the scriptures as advised in the opening lines of this Upanishad inculcates in him the wisdom about the perishable and deluding nature of this world and the eternal nature of his true self. So naturally he would reject something impermanent and go and investigate something that is permanent. With this aim in view, the aspirant relentlessly pursues his goal of finding it without getting distracted by delusions and false charms of this world. This is indicated by the fact that he constantly remembers Lord Shiva, symbolising his constant awareness of the fact that the life would very soon come to an end.

Now, the word OM has three basic sounds represented by the letters A, U and M. These three are called *Matras* which literally means the time taken or marked to pronounce a short vowel in the Sanskrit language; it also means a vowel mark. Matra refers to the basic ingredients and their magnitude in any given entity. It also means quantity and intensity of an ingredient. In the case of creation, there are three basic components—its coming into being, its development and expansion, and its conclusion. These three are symbolically represented by the three letters of OM—viz. 'A' represents the initiation, 'U' the development and expansion, and 'M' the conclusion. This is because to say the letter 'A', one has to open the mouth, signifying life coming into existence. This is evident from the fact that when the child takes birth, the first thing it does is starting to cry, entailing the opening of the mouth. Or when a man wakes up from sleep, he yawns and utters some incomprehensible

monosyllables to indicate that the sleep is over. Similarly, to say 'U' one has to cup the lips and the muscles of the tongue are rolled forwards, indicating progress and outgoing nature. Finally, to say 'M' one has to close the mouth, indicating the reversal of the process when the mouth was first opened to indicate the initiation of life. That is, M stands for conclusion of life; it symbolises death.

In the present context, this verse is talking about meditation on the divine word OM with the eclectic view point that the first letter of OM, i.e. 'A' is Lord Vishnu because he is the Viraat Purush from whom the entire cosmos has evolved. Once the creation comes into being, 'U' represents the vast kingdom of Brahma, the patriarch creator of this visible world. A wise and erudite spiritual seeker of the Truth researches this world to find out the truth him, and this he does by meditation and contemplation. For this purpose he invokes Lord Shiva who is represented by the third letter 'M' signifying the conclusion of creation, or death. Further, Shiva is the patron deity of ascetics and seekers of truth who have renounced the illusionary charms of this world and taken the strict vows of a monk or a friar. Shiva is worshipped as the Lord who symbolises truth and its beauty, an auspicious way of life full of dispassion and detachment from this material world which has a profound impact upon the whole spiritual well being of the creature, including his peace of mind and blissful heart.

For this purpose of meditation, the spiritual aspirant uses the word OM as a vehicle to concentrate his mind and attention on divinity, truth and the eternal source of peace and tranquility, beatitude and felicity known as Brahm. As to why he chooses OM to do meditation to the exception of all other Mantras, the answer is that if one wishes to study, for example, a specialised branch of advanced molecular biology, then he would buy relevant books, go to a relevant college, here relevant lectures and use relevant knowledge to succeed. It would be highly incredulous and incongruous for him to use physics text book and attend classes on this subject in order to study molecular biology! Likewise, OM is the proper channel, the correct path, the right instrument and the fine-tuned apparatus that can enable him to succeed in Brahm realisation. No other way is as effective and as fruitful as this.

³Let us see the meaning of the symbolism here. Lord Vishnu is depicted as the charioteer here to draw a parallel to his incarnation as Lord Krishna when he had become a charioteer of Arjun during the famous Mahabharat war when the Lord had preached the much acclaimed philosophical treatise known as Gita. Vishnu is regarded as Brahm personified in his macrocosmic form as the Viraat Purush, the invisible, all-encompassing and all-pervading macrocosmic gross body of Brahm. So, when the spiritual aspirant makes Vishnu his charioteer he is literally leaving his spiritual destiny in the hands of the ultimate Lord himself; he is making the Lord his guide and guardian. This ensures that the aspirant would not be tormented by evil forces because the Lord is now responsible for his protection and welfare.

Form the metaphysical interpretation of OM, making Vishnu the charioteer is like meditating and contemplating upon the first letter 'A' of OM. Since the aspirant has made OM as his vehicle for spiritual journey to Brahm-realisation, he must choose a charioteer who is well versed with the path leading to enlightenment as well as the destination which is self-realisation and Brahm-realisation along with their eternal beatitude and felicity. Lord Vishnu knows this path well because he has created the cosmos and is the supreme Brahm himself. Lord Vishnu takes the aspirant through the journey, showing him all the way side villages and towns represented by the countless experiences and ideas that the aspirant comes across in his lifetime. The charioteer gives him a running commentary of all these places, symbolising the fact that if one listens to the divine voice of the inner self where Vishnu is supposed to reside as one's Atma or consciousness, then the chances of his falling from his chosen devotional path are remote, and the progress of the chariot towards its destination of self-realisation and Brahm-realisation would go on smoothly.

The second letter 'U', as we have seen above, represents the expansion of the creation, indicating that the spiritual aspirant is given a wide choice and shown all the pitfalls that come in the way as well as the horrendous consequences of falling from his spiritual goal and getting distracted by the road-side tricksters and cheated by moral imposters. He would then be trapped in the endless cycle of birth and death, and go back to where he has come so far. When the aspirant relies upon his wisdom cultivated by the study of scriptures, he does not allow himself to be laid astray and fall in the trap of such wayside delusions. This ensures that the chariot progresses smoothly onwards towards its final goal.

The last letter 'M' represents conclusion or death. When a man is face to face with the reality of an imminent death, no amount of worldly enticements of material comforts and sensual pleasures would move him, especially if he sees in that death a chance of eternal liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death. Such a man would be totally detached from this world, and turn inwards in search of peace and tranquility. This is the culmination of meditation and marked by a perpetual state of Samadhi. This is why such a person worships Lord Shiva who is a living personification of these eclectic virtues and in a perpetual state of Samadhi. The age old adage that 'one becomes what one thinks' is fully applicable here—the aspirant becomes one like these three icons of auspiciousness, righteousness, truthfulness, divinity and holiness (i.e. Vishnu, Brahma and Shiva) with whom he constantly keeps company; he inculcates their virtues and ultimately loses his own independent identity, being completely infused, soaked and drenched in their diving glory, completely imbued in their spiritual colour.

⁴Lord Shiva and Rudra are two names of the same divinity, while Shiva and Vishnu are both regarded as manifestations of Brahm, and therefore synonymous with each other and with Brahm—refer Skanda Upanishad which is Chapter 19, and Rudra Hridaya Upanishad which is Chapter 26 of this volume. Shiva is regarded as the patron God of ascetics and of those who do meditation. The emphasis in this present Upanishad is on attaining the eclectic state of Brahm-realisation through the medium of meditation as described in the following verses, and therefore it is appropriate to regard Shiva or Rudra as the patron God who is invoked during the journey to Brahm.]

3. A wise aspirant should ride the chariot only as long as the path permits so, but as soon as he reaches a point where the chariot is no longer needed or cannot go further, he should disembark from it and move ahead on his own. In other words, till the time the aspirant has not reached a certain point in his stated objective of spiritual enlightenment and self realisation after which he does not need any more support to move ahead in his spiritual pursuit, he should diligently follow the directions laid down by the scriptures and practice various means prescribed by them, one of them being the practice of Yoga (meditation). But as soon that point is reached when he becomes aware of the pure consciousness present in his bosom, he no longer needs a prop or crutches to move ahead in his spiritual journey any more. After a certain point, the progress is automatic and self-propelled. It becomes so powerful a spiritual force that it magnetically pulls the aspirant towards itself, and then there is no longer any need for meditation and contemplation as well as study of the scriptures and listening to religious discourses. Obviously, when one reaches his goal, there is no point in sticking to the means employed earlier to reach there, because from this exalted citadel of self-realisation and Brahm-realisation where the aspirant has found an eternal wellspring of beatitude and felicity, there is no question of going back to the mortal and perishable world of delusions and miseries, and therefore there would no further need of this 'chariot' and to ride on it again any longer (3).

[Note—This is like getting a car started or a heavy stone rolling. Initially it requires a lot of energy to push the two to get moving, but once the start to move they gain momentum and then no more pushing is needed. Another example would be a space vehicle—the earlier part of its journey to outer space, the time of lift off from earth and the time it is in the lower part of the earth’s atmosphere is the most difficult part of the flight because of the exceptional weight of the vehicle, the inertia that has to be overcome, and the high gravitational pull. Once the required height and momentum is gained, the progress becomes easier and requires less energy.]

4. The different Matras of Pranav or OM (as described in verse no. 2) are symbolic of the basic seeds of creation, because it is from them that the rest of the creation has come into being. Letters are the elementary building blocks of words, and the words are at the heart of the holy scriptures because it is by the means of words that the profound spiritual teachings of these scriptures are brought to light.

According to the genesis of creation, the world, both the visible and the invisible, has come into being when the creator Brahma had turned his face in the four directions and pronounced the first elementary words of creation, called the ‘Vyahritis’¹. These Vyahritis and the Matras of OM are symbolic of the manifestation of this creation having different attributes and characteristic features from a single divine entity which has no such distinguishing attributes and characteristic features whatsoever.

That attributeless and featureless entity which outlasts this creation and pre-dates it, which is the cause of everything coming into being and is the final point where everything collapses at the end, is the absolutely almighty, omniscient, all-knowing and self-enlightened Brahm or Ishwar. Since this Brahm or Ishwar has no attributes and outlasts the creation, it is represented by the third letter ‘M’ of OM. This is because ‘M’ represents conclusion of this deluding and artificial world started by ‘A’ and expanded by ‘U’. Beyond ‘M’ there is no physical creation as we understand it to mean. Therefore, this state is symbolic of the fourth state of existence called Turiya when the world ceases to exist.

By progressively meditating upon these Matras of OM, the aspirant gradually evolves in his spiritual pursuit from the waking state of consciousness represented by the first letter ‘A’ of OM symbolising the initiation of creation, to the second state called dreaming state represented by the second letter ‘U’ of OM symbolising development and expansion of the creation, and moves ahead in this progression to reach the third state known as the deep sleep state of consciousness represented by the first letter ‘M’ of OM symbolising the conclusion of creation. When the visible and perceptible creation concludes, there exists the fourth state of consciousness which transcends these three earlier ones, and it is known as Turiya².

This Turiya state is most subtle and sublime; it is beyond the known and perceptible world symbolically represented by the letters of the Sanskrit alphabet, such as the vowels starting with the first letter ‘A’ and the consonants starting with the first letter ‘Ka’. In other words, in the Turiya state of consciousness all delusions and imaginations are eliminated and barred; it is a state of supreme enlightenment and realisation where only the Truth exists (4).

[Note—¹The *Vyahritis* are the primary root words pronounced by the creator Brahma at the time of the beginning of creation and from which formed the nucleus around which the seven worlds formed. In other words, the rest of the creation was revealed from these primary sounds created by Brahma.

The seven ‘Vyahritis’ are the words—(1) Bhu, (2) Bhuvaha, (3) Swaha, (4) Maha, (5) Janaha, (6) Tapaha, and (7) Satyam. ‘Bhu’ was the nucleus for earth, ‘Bhuvaha’ for

the sky above the earth, 'Swaha' for the space beyond the earth's atmosphere and is generally meant for the heavens, 'Maha' stands for the greater heavens beyond the solar system, called the Maha-Loka where enlightened sages and seers are supposed to dwell (as opposed to earth where ordinary creatures including subterranean creatures would finally take up residence), 'Tapaha' was the place where exalted ascetics would do penances and austerities, and 'Satyam' was the truthful and ultimate abode where the ultimate and irrefutable supreme truthful entity which is the only Authority in creation resides.

According to Sankhya Shastra and the Purans, Brahma, who is known as 'Swayambhu' (self created in the sense that he had no father or ancestor) created seven elements called 'Vyahriti', viz. Bhu, Bhuvaha, Swaha, Mahaha, Janaha, Tapaha and Satyam respectively (भू, भुवः, स्वः, महः, जनः, तपः, सत्यम्) which constitute the fundamental elements which formed the gross body of the creation as its core building blocks at the macro level. Encircling this core is the rounded globe called 'earth' which is surrounded by concentric circles constituting of 'water', 'energy' called 'Tej', 'wind or air', 'sky or space', the notions that are described as 'pride, ego, arrogance, haughtiness and vanity' collectively called 'Ahankar', and the notions of 'importance, majesty, grandeur, magnificence and lordliness' called collectively as 'Mahattatva'. Each of them was ten times larger than its preceding layer or circle.

The *seven Vyahritis* and the worlds they represent are the following—(a) 'Bhu' represents this world (earth), fire, Rig Veda and Pran (life giving breath); (b) 'Bhuvaha' represents the sky called Antariksha, wind or air, Sam Vedas and Apaana wind (i.e. the wind which passes down the intestines and helps in digestion and excretion); (c) 'Swaha' represents Dukoka (the heavens), Aditya (the celestial sun), Yajur Veda and Vyan (the wind that prevails throughout the body); (d) 'Maha' represents Aditya (the Sun God), Chandrama (the Moon God), Brahm (the supreme transcendental Being who has no specific attributes) and Anna (food which sustains life in this creation); (e) 'Janaha' represents the world inhabited by mortal creatures such as the life on earth; (f) 'Tapaha' represents the world where great ascetics and hermits live to do severe penances and austerities, and therefore it is most auspicious and holy and marked by an effulgence of divine energy and splendour; and (g) 'Satyam' representing that truthful abode where the supreme transcendental Brahm lives; it is the ultimate destination of all spiritual pursuits, and is marked by eternal beatitude and felicity.

Taittiriyo-panishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Valli 1, Anuvak 5 describes these Vyahritis. It however focuses on four Vyahritis only, i.e. Bhu, Bhuvaha, Swaha and Maha. In this verse, the different 'Vyahritis' are being worshipped as manifestations of the supreme transcendental Brahm.

²The four states of consciousness are—waking or Jagrat, dreaming or Swapna, deep sleep or Sushupta, and transcendental or Turiya. The Turiya state in the context of Yoga has been explained in Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, 2/149-152 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition.]

5. A wise and erudite man should treat his pure conscious Atma as a Sun whose brilliant rays illuminates the world. [That is, even as the world is made visible when it is lighted by the Sun's rays, it is the consciousness present inside the body of the creature that enables him to see and become aware of the world through the different sense perceptions of the body. Had it not been for the Atma, the body, left to its own account, would not have been able to perceive this world or know anything about it. This is proved by the fact that when the creature dies, i.e. when the Atma has left his body, he is not able to recognise or perceive the existence of the world inspite of the fact that all the organs are still there as before. The Sun is like the Atma, while its light is like the consciousness that emanates from the Atma. Even as the Sun and its

rays are synonymous with each other and can't be separated from one another, the Atma and its consciousness are the same and inseparable. Just like a man would not be able to see anything in the dark of the night when the Sun's rays are not able to illuminate the objects in this world, a man would not be able to see or perceive this world without the sense organs of perception which are the external receptors for the mind that actually does the perceiving of the world.]

In other words, it is the presence of the 'consciousness' in the form of the Atma residing in the bosom of the man that enables him to receive the stimuli in raw form from the external world through the organs of perceptions, and then use the mind to interpret them sensibly and classify them into various sense perceptions, such as sight, taste, sound, smell and feeling or touch. The Atma then uses the intellect to deduce an intelligent meaning from them and create a picture of the world in its mind-intellect complex. So, the entire process of being aware of the external world, receiving it through the sense organs of perception, making sense of it and reacting accordingly—all depends upon one single factor which is conscious and alive, which is the supreme Authority at the center of the entire reconnaissance, command and action mechanism of the creature, and without which the entire edifice of life and the existential world would lose their importance and relevance for him.

It is in the 'light' radiating out from this Sun-like consciousness known as the Atma that the mind and intellect show their stupendous powers and potentials, and the organs of perceptions (and of actions for that matter) too mark their presence felt by carrying out their respective functions which are typical to them and that are unique to the existence of 'life' in any form. A dead body would not perceive anything whatsoever.

Again, it is this consciousness or Atma which 'lights up', or infuses the vital factors of 'life, awareness, alertness, energy, strength, ability, drive and vitality' into these two units of the body (i.e. the subtle body made up of mind-intellect complex, and the gross body made up of the organs of perceptions and action, at the micro level of the individual creature, as well as the entire creation at the macro level) to enable them to carry out their functions effectively. These different functions of the body are collectively responsible for the showcasing of the most astounding and mysterious characteristics that distinguish 'life' in this creation.

In other words, had there been no consciousness, the world with all its alluring charms and enchanting attractions which are so gratifying for the sense organs and keep the mind enthralled and captivated, would automatically lose their relevance and importance. It would be like seeing the world in the dark of night.

Therefore, realising this fact, the wise and erudite aspirant should endeavour to turn away from all things that have no real worth in the world because they are not true and not illuminated themselves (i.e. he should turn away from those things of the artificial world which have no real importance, glory and value of their own, but instead depend upon the Atma to give them their importance). He should exercise restraint on his sense organs as well as the mind-intellect complex and focus them on something of real value and true importance, which is the 'consciousness' called the Atma. Had there been no Atma, the rest of the things in this world would have no value and importance whatsoever.

Exercising control over the sense organs and the mind so that they are preventing from being restless and naturally gravitating towards non-essential entities of the delusory world which have no pith and reality in them, and instead remaining under control and disciplined, is called 'Pratyahar'¹. Pratyahar is therefore putting a

tight leash on both the gross body as well as the subtle body of the creature to control their vagaries, recklessness and intransigence (5).

[Note—¹*Pratyahar* has been defined in Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 1/1/7 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition in the following words—“*Pratyahar* is defined as the control of the mind and the intellect from getting engrossed with, attached to, lured by, or attracted towards the various sense objects of this material world. In other words, it is the control of the various senses of perception that impel a man towards this artificial world and get trapped in its snare.”]

6. Yoga is said to have six limbs or branches as follows—*Pratyahar*, *Dhyan*, *Pranayam*, *Dharna*, *Tarka* (logic and rationality), and *Samadhi* (6).

[Note—The *six paths of Yoga* or meditation and contemplation which enables one to realise the true nature of the pure consciousness residing in one’s own bosom as the Atma, which is the ‘true self’ of the aspirant, and establish oneness with this Atma and the supreme Atma of the creation known as Brahm, are the following--(1) *Pratyahar* or withdrawal of the mind and its control; (2) *Dhyan* or contemplation and concentration of the faculties of the mind and intellect; (3) *Pranayam* which means control of the vital winds in the body, called the subtle Prans, by the means of different meditation techniques and harnessing their latent energy and potentials to acquire stupendous mystical powers which enables the aspirant to reach higher state of consciousness which is not otherwise possible in the normal course; (4) *Dharna* or having a firm conviction, faith and belief on the sanctity and truthfulness of the chosen path; (5) *Tarka* or application of logic and analytical abilities of the mind to reach rational conclusions that are empirical and can stand the rigorous tests of rationality and truth, lending them credibility and value; and (6) *Samadhi* or a perpetual trance-like state in which the aspirant loses all awareness of the external world and even himself, and remains perpetually in meditation; or a state when all falsehoods are eliminated and what remains is an unwavering and steady light of realisation of the Truth.

The Yogchudamani Upahishad of Sam Veda tradition describes the six-limbs of Yoga in detail.]

7. Even as the impurities of precious minerals and rare elements extracted from mining of mountains are purified by heating them in the fire of a furnace, all the ignominious impurities and faults that are brought in by the various sense organs of perceptions are burnt when one practices holding of the various vital winds called Prans by the process of *Pranayam* inside the body. These impurities and faults impinge upon the purity of the soul and create a tainting layer of worldly delusions and their attendant problems around the otherwise glorious Atma, thereby suppressing its natural divinity and sublime glow. [This is like the case of a film of dust covering the glass enclosing the flame of the lantern. The light of the flame appears to be dull and gloomy. When this glass is cleaned, the light shines ever so brilliantly.] (7).

[Note—Metals are extracted by heating their ores in a furnace. This intense heating removes the impurity and brings out the purity of the metal to the fore. Similarly, the various taints that surround the Atma are removed by subjecting it to the rigors of spiritual discipline.

The inputs from the world create *Vasanas*, i.e. desires and passions to enjoy the material pleasures of the world, and these transform into *Vrittis*, i.e. natural habits and inclinations of the aspirant. The *Vrittis* tend to swerve the aspirant away from the path of spiritualism because it is a difficult path, and instead bend it to enjoyment of the sensual pleasures of the world and gratification of the senses because it is not only easy but most alluring at the same time. Slowly and over time, these faults form a thick crust over the Atma much like scum floating on the surface of the crystal clear

water of the lake, thereby suffocating the healthy and vibrant aquatic life that originally flourished in this lake before it got polluted. The Vasanas and Vrittis suppress the inherently divine glow emanating from this self-illuminated 'gem' called the Atma. The Atma then appears to be tainted and faulty, and not in its pristine pure form.]

8. Pranayam should be employed by the spiritual aspirant to reduce to ashes, i.e. to destroy and eliminate the various faults and impurities that have entered via the path of sense perceptions of the body¹. Dharna should be employed by him to similarly reduce to ashes the various sins and evil tendencies of the various organs of the body². Pratyahar should be employed to control the various organs of the body, including the mind, and divert them towards contemplating upon the numerous virtues and divine glories of the supreme transcendental Brahm residing as the soul or the Atma of the aspirant on the one hand, and as revealed in the form of the vast creation on the other hand³ (8).

[Note—¹Verse no. 7 has already shown how *Pranayam* helps the aspirant to burn the various faults that enter the mind along with the different perceptions that the mind constantly receives from the external world. For example, the mind is subjected to a constant bombardment of information in the visual spectrum which it calls 'sight'. Now, all that is seen is not always righteous, noble and auspicious, for more often than not it is just the opposite, creating a negative impact upon the mind and its subconscious, and the consequence corrupting of the Atma because the Atma relies upon the instrument of the mind and intellect to perceive the world in which it lives. The Atma has no means to directly perceive the world; it has to do so through the mind-intellect apparatus called the subtle body, and the organs of perception called the gross body. If any one of them is corrupted or tainted, the Atma is given a negative feedback, and it is no fault of the Atma if it *then* wrongly perceives the world. The fault is of the mind-intellect because it is the minister appointed by the Atma to sieve through the overwhelming wave of information from the outside world and let only the clean information to reach it. But if the mind-intellect apparatus is not itself properly maintained, then the consequences may be fatal for the Atma.

That is why essentially this Upanishad stresses on these six paths of Yoga which help the aspirant to filter out all rubbish from the world and let in only the divine nectar represented by auspicious, righteous, noble and virtuous ideas and perceptions to reach the taintless and faultless Atma so that its inherent natural beauty and divinity are not compromised.

²*Dharna* is having a firm conviction, faith and belief on the sanctity and truthfulness of the chosen path. This helps the aspirant to remain firm in it and prevent any chances of his faltering from it. This firmness helps the body to overcome temptations of the world and the natural affinity of the body and mind to fall prey to them.

³*Pratyahar* is control of the mind and body, and therefore it goes hand in hand with the other two methods. It must be noted that all limbs of Yoga mentioned here have no separate existence, and they must be used in a coordinated manner, just like the different organs of the body, both the external and the internal, function in a coordinate manner to enable the man to lead a normal life. In order to succeed in any enterprise, all the units have to function in a judicious manner and mix prudence with wisdom. When one constantly thinks about good things, it is but natural that it has a positive psychological effect on the mind, and helps it to become noble and wise in the long term.]

9. In this manner, the wise and erudite spiritual aspirant should, after having burnt all faults and cleansing the self of all taints associated with the body and the mind,

constantly contemplate upon the pure and pristine Divinity in the form of the 'conscious Atma' representing the supreme transcendental Brahm, the Supreme Being residing in one's own bosom (9).

10. Pranayam has three phases. While contemplating upon the divine and holy form of the Supreme Being (represented by the ethereal word OM—refer verse no. 1), one should keep the inhaled wind or breath inside the body for a given period of time during the phase called 'Kumbhak' (meaning a 'pot or pitcher', and here implying holding the wind like filling a pot or pitcher with air). Thereafter, it should be slowly exhaled or let out in the second phase called 'Rechak' (literally meaning cleaning or purging, because when the wind is let out of the body it takes along with it all the gaseous impurities and toxins that have accumulated inside it). The final and third phase is called 'Purak' (literally meaning to fill or compensate for the loss of wind during exhalation) in which wind is inhaled to fill the body, leading once again to the Kumbhak stage (10).

11. One cycle of Pranayam (Kumbhak, Rechak and Purak) is said to be complete when the practitioner mentally repeats the seven Vyahritis¹ and the full Gayatri Mantra² three times during each phase. [This indirectly determines the time taken for each phase.] (11).

[Note—¹The *Vyahritis* are the following primary words pronounced by Brahma the creator at the time of initiation of creation—OM Bhuha, OM Bhuvaha, OM Swaha, OM Maha, OM Janaha, OM Tapaha, and OM Satyam. Please refer to note of verse no. 4 above.

²The *Gayatri Mantra* has two versions which are presented here. (a) According to one version, it is based on the typical Gayatri Chanda which is a poetical composition consisting of three stanzas or lines each having eight letters or syllables. The total number of letters or syllables is thus twenty four. The Gayatri extolled by this Upanishad is the one strictly conforming to this rule, while the usual and commonly known Gayatri Mantra has four steps or stanzas and is called Anushtup Chanda.

In Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 5, Brahmin 14, the Gayatri of three steps is extolled as the one which is superior to other forms of the Gayatri Mantra having four steps because this three-stepped Mantra is synonymous with Pran, i.e. it is the life or the essence of all that exists.

The Gayatri Mantra having three lines is the following—"Tatsaviturvarnyam Dhimahi Dhiyo Yo Naha Prachodayat".

The fourth line honours and glorifies this Gayatri as a manifestation of the Sun God, and it is as brilliant and splendid as the latter. The Gayatri is--"Paro Rajase Suvarnam"—i.e. it is beyond the reach of darkness, and it has the hue of gold. Since the Sun is a visible manifestation of the supreme Brahm who is the transcendental Consciousness of the entire creation at the macro level of existence, having the Atma resident in the bosom of the individual creature as its micro level counterpart and Pran as its subtle manifestation, the Gayatri Mantra is in honour of the supreme Authority of creation, i.e. in honour of Brahm, the Supreme Being.

(b) The other version is based on the 'Anushtup Chanda' pattern. It is--'OM BHURBHUVAHA SVAHA¹, TATSAVIURVARENYAM², BHARGO DEVASYA DHIMAH³, DHIYO YO NAH PRACODAYAT⁴'. It means 'OM is the supreme, transcendental Brahm. He is the lord of creation of the terrestrial, the celestial and heavenly worlds. I offer my oblations to you. That Brahm is luminous like the sun. He is excellent, the best, the most exalted, a destroyer of sins, and a divine entity. May he imbibe, infuse and inspire our intellect with wisdom and enlightenment so that we are purified and move on the righteous and noble path'. The four phrases of the Gayatri Mantra are clearly marked by small numerals in this Mantra. This Mantra

appears in the Rig Veda (3/62/10), the Sam Veda (1462), and Yajur Veda (3/35, 22/9, 30/2, 36/6).

The famous Mantra is dedicated to the Sun God who is a manifestation of the supreme transcendental Brahm. It is this Mantra—which is a group of ethereal words having profound spiritual value and metaphysical importance. It is called Gayatri because it gave protection to the Pran--Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 5, Brahmin 14, verse no. 4. It has been accepted as a manifestation of Pran in Shatpath Brahmin, 1/3/5/15, while it is praised as having the potentials of Agni (fire) present in the faculty of speech known as Vak in Taittiriya Sanhita, 3/2/9/3, as Tej (energy) in Shatpath Brahmin, 1/8/2/13, and as Brahm (the supreme transcendental consciousness) in Maitri Brahmin, 4/3/1. According to the Purans (mythological histories of the Hindus), the Gayatri has been praised having manifested in the form of the Trinity Gods—Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva the concluder--Skanda Puran, Kashi Khand, Purva, 4/9/58. Whatever that exists is a revelation of Gayatri because it is a manifestation of Brahm—Chandogya Upanishad, 3/12/1. In fact this whole earth that gives refuge to all the life forms in this world is a manifestation of Gayatri-- Chandogya Upanishad, 3/12/2. By worshipping it, a person is blessed with worldly assets such as abundant livestock and flourishing family, a long, healthy and active life, wealth and fortunes, good name and fame, as well as spiritual attainment in the form of Brahm realisation—Atharva Veda, 19/71/1.

The Gayatri Mantra has been expounded and elucidated upon in Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 5, Brahmin 14 and other Upanishads, such as the Savitri Upanishad which is entirely dedicated to it, the Maitrayanyu Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 7, and the Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 3, Section 12, verse nos. 1-9 belonging to the Sam Veda tradition. Besides these, the Gayatri Upanishad appears as eight assorted verses or Kandikas numbering 31-38 of the Gopath Brahmin belonging to the Atharva Veda.

It has been said in the scriptures that Brahmins, the highest class amongst the humans and who are regarded as the most learned and wise amongst them, were born from Gayatri, thereby drawing a parallel between the highest stature and exalted standing of Brahmins amongst the creatures and the Gayatri amongst the hymns. It is pertinent to note here by the way that Kshatriyas, the warrior class, were born from the Chanda known as Trishtup, and Vaishya, the trading class, from the Chanda known as Jagati. In other words, the divine and eclectic powers encrypted in the Trishtup Chanda revealed themselves as the Kshatriya, and those of the Jagati as the Vaishya. The Trishtup Chanda has four lines each having eleven letters or syllables, totaling forty four letters or syllables in all, while the Jagati Chanda has six lines with eight letters or syllables each, totaling to forty eight letters or syllables.]

12. The sign of properly doing Rechak phase of Pranayam is that the wind or breath is exhaled fully from the body into the outer space or sky through the nostrils. No trace of wind is to remain inside the body at all. During this phase, the practitioner should be absolutely in a mentally neutral state of existence so that there are no thoughts of any kind impinging upon his consciousness (12).

13. The sign of properly doing Purak phase of Pranayam is that the wind or breath is slowly and gradually inhaled inside the body through the nostrils (with the mouth shut tightly) just like one draws liquid into the mouth by sucking it up through a long straw (13).

14. The sign of properly doing Kumbhak phase of Pranayam is to remain absolutely immobile and retaining the wind inside the body such that no part of it is able to escape or leak from it through any aperture, such as the nostril or mouth or anus (14).

[Note—The three phases of Pranayam and the entire process to successfully do it have been described in great detail in the following Upanishads—Trishikhi Brahmin of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 2, verse nos. 24-158; Yogchudamani Upanishad of the Sam Veda tradition; and in Yog Kundali, Canto 1 of Krishna Yajur Veda.]

15. The sign of attaining the state of 'Prashant' which literally means achieving total neutrality and its attendant tranquility, peace, equanimity, dispassion and detachment from everything in this world is the state when one begins to see or observe everything having any shape and form in this world with the same detachment and disinterest as shown by a blind man, and hearing any sound or word emanating from this world with the same indifference and lackadaisical attitude as displayed by a deaf man. Such an acclaimed practitioner treats the body as a log of wood, i.e. he is not at all ruffled by either the pains or discomfiture of the body, or gets joyous and happy when the body feels comfortable and its desire for gratification attended to (15).

16. A wise man is one who understands the fact that the mind is the root cause of all types of 'Sankalps', i.e. all volitions and yearnings, all desires and aspirations, all vows and promises, all hopes and expectations that a man has or makes. So in order to overcome this hurdle and exercise control over the mind, he should diligently merge it with his intellect and the discriminating consciousness so that the mind is put under tight leash. It is because the intelligent Atma or consciousness knows that the world is delusory and misleading, and all the things with which it attempts to tempt the mind are perishable and illusionary. Following this trail would ultimately lead to endless miseries and perpetual restlessness for the mind much like running after a mirage in the desert in search of the illusive water. When this notion becomes firmly engrained in the aspirant's mind and it is put under the care of the wise and erudite intellect working under the guidance of the discriminatory Atma, it is called 'Dharna' (16).

17. Intelligently consulting and interpreting the scriptures and understanding their tenets and doctrines with a rational and logical mind-intellect apparatus, employing the method of discussing and debating them with a positive attitude so that all confusions and doubts are dispelled and the empirical 'truth' is grasped, is called 'Tarka'.

The final state when the aspirant arrives at the ultimate Truth and when nothing remains to be searched anymore because the spiritual citadel has been reached, then this state is known as 'Samadhi'. [It is marked by exemplary steadiness and fortitude.] (17).

18. The spiritual aspirant should select a proper place to practice meditation. This site should be reasonably comfortable and favourable for such practices (because unnecessary physical discomfort is counter productive). Therefore, the ground should be even, the surroundings pleasant, and the place should have a general holy ambience conducive to spiritual practices. [This is to ensure that the practitioner of meditation can concentrate on his spiritual pursuit with concentration and single-minded devotion without suffering from avoidable and unnecessary hardships which can cause physical and mental irritation and consequent distraction for him. For example, pebbles, thorns, un-natural dryness and hardness etc. of the ground where he sits for meditation, or excessive heat and cold, or dampness and aridity in the environment, or disturbance in the form of noise of any kind, or where worldly

mundane matters are the dominant feature as compared to a spiritual environment—all these circumstances would have their bearing upon the aspirant's peace of mind and his ability to concentrate; they would have a negative effect on the final consequences of the spiritual effort. Refer Shwetashwatar Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 10, and Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 22-23 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

In such a favourable site which encourages spiritual practices, the aspirant should sit down with a peaceful and undisturbed mind to practice meditation and contemplation. He should repeat the eclectic Mantras of the Mandal Brahmin¹ to help him in concentrating his mind and focusing it on the practice of Yoga (meditation and contemplation) (18).

[Note—¹The Mandal Brahmin Mantra is the following—“Yadet Mandalam Tapati” etc. These Mantras essentially are dedicated to the Sun God as manifestation of the supreme Brahm or the Viraat Purush (the invisible and all-inclusive macrocosmic gross body of Brahm). The Sun God is said to ride a chariot as he moves across the sky. This movement of the Sun produces a sound which can be verified by the occurrence of breeze that whistles and gushes during the pre and post noon hours across hot plains and in the valleys of the mountains during the day time. This sound when envisioned in the backdrop of the cosmos has been visualised as Naad which in turn is pronounced as OM. The Mandal Brahmin Upanishad of the Shukla Yajur Veda is revealed by the Sun God to sage Yagyavalkya, and since this sage is regarded as the greatest exponent of the Yajur Veda, it is expected that the Sun is honoured as the equivalent as the Atma in all the Upanishadic texts of this Veda.]

19. He should sit properly in any one of the following three sitting postures—viz. Padmasan¹, Swastikasan², or Bhadrasan³, while facing the North (19).

[Note—¹*Padmasan* is to sit in a lotus posture. This entails to sit crossed-legged in such a way that the foot of the left leg rests on the upper and inner part of the thigh of the right leg, and vice versa. The spine, neck and head are in a ram-rod straight position, and the hands, with palms facing upwards and resting one on the top of the other, are placed on the folded legs in front of the navel region. This Asan has been described in Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 39 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition.

²*Swastikasan*—The sitting posture called ‘Swastik-Asan’ is one in which a person sits with the sole of his one foot lying on the center of the thigh of the opposite leg, and the hands are held in such a way that one is bent at right angle at the elbow and held upright while the other is bent and rests upon the thigh of thigh of that side. This Asan has been described in Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 35 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition.

³*Bhradrasan*—A ‘Bhadrasan or Bhadra Asan’ (literally, to sit like a gentleman) is when the two ankles are placed on either side of the suture region, called the ‘siwani’, below the testicles and the feet are clasped or held tightly by the hand of that side (i.e. lift foot by the left hand and the right foot by the left hand). This Asan has been described in Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 45 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition.]

20. Then he should close one nostril with one of his fingers and inhale gradually with the other nostril. When his abdomen and lungs are full, he should close both the nostrils and withhold the breath. During this process, he should think of nothing else but the glorious and divine ‘word¹’ (20).

[Note--¹This ‘word’ is OM which is the cosmic ethereal sound representing Divinity known as Pranav which is synonymous with the supreme transcendental Brahm. In other words, while inhaling breath during the ‘Puruk’ phase of Pranayam as well as

during the ‘Kumbhak’ phase when it is retained for a certain period inside the body, the practitioner of Yoga should contemplate upon nothing else but OM. That is, he should concentrate his mind on mentally repeating this divine Mantra with stress on each of its syllables so that the sound waves of the repeated Mantra and the ones that are inherently present in the cosmic wind inhaled as breath coalesce with other and mutually enhance the latent energy present in them. This is like two waves in the ocean overlapping each other and resulting in a surge of energy which builds up and accumulates so much force that it can capsize huge ships if it so wills. Thus, the aspirant is able to harness the latent energy present in the sound waves of the divine Mantra OM along with that which is generated by the movement of the air in and out of the body during Pranayam]

21. This monosyllable ‘word’ is OM, the ethereal sound representing the eternal, imperishable and infinite supreme transcendental Brahm.

OM is also to be repeated and contemplated upon while gradually exhaling breath during the ‘Rechak’ phase of Pranayam.

In this way, the spiritual aspirant should repeatedly invoke this divine ethereal Mantra OM and do Pranayam to cleanse his mind and free it from all impurities and faults pertaining to this world. [Refer Shwetashwatar Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 14.] (21).

22. The practitioner of Yoga should cleanse the mind (and body) of all impurities by diligent practice of Pranayam. He should employ this cleansed mind to focus on the finer aspects of the ethereal word OM by contemplating upon each of its five elementary sounds (A, U, M, ‘Anuswar’ or dot •, and the crescent shaped ‘Naad’ (~)) placed on the symbol for the word OM. The final shape of the word OM is— ॐ .

While thus meditating upon OM, he should contemplate upon the different divine aspects of each of these syllables, their divine qualities and eclectic attributes, as well as their patron Gods or deities¹.

He should take the precaution that this type of practice of holding of the breath while repeating OM should not exceed the prescribed limits. There are three cycles in doing Pranayam with the help of OM.

The first is called ‘Sthul Matra’ or crude or coarse form of Pranayam. This involves eighty cycles of inhaling breath, retaining it and then expelling it while saying OM once each time. The second is called ‘Ati Sthul Matra’ or the finer or more refined form of Pranayam whereby the breath is held inside the body during which OM is repeated eighty times. And finally, the third is called ‘Sthulaati-sthul’ or the best and finest form of Pranayam wherein the second type is repeated eighty times in succession. It is said that more than that in one session is not advisable.

This cycle of Pranayam is to be done four times a day—at dawn, at noon, evening and night (22).

[Note—¹The patron deities of these five syllables of OM are the following—Vishnu patronises the letter ‘A’, Brahma the letter ‘U’, Shiva the letter ‘M’, the cosmic Shakti or the energy at the core of creation and its regulation is represented by ‘Dot’, and the supreme transcendental Brahm himself is indicated by the cosmic Naad represented by the symbol of the crescent moon on the top of the symbol of OM. Refer Shwetashwatar Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 14.]

23. A wise and expert practitioner of Yoga is one who sits completely immobile (in any of the postures mentioned above) and fixes his eyesight either in the straight line

in the front of him, or in the upwards direction towards the sky, or in the lower direction towards the ground in the front (23).

24. This form of Yoga takes some time to yield result like the palm tree that takes some time to bear fruits. It is to be practiced in a systematic manner, and without disruption. [That is, it should be practiced daily, at a fixed time and place, adhering to the number of cycles of Pranayam done daily, and not doing them on an ad-hoc basis or in a fluctuating or erratic manner.]

Similarly, it is prescribed that the time taken to mentally say the twelve 'Matras' or letters or elementary sounds of OM¹ should also be maintained and observed religiously. That is, the time taken to say the word OM should always be the same, no matter how many times it is repeated. It should not be done in an irregular, haphazard and erratic manner; it must be ensured that the time taken to say OM is the same each time (24).

[Note—¹The *twelve Matras* of OM are equivalent to four cycles of saying this word. This is because OM consists of the three basic sounds represented by the letters A, U and M. So, one cycle of three letters multiplied by four such cycles would yield twelve Matras of OM. Refer Kshuriko-panishad, verse nos. 2-5 of the Krishna Yajur Veda.]

25. This cosmic ethereal sound represented by the divine word OM is so mystical, esoteric, enigmatic and mysterious as well as inimitable that it cannot be described in words or mimicked by the body by its own physical efforts. It is not easily perceived by the organ of hearing present in the body (i.e. by the ear) and neither can it be reproduced by the organs of speech or voice of the gross body (i.e. by the tongue and the mouth). It is neither a consonant nor a vowel; it is neither tenor nor bass or baritone sound; it is neither grave and somber nor shrill and light; it is not a moan or a cheerful crackle. It is not a sound that can be copied or mimicked by the throat (as a gurgling, guttural, husky or squeaky sound emanating from the throat; or such sounds as 'Ha, Ah, Oh' etc.), palate (as a chuckling, clucking, quacking or chirping sound emanating from the back of the tongue and the roof of the mouth, such as the sound of the alphabets K, Q, S, T etc.), lips (such sounds that require perceptible lip movement such as when pronouncing the letters B, F, M, P, Q, U, V, W and Y etc.) and nose (i.e. the nasal sound of the vowels; sounds resembling a snore, or when one hums a musical note through the nostrils with the mouth closed; a resonating and sonorous sound). It is not also the sound of the 'R' which resonates in the head in the cerebrum region and has its origin in the upper part of the hard palate.

The divine ethereal word OM cannot be pronounced or mimicked by the region of the mouth behind the lips where the teeth are located. [That is, none of the sounds generated in the front part of the mouth where the two rows of teeth are located, or even by the rubbing of the teeth against themselves such as gnashing of the teeth in anger or chattering of the teeth when one shivers in severe cold, can resemble, by any stretch of the imagination, the sound emanating from OM.]

'It' (i.e. the supreme, transcendental and absolute Truth in creation, known as Brahman and pure cosmic Consciousness, which is at the heart and core of the entire existence, the very cause of all that exists) is the only imperishable and eternal entity that is sublime, divine, holy, eclectic and immaculate, and which does not decay and become extinct. 'It' is the entity referred to by the divine word OM representing the ethereal cosmic sound known as 'Naad' that permeates and pervades uniformly throughout the length and breadth of the entire universe much like the all-pervading

and all-encompassing cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm. [It is like saying that 'water' is present throughout the 'ocean' or the 'space' is present wherever there is the 'sky'.]

So, OM is regarded as being synonymous with Naad and Brahm (25).

[Note--In other words, the divine word OM is used as a means for meditation and contemplation because of its eternally divine and eclectic value. Anything which is glorious and of a high order itself would impart its own characteristic imprint on things with which it comes in contact. If a man works in perfume factory for instance, his clothes are bound to bear the sweet fragrance even after he has left his work place a long time back; this smell lingers on and sticks to his body and his clothes. An expert doctor always ensures that medicines of the best quality are given to his patient so that the disease is cured rapidly and permanently. Since meditation is a highly evolved form of spiritual exercise, it needs the best medium, and nothing is better than OM in helping the aspirant in concentrating his mind on the supreme transcendental Truth. It is because OM is eternal and imperishable like the Truth.

The idea here is that the practitioner of Yoga should employ the components of sound represented in their entirety by the word OM as a means of focusing his mind during meditation, as well as a means of establishing a unity between his own true pure 'conscious self' with the cosmic 'Supreme Consciousness' known as Brahm. He should envision the presence of the cosmic Consciousness around him when he uses OM as a Mantra during meditation. He must be convinced and certain that this Mantra he is using is the best representative of Brahm, or the best medium to reach his spiritual destination.]

26. Whichever path the mind of the ascetic regards as attractive and worth pursuing, the Pran or consciousness also follows that path. In other words, when the ascetic 'thinks'—and this 'thinking' process involves the mind—that one particular thing is beneficial for him and his spiritual welfare, he whole-heartedly goes for it. Since the pure consciousness is the true 'self' and identity of the ascetic, it follows that it follows the path shown by the mind.

That is why it is very imperative that the spiritual aspirant keeps a strict tab on the functioning of his mind. Hence, to ensure that the Pran or consciousness invariably and infallibly pursues a path that is most noble, auspicious and righteous, the wise and erudite ascetic should regularly practice restraint upon his mind (26).

27. The valves of the subtle heart are like the trap-doors through which the vital winds called 'Pran' present in the body enter the path called 'Sushumna'¹ which snakes upwards (from the bottom of the spinal cord) and reach the top of the head. At this top end is the opening through which the Pran can finally escape from the cage of the body and find permanent liberation, thereby delivering the ascetic for good from the captivity of the body. This opening in the skull is called 'Brahm-Randhra', and it is also called the symbolic 'door of Moksha', or the door that opens up to enable the Pran or the vital life-bearing winds present in the ascetic's body to escape from its entrapments and provide the ascetic with final liberation and deliverance for his 'self'².

Another name for this Brahm-Randhra is 'Surya Mandal' or the space around the Sun in the sky. This is a symbolic way of saying that as soon as the vital winds called Pran escape from the body into the outer atmosphere, the sense of liberation and expansion is akin to going up high in the air, much above the gravitational pull of the earth, and feeling a profound sense of weightlessness and expansion so typical in the higher reaches of the solar system. While on the earth the body feels so heavy and constrained by its physical limitations, but higher in the deep recesses of the cosmos

the sense and feeling of liberation and expansion is so exhilarating and elating that no words can define them. Similarly, when the expert and wise ascetic practices Yoga and manages to sufficiently control his vital winds so that he can divert them from remaining trapped inside the body and wandering aimlessly in it to moving upwards through the duct in the body called *Sushumna*, to finally reach the top of the head and then escape from the hair-like slit known as '*Brahm-Randhra*' present there into the outer space called the '*Surya Mandal*', it is said that the ascetic has attained liberation and deliverance from the physical limitations imposed on the *Pran* by the gross body (27).

[Note—¹The *Sushumna* duct is the nerve going from the bottom of the spinal cord, through its central core, right up to the top of the head. According to Yoga philosophy, there is a coiled subtle energy center at the base of the spine, and it is called *Kundalini*. When it is activated, the energy trapped inside it also snakes up this same *Sushumna* nerve to go up to the top of the head. As hot air is known to rise up in a closed vessel and escape through any opening at the top, like the spout of a kettle, the heated vital winds inside the body also rise up when *Pranayam* is practiced. The heart is the pump of the body, and it is the subtle sight where the consciousness known as the *Atma* is present. The best proof of this is when the heart stops functioning, all other signs of life in the body would also immediately collapse. On the other hand, as long as the heart continues to beat, the man is said to be 'alive' in spite of the fact that his other organs might have ceased to function. For example, a man paralysed in the limbs, or one suffering from the failure of one or the other internal organs such as the liver and kidneys is deemed to be alive as long as the heart beats. Even when the mind and intellect are not working properly, for instance in a mad man or when the man is in comatose state, he is not declared dead because the heart is still functioning.

The heart is the *sanctum sanctorum* where the revered deity is enshrined. This 'deity' is *Brahm* in the form of the consciousness known as the *Atma* which is in turn the 'true self' of the creature. The rest of the body is merely a 'vehicle or a chariot' for this 'self' to reach its destination. Refer *Shwetashwatar Upanishad*, Canto 3, verse no. 20.

So, heart is the defining factor which determines whether or not the ascetic is alive. That is why it is the site of the consciousness or *Atma*. *Prans* is also synonymous with life, and therefore both the *Pran* and the *Atma* co-exist. Now, this *Atma* or pure consciousness uses the vehicle of the *Pran* to move out of the body of the ascetic at the time of his death.

The wind needs some opening in the body to go out of it, and these openings are referred to as the *doors* of the body because they facilitate the exit of the vital wind along with the consciousness from the enclosure of the body. According to one version, there are said to be nine doors in the body through which it can move out. These so-called 'nine doors of the body' are two ears, two eyes, two nostrils, one mouth, one anus, and one urethra. Refer *Shwetashwatar Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, 3/18.

Besides these nine, there is the 'tenth door' or opening, and it is this '*Brahm Randhra*' present at the top of the head.

According to *Kathopanishad*, Canto 2, *Valli* 2, verse no. 1, there are eleven doors of the body. They are the following—two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, one mouth, navel, anus, genitals and *Brahm-randhra* (the hair like slit on the top of the head).

A practitioner of Yoga or meditation is able to control this exit; he is able to determine how his *Atma* or consciousness, representing his 'true self', leaves his body along with the *Pran* by the means of meditative exercises. The escape of the vital winds (*Pran*) along with the consciousness (*Atma*) through the hair-like slit called the *Brahm-Randhra* present at the top of the head is considered as the best path

to leave the body as compared to other means of leaving it. Since everyone wants the best type of end for himself, it is but natural to expect that the ascetic would endeavour and strive to ensure that he trains himself sufficiently enough to ensure that his Pran, along with his conscious 'self' or Atma, would leave the body by the best path available to it, and it is obviously the top of the head. This word 'top' itself indicates something which is the best, something that is excellent and most desired.

Hence, the end obtained by the conscious Atma by its escape through this symbolically 'highest placed door' in the body is tantamount to its obtaining the most exalted state of permanent deliverance from the entrapments of the body. It is like the Atma of that ascetic being welcomed in the palace of the supreme Emperor where other such noble and liberated souls have their abode.

Refer also Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 3, verse nos. 12-17 and Kshurikopanishad, verse no. 18-20.]

28. A wise ascetic should honestly abstain from such negative traits as having fear, becoming angry and wrathful, being indolent and lethargic, sleeping excessively or remaining awake for long times at a stretch, and eating a lot and more than that needed to sustain a healthy and well nourished body, or fasting unduly for long periods of time (28).

[Note—The various hurdles in Yoga and which should be avoided by a spiritual aspirant have been enumerated in Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 56-61 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

29. Those wise ascetics who practice Yoga (especially Pranayam, using OM as the Mantra to do meditation and contemplate upon the supreme transcendental Being) in a progressive, regular, systematic and organised way along with strict adherence to all its doctrines and tenets, honestly honouring all the proscribed restrictions as well as diligently following all the sanctioned ways to achieve success in one's spiritual objective as mentioned in this as well as other Upanishads, are able to obtain success in their spiritual endeavour and become enlightened and self-realised in a period of three months.

In other words, within a short period of three months, the diligent and sincere practitioners of Yoga are able to successfully harness the latent spiritual energy lying dormant and hitherto untapped inside them, and utilise it to uplift their soul from remaining engrossed and entangled in the web of worldly ignorance and its attendant delusions, and instead reach for the high and venerated citadel of self-realisation which would open the gates to their ultimate liberation from the endless cycle of birth and death, and pave the way for the emancipation and salvation of their souls. The awareness of the stupendous glories, splendour, potentials, powers and authority of the pure 'self' which is nothing but pure consciousness and a personification of the supreme Brahman is called 'self-realisation' which is tantamount to liberation from ignorance and delusions pertaining to the body and the world in which it lives. Deliverance from this world is the ultimate aim of doing Yoga by the ascetic, and when he becomes aware of the path that can lead him to his objective, and when he actually follows that path with due diligence and sincerity, it is deemed that he is wise and erudite. Such ascetics who have realised their hidden potentials as well as the astounding power and authority, the radiance and splendour, the glory and majesty of their 'true self' or their Atma, are indeed called a 'Gyani' or a learned man who is well versed in the truthful knowledge pertaining to what constitutes delusions and entanglements, and what is true liberation and deliverance, what is real emancipation and salvation (29).

30. Within a time of four months he is able to have visions of the divine Gods. Within five months he acquires mystical powers which make him as powerful as the Gods themselves. And within six months¹, if he so wishes, he can obtain the final liberation and deliverance for himself when he achieves the exalted stature of 'Kaivalya'² (30).

[Note—¹The different periods of time have been reiterated elsewhere also. Refer Yoga Kundali Upanishad, 1/13, 2/31-36, 42, 44-48; and Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, verse nos. 122-127.

²Kaivalya is that state of liberation of the soul when the ascetic's Pran or vital winds leave the subtle space inside the body and merge with the cosmic wind present outside his body. The path taken for this final escape is narrated in verse nos. 26-27. This sort of deliverance is sought by ascetics who have enlightened enough to realise that their 'true self' is the pure consciousness Atma which is a 'spirit' having no forms, no contours, no sizes and no colours. This 'self' and the cosmic 'Self' are no different from one another, they are both pure consciousness, there is nothing but this consciousness that is of any value and importance in creation, that this 'consciousness' is at the root cause of creation and is known as the supreme transcendental Brahm, that there is no other deity to whom worship and honour should be offered than this pure conscious Atma, and there is no greater 'truth' than this fundamental realisation. Refer Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, verse no. 148.

Such a self-realised and Brahm-realised ascetic would not wish any other form of emancipation and salvation, called 'Mukti', than to reunite his Atma (pure conscious soul) and his Pran (the vital winds that drive the body and keep the Atma protected and sustained inside the otherwise inane and gross body of the creature) with the supreme Atma and transcendental Pran of this creation known as Brahm. Since Brahm is omnipresent and all-pervading, since this divine entity is formless and attributeless, the ascetic simply removes the barrier between his 'true self' residing in his gross body as his Atma by discarding the latter, and merges with his principal form as the 'spirit' which leaves the body to vanish for ever in the cosmic 'Spirit' that is universally present everywhere. He need not die and go to some imaginary 'heaven' where such and such God lives, because for him that 'God' is no one else than his own true self or his own conscious Spirit.]

31-32. While contemplating upon the five elementary elements of creation, such as the earth, water, fire, air or wind, and sky, one should meditate on one or more 'Matras' or basic sounds that constitute the texture of the cosmic fabric revealed in the form of the ethereal divine word OM representing the entire creation in its nascent and primary form. It is from OM symbolising these basic elements that the rest of the visible and invisible creation has evolved. The meditation should start from the grossest and heaviest of the five elements because it represents the physical 'earth' upon which we live, which needs no other proof of its existence besides its own visibility and the physical support it gives the entire visible creation, and which is the easiest element to visualise and focus one's attention on. The meditation then progresses gradually to higher level, and the five elements are meditated upon depending upon their subtlety and sublimity, with the most sublime and subtle of them being meditated at the last because of the difficulty of its accessibility. [It is like the case of the student first learning about the world in class one through visual pictures, and slowly and in due course of time graduates to become a great scientist or philosopher who would show others the way instead of learning about it himself!]

So, while contemplating upon the 'earth' element, one should meditate on all the five sound forms or syllables¹ that constitute the word OM; while contemplating upon the 'water' element, one should meditate on the four sound forms or syllables²

that constitute the word OM; while contemplating upon the 'fire or energy' element, one should meditate on the three sound forms or syllables³ that constitute the word OM; while contemplating upon the 'air or wind' element, one should meditate on the two sound forms or syllables⁴ that constitute the word OM (31); and while contemplating upon the 'sky or space' element, one should meditate on the one sound form or monosyllable⁵ that constitute the word OM.

Finally, while contemplating upon the ultimate Truth represented by Pranav which is synonymous with the supreme transcendental Brahm who is invisible, imperceptible, attributeless, almighty, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, immutable, immanent, all-encompassing and all-pervading element in creation, one should meditate on only the half syllable⁶ which has no distinctive sound, no special form, no definable characteristic or attribute, and no other existence except as pure cosmic Consciousness.

A wise, erudite and enlightened ascetic regards his body as the habitat of all the five elements of creation. He visualises that his body is the microcosmic cosmos, with the grossest and the heaviest of the five elements lying at the bottom (i.e. in his leg region) and the subtlest and the lightest at the top (i.e. in his head region), while the rest of the elements occupying the space in between depending upon their grossness or subtlety. Thus, he starts his meditation at the bottom, i.e. in his toes, focusing his attention at the tip of the toes and consciously feeling the presence of life and vitality in this part of the body. Then he gradually shifts his attention from down upwards till he reaches the top of the head in a progressive manner.

In other words, for the purposes of meditation, he visualises that the 'earth' element is present in his body from the tip of the toes to the knees, the 'water' element from the knees to the hip region, the 'fire' element from the hip to the heart region (i.e. in the area of the abdomen), the 'air' element in the region from the chest to the area of the nostrils, and the 'sky' element in the top of the head. Finally, when he has reached this stage, he would have automatically become self-realised and enlightened. Then he would no longer need a prop or support in his meditation, and would hear the cosmic sound of ether reverberating in his head. This sound called 'Naad' has no definition and characterizations, and therefore it is regarded as a 'half-syllable' or just an indication of the presence of consciousness that can be felt and experienced and witnessed, but not represented by any of the known letters or syllables. It is the fundamental and primordial sound that existed even before the first trace of creation had even been imagined or visualised.

This most evolved form of meditation and contemplation helps the ascetic to gain authority over all the elements in creation. [And since the body is a product of these five elements, it naturally follows that he is able to exercise full control over his body.] (32). [31-32.]

[Note—¹The five Matras of OM are the following—A, O, U, M and the humming sound produced when the mouth is finally closed after the final letter M has been pronounced. This last sound resembles the reverberation heard when there is a distant explosion, indicating the ripples formed in the cosmic ether immediately after the first 'Big Bang' or cosmic explosion. From the metaphysical perspective, it was the first step taken by the supreme Brahm to initiate creation. These first ripples formed waves on the surface of this otherwise calm surface of the cosmic ether which overlapped each other as they moved forward from the central core of the cosmic explosion. The result was the generation of huge cosmic waves, the like of which are witnessed in the stormy ocean, and these waves produced 'sound' as they rolled on from their point of origin. This sound is conceptualised as OM. The cosmic debris and stupendous energy generated by the combined effect of the explosion and these

waves resulted in the formation of the rest of the elements, and these elements formed the building blocks of the creation as we know it today.

²The four Matras make the entity a wee bit lighter and subtler than that with five Matras. This is a metaphoric way of saying that it symbolises the next lighter form of creation, or the form that is a bit less gross and a bit more subtle than the one with the full load of five Matras. If the five Matras are represented by the earth element, which is the heaviest of the five elements in creation, then the one slightly lighter and less dense than earth is 'water' element. Hence, while meditating upon the water element, the ascetic should focus his attention on the mental repetition of these four letters of OM, which are A, O, U and M, and consciously visualise the presence of consciousness in the region of the body from the knee to the hip region. That is why urine is formed in the lower part of the abdomen, and when one remains standing for long periods of time, the legs swell due to accumulation of bodily water in them.

³The three Matras of OM are the basic sounds of A, U and M. Applying the same logic as described in paragraph 2 above of this note, this is symbolic of an element which is lighter and subtler than water. Such an entity is the 'fire' element. It is present in the abdomen region, and that is why food eaten is digested here just like it is being cooked in an oven. So, while moving the focus of this attention from the hip region upwards towards throat, the ascetic should imagine the fire element as burning inside him and contemplate upon these three primary sounds that constitute OM. The three Matras of OM are indicative of three dynamic forces of creation called 'Brahmi' related to Brahma the creator, 'Raudri' related to Rudra the concluder of creation, and 'Vaishnavi' related to Vishnu the sustainer and protector of creation—refer Yogchudamani Upanishad of Sam Veda, verse no. 86.

⁴The two Matras of OM are the two forms of sound produced by pronouncing the twin letters A and U together, and then U and M together. This is the second most subtle and lightest element in creation, and is known as the 'air or wind' element. It would be noted that when either of these twin letters are pronounced, a resonating sound is created, much like the rumbling of a plane taking off or landing in a distant respectively. The first two letters A and U = AU symbolise the taking off of the plane or the unfolding of the creation, and the second group of letters U and M = UM sound like the plane is landing, symbolising the conclusion or resting of the creation. These two Matras represent the 'sky or space' elements as it is in the space of the sky that all other elements had emerged in the beginning. This is because an open space is needed for anything to raise its head and stand up to make its presence felt; nothing can grow and develop in the confines of a closed space. Thus, while moving his focus of attention higher from the heart region to the forehead region (or the area around the eyebrows), the ascetic should concentrate upon these two Matras of OM as representing the consciousness present in his body.

⁵The single Matra of OM is the monosyllable word itself. This happens when the meditation has reached its climax, and the ascetic has submerged himself in the cosmic Naad so much so that he literally drowns in its ethereal waves, and the cosmic reverberation of OM overwhelms his consciousness. Even as a man submerged in the water of the ocean loses his sense of distinction of anything pertaining to the external world, because he does not hear any of the genres of sound that have their existence above the surface of the ocean but hears only the sounds inherently present in the water of the ocean, an ascetic who has finally submerged himself in the overwhelming sound of the cosmic Naad (the cosmic ethereal sound that is present in the background of this visible creation) and has tasted its blissfulness in his mind, he does not care about any formalities, and the only thing that he hears is the resonance of the divine cosmic word OM reverberating in his head. This happens in the highest echelons of the body in the area of the head between the forehead and the top of the skull where the 'Brahm-Randhra' is situated.

Thus, the ascetic should contemplate upon OM in its entirety when he has reached this exalted state of existence when he can withdraw his attention from the

rest of the body and focus it on the single are of it in the head. Obviously, in this state he would be unaware of the presence of the other parts of the body, and perceive consciousness only in the upper part of the head, i.e. in the region of the Brahm-Randhra. This is the highest form of Yoga, and it brings about a union of the 'self' with the 'cosmic Self'.

It would be pertinent to note here that verse no. 27 has stated that the realised ascetic's Pran or life forces leave his body through this aperture called the Brahm-Randhra. The reason is clear now—when the resonance of OM reaches a certain peak level, it creates such a crescendo of sound that the skull splits open due to the accumulated sound energy by overlapping sound waves.]

33. The area measuring thirty-and-a-half fingers width (i.e. the region approximately between the nostrils or upper lips and the lower end of the lungs) is the place where the Pran or breath lives and moves. This is the vital area of the body where the air or wind that keeps the body alive moves. If this air called the 'Pran' stops moving, i.e. if a man can't breathe fresh air, then the rest of the vital winds present inside the body would lose their importance and relevance for the simple reason that the body would be dead without breath. This part of the vital wind measuring 30 ½ fingers-width is the air that remains inside the body as opposite to the wind that is present outside the physical limits of the body. This air is not visible like the air that is present outside though both are called 'Pran' and are synonymous with breath. The air retained inside the body is however the one which is the foundation upon which the whole edifice of life rests though it cannot be seen or observed physically by the creature like the air present outside¹ (33).

[Note—¹The Pran or the vital air or wind element that sustains life inside the body but present outside it can be visually 'seen' as is evident when a mist forms outside the nose during cold weather or when breath is exhaled on a cold surface whereby a thin film of moisture collects on the cold surface. But no one can see the component of breath that is located inside the body. When one breathes, the internal air is not completely exhaled; some part is withheld inside the lungs and its tubes. This component is the Pran that is not visible, while the one that is exhaled is visible Pran.

The word Pran has two connotations here—one refers to the 'breath' and the other to the vital 'life forces' that it sustains inside the body of the creature. The latter form of Pran is synonymous with consciousness because both are indicative of 'life'. This verse is dealing with this aspect of Pran. The next verse no. 34 will deal with the former aspect of Pran, i.e. with 'breath' as a synonym of Pran. Broadly speaking, the word refers to the vital air or wind element in the body or outside of it because no life can be sustained without the presence of vital gases such as oxygen, nitrogen, hydrogen etc. which are inherently present in the air which we breathe in and breathe out daily.

The air we breathe is called Pran by the Upanishads because it is the fresh inhaled breath that injects 'life' in the otherwise lifeless body. The rest of the Prans, such as Apaana, Samaana, Vyana and Udaana depend on this Pran to function and remain active, for what good are they in a dead body?]

34. The Pran that is external to the body—that form of Pran or vital wind that moves in and out of the body as compared to the Pran that cannot leave the body unless it dies—is represented by the cycle of inhaled and exhaled breath. During the course of one day and one night, one takes approximately one lakh, thirteen thousand, six hundred and eighty breaths (i.e. 1,13,680 breaths) (34).

[Note—When one breathes, some part is always retained inside the body. This is the 'internal Pran'. The 'external Pran' would then be the air that is inhaled and exhaled—the part of breath that is located just outside the nostrils. Usually it is

believed that a man breathes approximately 21000 times during the course of a single day, so the figure of 1,13,680 mentioned here in this verse perhaps refers to a healthy man involved in strenuous exercises such as doing manual labour when he would breathe faster. Or it indicates the fact that this is the maximum number of breaths one can take in a day's time.]

35. The primary and principal vital wind called 'Pran' lives in a subtle form in the subtle space of the heart (and keeps this organ functioning); the vital wind called 'Apan' lives in the region of the anus (and is responsible for excretion of the residue from the intestines); the 'Saman' wind is found in the navel region (because it is from here that all the nerves and veins in the body radiate out from the nerve center or core called the 'Nabhi Kand', and ensure that nutrients and other essential supplies are equally distributed in the body); the 'Udan' wind lives in the region of the throat (because this wind is synonymous with the notion of 'getting up' or 'rising', so it symbolises the creature's state of wakefulness when he speaks out, and at the same time it helps it to 'raise' and spit out cough present in the lungs) (35).

36. The vital wind known as 'Vyan' spreads through the body (as it helps in maintaining equilibrium).

Now, the subtle colours of these five Prans symbolising the five forms in which the vital wind force in Nature exist are being mentioned (36).

37. The main Pran (breath which is at the core of life) is said to be red-coloured like a ruby. [This is a symbolic representation of the fact that this form of air is rich in oxygen, which in turn oxidizes the cells and help in producing red-blood corpuscles and hemoglobin in the body.]

The Apan wind present in the anus is like a red-coloured insect called 'Indragop' or an insect called 'Bibahuti' which has a scarlet colour like velvet and appears when the first rain falls. [That is why the anus region is red in colour, and malfunctioning of this vital wind creates piles which are red in colour, or bleeding dysentery or diarrhea which is also red in colour.] (37).

38. The Saman wind is located in the area of the navel and is said to be white like cow's milk or alum. [This is indicative of the presence of mucous and lymph and other intercellular and inter-muscular fluids in the body which are not red in colour as blood is.]

The Udan wind is smoky and grey in colour (like the fluffy clouds floating across the sky). [And that is why the cough or mucous raised in the throat is predominantly of this colour.]

Finally, the Vyan wind has the glorious and splendid colour like the tip of the flame of a burning candle. [This indicates that the flame is steady and burning brightly, without being subjected to any disturbances from any external factor, such as a gust of wind. Hence, this Vyan wind maintains a healthy and well-proportioned body which is not disturbed by any worldly influences. Such a healthy body has a radiant and glowing appearance, and its skin is taut and thus literally shines in the pink of its health.] (38).

39. Those wise, expert and spiritually realised ascetics who have trained their Pran to collect themselves from the different locations where they are present inside the body (as narrated above in verse nos. 35-36), and then move in a systematic and organised

manner upwards (as described in verse nos. 26-27 and 31-32), by means of meditative practices, to collect in the head (in the region of the Brahm-Randhra), are able to ensure that wherever they die they would not have to take birth again. Indeed, they find their final redemption and salvation when they are able to felicitate the exit of their Pran from the body through the Brahm-Randhra and become one with the elements of Nature (as described in verse no. 27 above). Such an ascetic does not have to take a birth again; this is his final dissolution and liberation from the fetters of the body and the world. [That is, he has attained the best form of Mukti called the Kaivalya Mukti as mentioned in verse no. 30. This is because his vital winds known as Pran leave the body and merge with the cosmic air present outside his body, and when the Pran has left the body the latter disintegrates into its primary elements such as the earth, water and fire. With the barrier of the skin and bones gone, the space inside the body just merges with the open sky outside, leaving no trace of the ascetic any longer.]

This is the great and magnificent teaching of this Upanishad; this is the profound philosophy and secret it teaches (39).

-----Shanti Paath-----

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Chapter 10

Kalagni Rudra Upanishad/Kalagnirudro-panishad

This Upanishad is revealed in the form of a dialogue between sage Sanatkumar and Kalagni-Rudra. It describes the proper way of marking and wearing the 'Tripundra' (three horizontal lines marked on the forehead, the chest and the shoulders (verse no. 3) of devotees of Lord Shiva using the ash of the sacrificial fire) along with its spiritual and metaphysical importance and significance. This Tripundra is an auspicious symbol of Lord Shiva who is regarded as the greatest of ascetics and the wisest, most enlightened and omniscient Being in creation. The wearer of this sign of the Lord, if he is not an imposter, becomes a personification of the Lord, and exemplifies the auspicious and glorious virtues the Lord stands for.

The whole idea of making these three lines of the Tripundra at the three places is to feel spiritually elevated and blessed, to feel holy and purified, and to feel the presence of the Lord very close to one's own self and be reassured of the Lord's constant protection. It is an external sign to indicate that the wearer is not only god-fearing but also keep the various vows and follows the different tenets of the scriptures diligently.

The metaphysical significance and importance of the three lines of the Tripundra have been elaborately described in verse nos. 6-8 of this Upanishad. Other Upanishads relevant to this present Upanishad and belonging to the Krishna Yajur Veda are the Dakshin Murti Upanishad, Chapter 18, Skand Upanishad, Chapter 19, Kath Rudra Upanishad, Chapter 25, Rudra Hridaya Upanishad, Chapter 26, and Panch Brahm Upanishad, Chapter 28. The Rudraksha Jabal Upanishad of the Sam Veda tradition describes a discussion between Kalagni Rudra and crow sage Bhusund

regarding the importance and significance of the Rudraksha beads used to make the prayer rosary by which the Mantras of Shiva are repeated.

-----Shanti Paath-----

ॐ_सह_नाववतु_।_सह_नौ_भुनक्तु_।_सह_वीर्यं_करवावहै_।_तेजस्वि_नावधीतमस्तु_।_मा_विद्विषावहै_।
-----ॐ_शान्तिः_।_शान्तिः_!!शान्तिः_!!!_

The meaning of this Shanti Paath is given in appendix no. 1.

1. The Rishi¹ of this Kalagnirudro-panishad or Kalagni Rudra Upanishad is 'Samvartak Agni'²; its Chanda³ is 'Anushtup'⁴; and its Devta or patron God⁵ is Kalagni Rudra⁶. This Upanishad is invoked to worship Lord Kalagni Rudra as the almighty Lord who personifies the Supreme Being who has revealed himself as the Panch Brahm (refer verse no. 3) embodying the entire creation. [The Lord's symbolic presence is marked by the three lines of the Tripundra as described in the following verses.] (1).

[Note—¹*Rishi* is the first sage or 'seer' who had envisioned a particular metaphysical concept during one of his meditative trances. Such divine and eclectic revelations were then made known to the rest of the world in the form of poetical compositions called Chanda. This system of composing the religious text of the scriptures is in vogue since earlier times and such verses are called hymns as they are dedicated to the offering of prayers and honouring the chosen deity for which the particular hymns is meant. These hymns are also called Mantras because they are like mystical formula specific to that deity; they help the worshipper to activate the dynamic forces of Nature and creation as represented by this deity who is actually a personified form of these forces. Each deity had a particular hymns dedicated to it much like we have specific formulas in science or mathematics to solve specific problems. No one formula applies to all the problems in a universal manner, though there are some universal ones also which can be applied to all the cases, such as the Mantra OM which is used equally for all the deities. The reason is that OM represents the supreme transcendental Brahm whose manifestations all these individual deities or Godheads are. This is like the case of one listening to a particular radio station of his choice when he must tune-in to the particular frequency in which that radio station broadcasts.

²The phrase *Samvartak Agni* refers to the fire that engulfs the earth at the time of dooms-day, because the word 'Samvartak' means the end or conclusion of an era or a period of time, and Agni means fire. It also has two other connotations—viz. (1) The dooms-day cloud, because at the time of conclusion of one cycle of creation and destruction there is torrential rain which causes a deluge that drown the entire habitation on the surface of the earth. In this scenario, only certain forms of aquatic life survive, and from it the seed of the next cycle of creation is sown. (2) The fire burning under the bed of the ocean and in the bowls of the earth which keeps the water of the ocean as well as the underground springs warm. This fire is called 'Barvaanal' or 'Badvaanal'. In the present verse, this fire has been personified as the sage who first conceptualised this Upanishad.

³The *Chanda* is a particular style of poetical composition in which all the ancient scriptures were composed. All the Vedas were composed in this method.

⁴One of the styles is called *Anushtup Chanda*. It is verse of four lines with eight letters in each line. Therefore, the total number of letters in an Anushtup Chanda is $4 \times 8 = 32$ letters or syllables.

⁵*Devta* is the deity or God to whom a particular sacred hymn is dedicated. It is this deity who is worshipped, lauded and revered as the patron God whose blessings are sought by the worshipper when he reads a particular scripture, such as this Upanishad dedicated to Lord Kalagni-Rudra. This Upanishad, from the metaphysical and spiritual point of view, invokes Lord Shiva's auspicious virtues of destroying all the worldly delusions and taints that shroud the devotee like the clouds of the dooms-day, completely enveloping his wisdom and intellect in a veil of darkness of ignorance.

⁶*Kalagni-Rudra* literally means Lord Shiva, the concluder, in his most ferocious form which is like the fire of dooms-day. Shiva is the greatest ascetic, a great renunciate, most auspicious and regarded as an enlightened God. So his invocation helps the spiritual seeker to burn all his worldly delusions and taints arising out of ignorance and attachments to falsehoods. This paves the path for his ultimate liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death. Lord Shiva is the designated Authority that controls death and destruction, not only of the gross physical world and its visible objects but also metaphorically of all the evil tendencies, all the blemishes and faults that are characteristic of this deluding world and which usually cover the soul of the creature like a layer of thick scum floating on the surface of the otherwise crystal-clear waters of the mountain lake.

Usually Lord Shiva is depicted in the scriptures and in iconography as sitting in a perpetual state of Samadhi or deep meditation, remaining ever calm and peaceful as well as totally dispassionate and neutral towards everything that has got anything to do with Maya or worldly delusions, deceptions, attachments and attractions. But at the same time the Lord is not unaware of his moral obligations as the patron God of ascetics who is supposed to uphold the highest traditions of righteousness, auspiciousness, nobility, probity and propriety as well as ensure that all the negative, demonic and evil factors of creation are vanquished and crushed so that positive virtues are always ascendant. Whenever this does not happen, whenever a dynamic remedy is needed to overcome a malignant force, Shiva assumes the form of Kalagni Rudra—literally the ferocious form of Shiva which is very angry and like the doomsday fire that destroys everything it beholds. After all, if the enemy is strong, then merely being merciful and compassionate is not the answer. A strong dose of antibiotic is needed to overcome a virulent form of virus, and no matter how much a person is adherent to the philosophy of non-violence, he is well advised not to extend this philosophy to ridiculous proportions of showing mercy to the virus by refusing to take antibiotic medicines because they would kill the virus!

So, while on the one hand Lord Shiva is invoked the spiritual aspirant to bless him with spiritual peace and bliss, the Lord has to be invoked to overcome all the powerful enemies of the Spirit that are ready to impede the aspirant's spiritual progress.

Refer 'Rudraksha Jabal Upanishad' of the Sam Veda tradition published as Chapter no. 14 of volume 2 in this series in which Lord Kalagni Rudra preaches the crow sage Bhusund about the importance of the Rudraksha beads used in the preparation of the prayer rosary. Further, other Upanishads relevant to this present Upanishad and belonging to the Krishna Yajur Veda are the Dakshin Murti Upanishad, Chapter 18, Skand Upanishad, Chapter 19, Kath Rudra Upanishad, Chapter 25, Rudra Hridaya Upanishad, Chapter 26, and Panch Brahm Upanishad, Chapter 28.]

2. In some ancient time, sage Sanatkumar¹ asked Lord Kalagni-Rudra (Lord Shiva), 'Oh Lord! Please explain to me the metaphysical and spiritual importance and

significance of ‘Tripundra’² in detail. What is it? Where should it be placed? What is its length (or measurement)? How many lines does it have? What is its Mantra, and what is its power and potential? Who is its patron deity or God? Who uses it, and what are its benefits?’ (2).

[Note—¹Sage *Sanatkumar* is considered as one of the four Manas Putras or the mental-born sons of the creator Brahma. The other three are Sanak, Sanat-sujaat and Sanandan. They are regarded in a perpetual state of boyhood.

Sanatkumar had taught the greatness of Vishnu to demon Vrittaasur, the enemy of Indra, the king of Gods. He also taught spiritual wisdom to sage Narad, the celestial sage.

Sanat-sujaat taught spiritual wisdom to Dhritrashtra who was the blind father of the Kauravas of the epic Mahabharat fame. Sanak is said to an eternal companion of Lord Vishnu. Sanandan is regarded as the ancient preacher of the Sankhya Shastra, even more ancient than Kapil.

²The word *Tripundra* has two parts—‘tri’ and ‘pundra’. Tri means three while the word Pundra refers to the three horizontal lines marked on the body (the forehead, the chest and the shoulders) by Hindus. The Pundra can be horizontal or crosswise lines, in which case it is called the ‘Tiryak Pundra’, or it can be vertical or upright lines, in which case it is called ‘Urdhva Pundra’. The Tiryak Pundra or Tripundra is worn by devotees of Lord Shiva and initiated ascetics and is marked by the paste of the ash obtained from the pit of the fire sacrifice by mixing it with water. Each of these three lines has a deep religious importance, and they have been explained in verse nos. 6-8 below.

3. Lord Kalagni-Rudra explained to sage Sanatkumar—‘The holy ash of the fire sacrifice is used to mark the lines of the Tripundra. The divine Mantras ‘Sadyojatadi’, which are called the ‘Panch Brahm’ Mantras¹, should be invoked at the time of marking the lines of the Tripundra using this holy ash. [There is a special Upanishad dealing with the concept of Panch Brahm, called the ‘Panch Brahm Upanishad’ which is Chapter 28 of this volume. The concept of ‘Sadyojaat’ and ‘Panch Brahm’ have been elaborately explained in its verse no. 1 and its accompanying note.]

[Since these ‘Panch Brahms’ are personifications of the stupendous powers and potentials as well as the characteristic glorious attributes and divine virtues of the five fundamental elements of creation (viz. earth, water, fire, air or wind, and sky or space), when their respective Mantras are invoked while marking the three lines of the Tripundra on the body of the worshipper, it is like establishing these glories and divine virtues on the body itself to indicate that the worshipper is blessed and empowered with the divine virtues as represented by these dynamic forces of Nature called the Panch Brahms. He becomes a living embodiment of the Godhead worshipped as the latter is supposed to be now honorably established in the worshipper’s own body.

Thus, the following Mantras should be invoked to consecrate and purify the three lines of the Tripundra and bestow divine powers to them—‘Agniriti Bhasm’ for the fire element, ‘Vayuriti Bhasm’ for the air or wind element, ‘Jalmiti Bhasm’ for the water element, ‘Sthalmity Bhasm’ for the earth element, and ‘Vyomriti Bhasm’ for the sky element².

The ash should be picked up in the fingers while pronouncing the Mantra ‘Maanastok’. It should be made into a thick paste by adding required amount of water while pronouncing the Mantra ‘Ma No Mahan’. Sufficient quantity of this paste of dampened sacrificial holy ash should first be placed on three parts of the body, viz. the forehead, chest and shoulders, while pronouncing the Mantra ‘Triyayunsha’. Then

this paste is spread as three horizontal lines at these places while pronouncing the Mantra ‘Trayambak’.

This process of smearing the sacred ash on the body is called ‘Shambhav Vrat’ or a form of religious duty and sacrament which has been extolled in all the Vedas and lauded by all those who are experts in these scriptures.

Those who aspire for liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death, those seekers who wish that they do not have to take birth again in this world, should invariably wear this Tripundra in the aforesaid manner², (3).

[Note—¹*Panch Brahm*—(a) These are the personification of the stupendous divine powers and potentials of the Supreme Being as manifested in the form of the ‘five basic elements of creation’ such as the sky, air, fire, water and earth. The word *Panch* refers to the numeral five, while *Brahm* refers to the supreme cosmic Consciousness which is at the core of the coming into being of the entire creation.

(b) According to another version, these Panch Brahms are the five manifestation of the Supreme Being, and they are Sun God, Vishnu the sustainer and protector, Shiva the concluder and annihilator, Ganesh the most revered deity in the Hindu pantheon who is invoked at the beginning of any auspicious effort, and Shakti or the divine Goddess personifying the stupendous energy in Nature.

(c) Again, since everything in existence has been created from the five basic elements, it follows that Panch Brahm also refers to the *five sheaths or Koshas* that surround the pure conscious Atma which is the truthful identity of the creature. These five Koshas are the following--‘Annamaye Kosh’ or the food sheath, ‘Pranmaye Kosh’ or the vital wind sheath, ‘Manomaye Kosh’ or the mental sheath, ‘Vigyanmaye Kosh’ or the intellect sheath, and ‘Anandmaye Kosh’ or the bliss sheath. These sheaths cover the Atma or pure conscious self like various coverings or shrouds wrapping any object. The *Annamaye Kosh* is that which was created by the intake of food, was nourished and developed by food, and at the end it finally disintegrates into the basic ingredients that constitutes food and merges with the earth element from where the food has derived its original ingredients. This forms the gross body of the creature.

The *Pranmaye Kosh* consists of the five vital winds (Pran, Apaana, Vyan, Udaan, and Samaan) along with the five organs of action (hands, legs, mouth, excretory and reproductive).

The *Manomaye Kosh* consists of the mind and the five organs of perceptions (ears, eyes, nose, tongue and skin), while the *Vigyanmaye Kosh* consists of the combined apparatus made of the intellect and these five organs of perception.

A combination of these three sheaths, i.e. Pranmaye Kosh (vital wind sheath), Manomaye Kosh (the mental sheath) and Vigyanmaye Kosh (the intellect sheath) is what is known as the ‘Ling Deha’ of a creature, or the ethereal form of the corporeal body. This is the subtle body of the creature.

The sheath in which the pure conscious self is not aware of the ‘Ling Deha’ is called *Anandmaye Kosh*. This forms the causal body of the creature”.

These five sheaths are called the ‘Panch Kosha’.

(d) Life in this creation is sustained by the wind or air element, as is evident from the fact that it is possible to survive for a reasonable time without water and food but one immediately suffocates to death if there is no air. These vital winds or air element takes five principal forms, called the *Panch Prans* which are personifications of the magnificent abilities of the supreme Brahm to sustain life in a quiet and subtle manner. These primary and principal vital wind called *Pran* lives in a subtle form in the subtle space of the heart (and keeps this organ functioning); the vital wind called *Apaan* lives in the region of the anus (and is responsible for excretion of the residue from the intestines); the *Samaan* wind is found in the navel region (because it is from here that all the nerves and veins in the body radiate out from the nerve center or core called the ‘Naabhi Kand’, and ensure that nutrients and other essential supplies are

equally distributed in the body); the *Udaan* wind lives in the region of the throat (because this wind is synonymous with the notion of ‘getting up’ or ‘rising’, so it symbolises the creature’s state of wakefulness when he speaks out, and at the same time it helps it to ‘raise’ and spit out cough present in the lungs); and *Vyan* spreads through the body (as it helps in maintaining equilibrium). These vital winds have been described in Amrit Naad Upanishad, verse no. 35-38 which is Chapter no. 9 of this volume.

(e) The entire life of a religious and pious spiritual aspirant is regarded as one big wholesome fire sacrifice, and thus it is ordained that he must diligently perform the five *Panch Maha Yagyas*, or the five great noble deeds that have the same sanctity and holiness as doing a formal fire sacrifice. These are the following—(a) *Brahma Yagya*—study and teaching of the Vedas and other scriptures that enlighten the man about the ultimate Truth known as Brahman, (b) *Deva Yagya*—the performance of fire sacrifices in which offerings are given to the sacred fire which sustain the Gods and are done to honour them, (c) *Pitri Yagya*—paying homage to the spirit of dead ancestors, offering oblations to them and doing religious activities for the peace of their souls, (d) Service to mankind called Jiva Yagya, and (e) *Bhut Yagya*—service to all the creatures including animals, insects, plants etc., such as giving them food, shelter and protection, i.e. taking care of them. These five sacrifices have been described in Ashramo-panishad, verse no. 3.

²This invocation ensures that all these three lines become symbolic representatives of the *three worlds* representing the entire gamut of creation. These three worlds are ‘Bhu’ or the terrestrial world, ‘Bhuvaha’ or the sky just above the earth where life-forms such as birds etc. live, and ‘Swaha’ or the heaven representing the higher reaches of the atmosphere where exalted spirits live. In other words, by invoking the Mantras mentioned here, the worshipper symbolically empowers these three lines of the Tripundra with mystical, divine and holy powers that control the entire cosmos. By doing this, he metaphorically establishes his authority and sway over the entire realm where Lord Shiva, as Kalagni-Rudra, has his influence. Since these lines are placed across the forehead, they also signify the fact that such persons have become all-knowing and omniscient like the Lord himself.]

4. Sage Sanatkumar enquired about the length and thickness of the lines of this Tripundra (4).

5. Lord Kalagni-Rudra replied that the three lines should be made in such a way that one of the lines, the bottom one, passes through the center of the forehead at the middle point of the eyebrows just above the root of the nose, and the third line covers the top of the forehead just below the hairline on the skull (5).

6. The first line is a symbol of the ‘Garhapatya Agni’ (the sacred fire of the household hearth), the first letter ‘A’ (of the divine ethereal word OM), the second quality called ‘Raja Guna’ (that is one of the three basic qualities inherent in all the creatures in creation and which determine the creature’s basic character and mental temperament, such as his natural propensity to have worldly attractions and passions as well as a natural tendency to remain engrossed in worldly matters), ‘Bhu’ Loka (or the terrestrial world inhabited by mortal creatures), the self-conscious Atma (which is the true identity of the creature), the personification of the powers to act and perform that are natural and the basic requirement in all the creatures of this creation (because without this ability and strength to act and produce results, no creature can survive competition in this world where only the fittest survives), the Rig Veda (first of the three primary Vedas), the morning sacrament (or payers offered to the Sun God

representing the supreme Brahm in all its glorious magnificence), and Lord Maheshwar (or the great Lord Shiva himself (6).

7. The second line of the Tripundra is symbolic of the sacred fire called 'Dakshinagni' (or the holy fire which stands a witness of donations and charities made), as well as of the second letter or syllable 'U' of the sublime, divine and ethereal word OM. It also stands for and personifies the following entities—the quality called 'Sata' (which refers to the different virtuous and noble qualities present in the spiritual aspirant, qualities which are considered as the best amongst the three primary qualities that determine the character of the individual creature), the world known as the 'Antariksha' (or the second world represented by the sky above the earth where the creatures with wings, e.g. the birds, live; it is the world created when the creator Brahma had pronounced 'Bhuvaha' at the beginning of creation), the Atma or pure consciousness (which is the true self of all the living creatures and a personification of the supreme transcendental Brahm), the powers and potentials of 'Ichha' (desires, wishes and aspirations, because the whole world is driven by this virtue of Ichha that is inherently present in the heart of all men, and which inspires all actions and deeds done by them, for had there been no desire and aspiration, the man would not enter into any enterprise), the Yajur Veda (the second of the primary scriptures known as the Vedas), the sacrament performed during the noon time (i.e. the second daily prayer offered to the Sun God), and the eternal and infinite Lord known as 'Sada Shiva' (who is omnipresent, immanent, imminent, and uniform) (7).

8. The third line of the sacred Tripundra stands for and personifies the following entities—the holy fire called 'Ahawaniya Agni' (or the ritualistic fire of the formal sacrifice), the third letter or syllable 'M' of the sublime, divine and ethereal word OM, the third quality called 'Tama' (which is the lowest and grossest of the three basic qualities in creation), the 'Duloka' or the heaven (created when Brahma pronounced 'Swaha' at the time of creation, and is the realm of creation where the exalted Gods have their abode), the Parmatma or the supreme Soul which is the ultimate authority and cause of the entire creation, the stupendous and magnificent powers and potentials of Gyan (truthful knowledge, erudition, sagacity, skills and wisdom which makes a man well honoured, respected and revered in this world), the Sam Veda (which is the third primary Veda), the third sacrament performed in the evening, and Lord Mahadev himself (i.e. Lord Shiva in his manifestation as the greatest and most eminent God in the pantheon of Gods in Hinduism; the word 'Maha' means 'great and most exalted', and 'Dev' means a 'godhead') (8).

9. In this way, anyone—whether he is a Brahmachari¹, a Grihastha², a Vanprastha³, or a Sanyasi⁴—who wears this Tripundra in the manner prescribed herein above, with due respect, faith and conviction, is liberated from the horrible consequences of all types of sins and misdeeds committed by them either inadvertently or willingly, whether they are major ones, being most grave and horrendous, or minor ones but still unrighteous and inauspicious. Such a wearer of Tripundra becomes holy and cleansed of all his sins and worldly taints as if he has been to all the sacred pilgrim sites, performed necessary purification rites, offered oblations to Gods, and taken the ritualistic bath there. He gets the benefit of studying and reciting all the Vedas. He becomes so enlightened and wise that he can have easy access to all the Gods (representing all the virtues that are considered grand, righteous, auspicious and noble in creation, thereby enabling him to reach for these virtues and inculcate them easily

in his own life). He is able to enjoy all types of pleasures and comforts that he wishes for, and at the end of his life he goes to the abode of Lord Rudra (Shiva). As such, having reached the pinnacle of enlightenment and spiritual liberation by merging his soul with the great Lord Shiva, who is the supreme Brahm personified, he does not have to take birth again. [That is, he has obtained the ultimate emancipation and salvation for his 'self'.]

This is how Lord Kalagni-Rudra described to sage Sanatkumar the importance and the proper way of wearing the Tripundra (9).

10. A wise and enlightened man who diligently studies this Upanishad and understands its great metaphysical importance becomes an embodiment of the virtues extolled by it (i.e. he becomes as exalted and auspicious as Lord Shiva himself). Verily, this is the truthful assertion of this Upanishad (10).

[Note—¹*Brahmachari* is a student or elder person who observes strict vows of celibacy, abstinence and self-control in all spheres of life, spending his time in studying and devoting his energy in acquisition of knowledge of the Truth.

²*Grihasta* is a householder and he marries to raise a family. This is the second phase of life.

³*Vanprastha* is the third phase of life when one who has fulfilled all his obligations towards his family and literally heads for the forest to lead the rest of his life in a peaceful way, meditating and roaming around in pilgrim centers. In practice, it is not feasible for anyone to actually go to the forest in a modern world, so this phase should be interpreted to mean when the man prepares to pass on the responsibilities of his mundane affairs to his heirs and start leading a more relaxed life, spending his time on reading the scriptures and going to visit pilgrim sites which he had not been able to do earlier due to his worldly pre-occupations.

⁴A *Sanyasi* is a person who has entered the fourth and final phase of life of total renunciation of the world and snapping all ties with it, marked by complete detachment and dispassion, and spends his time in deep contemplation and meditation. This is the phase just before death. As in the case of the Vanprastha, he need not actually go to the forest if his health does not allow for instance, because that would be tantamount to committing suicide, which is in itself a grave sin. The basic idea is to be fully detached from everything material and prepare for the imminent death.]

-----Shanti Paath-----

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Chapter 11

Kshurika Upanishad/Kshuriko-panishad

This Upanishad is so named because it advocates the employment of various Yoga practices to act like a 'knife' which cuts through the different hurdles in the seeker's spiritual progress, and helps him to attain his objective of obtaining final liberation and deliverance from the fetters that shackle him to this body and the various torments that it is subjected to in this deluding world of artificiality.

Amongst the various paths of Yoga, it especially emphasises the importance and rewards of having a firm 'Dharna'—i.e. firmness of mind and steadfastness of

conviction; firm resolution and a determined pursuit of one's spiritual goals by overcoming all hurdles that come in the way; to resolutely follow the principles of Yoga in order to achieve success in one's spiritual path.

This Upanishad is highly Yoga-centric and describes in detail the process of 'Pranayam' (breath control) which helps in harnessing the stupendous potentials of the vital winds called Pran present inside the body and ensure that it gains sufficient energy to break through all the hurdles or barriers represented by blocked Naadis (the tubular ducts inside the body) that obstruct its free passage inside the body itself and its escape from the body to the outside space to merge with its primary form as the cosmic air or wind element at the time of death of the spiritual aspirant.

Since 'Pran' is a synonym for life and consciousness, when it is able to move freely and ultimately escape from the bondage of the gross body it is deemed that the practitioner of Yoga, who is a spiritual seeker, has obtained his final liberation from the fetters that tie him down to this body as well as the artificial world of delusions and numerous entrapments in which the soul has to live. He is delivered from their shackles once and for all, for the freed air element known as Pran no longer enters another body once it escapes from the previous one. This is the spiritual seeker's or ascetic's final and ultimate emancipation and salvation.

Besides controlling of the vital winds and their movement in the body, the other correlated benefit is the ability generated to exercise control over the restless mind and focus it in the direction that the aspirant wishes. This helps in concentration of the mind on the job at hand and achieve success in any enterprise.

The steps to be followed in doing Yoga, which are meditative exercises to control the vital wind called Pran, its movement upwards in the body, as well as the unclogging of the hitherto blocked Naadis, are described in graphic detail. With Naadis open, the vital winds can move freely inside the body, and with practice of Yoga sufficient energy is generated inside the body itself when the body is well ventilated. This stokes the latent fire present inside the body further, and the Pran winds move up the body to finally escape from it into the outer sky by rupturing the skull and escaping into the outer sky to merge and become one with the cosmic air or wind element present outside the body much like the heated air, in the form of steam, escapes from the spout of a kettle never to return into the body of the kettle again.

-----Shanti Paath-----

ॐ_सह_नाववतु_।_सह_नौ_भुनक्तु_।_सह_वीर्यं_करवावहै_।_तेजस्वि_नावधीतमस्तु_।_मा_विद्विषावहै_।
-----ॐ_शान्तिः_।_शान्तिः_!!शान्तिः_!!!_

The meaning of this Shanti Paath is given in appendix no. 1.

1. [This verse emphasises the importance of Dharna in Yoga or meditation.]

We shall now discuss the ways and means that helps a spiritual aspirant to obtain unequivocal success in doing Yoga (meditation). In this connection, 'Dharna'—or having a firm faith and conviction in its stupendous effects and glorious potentials, a resolute mind that remains steady and determined in its chosen path, a sincerity of purpose, and ability to resist all temptations—acts like a potent and powerful 'Kshuri' or knife because it helps him to cut through all the fetters that tie him down and

prevent his liberation. Such a person who makes Dharna his weapon to aid and protect him in his spiritual progress attains success in obtaining final liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death. [That is, such a person finds emancipation and salvation for his soul for good.] (1).

[Note—The concept of Dharna is explained in verse no. 16 of Amrit Naad Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda which is Chapter 9 of this volume.

An ordinary man remains engrossed in his worldly activities, never finding time to contemplate on what lies beyond the mundane. He is so enchanted by the deluding mirage created by this fascinating world of kaleidoscopic colours that he has neither the time nor the inclination or the intention to look at the other side of it; he prefers to remain submerged in its transient and impermanent pleasures and comforts even at the cost of risking his long-term spiritual welfare. Numerous, endless and varied hopes, desires, aspirations and expectations pertaining to this world of material objects, and the pleasures and comforts derived from them, keep him entangled in their sticky net much like the spider remaining stuck in its own web.

In this connection there is a beautiful verse in the *Holy Quran* that says—“Allah hath sealed their hearing and their hearts, and on their eyes there is a covering. Theirs will be an awful doom” (Surah ii, verse no. 7), and “These are they who purchase error at the price of guidance, so their commerce doth not prosper, neither are they guided” (Surah ii, verse no. 16).

On the other hand, a self-awakened man realises the futility of worldly pursuit because he knows that this world is illusionary, deluding, temporary and perishable, as compared to the actual ‘truth’ that is eternal and steady. But it is not easy to reach this ‘truth’ when one is surrounded by falsehoods and delusions. So such a man distances himself from the world and searches for that ‘truth’ which would give him real peace and happiness that is everlasting instead of the one obtained by pursuing this world, because such a peace and happiness is transient and illusive. The path to this ‘truth’ is a rigorous one, and it passes through a dense forest requiring strict self discipline and resistance to worldly temptations, as well as abstinence from all things that have to do with darkness symbolising ignorance and delusions. In this connection there is a beautiful verse in the *Holy Quran* that says—“And believe in that which I reveal, confirming that which ye possess already (of the scripture), and be not first to disbelieve therein, and part not with My revelation for a trifling price, and keep your duty to Me. Confound not the truth with the falsehood, nor knowingly conceal the truth” (Surah ii, verse no. 41-42).

Amongst the various options open to this spiritual aspirant is Yoga or meditation and contemplation. This Yoga is a very potent instrument that helps him effectively divert all his energy towards his chosen path of spiritual enlightenment as well as obtaining liberation and deliverance for his soul or Atma which is his pure and true ‘self’; it is an effective means in helping the aspirant in this endeavour. A person who practices Yoga is called a Yogi or an ascetic. Yoga is a spiritual science that establishes coordination between the pure conscious Atma (or soul) of the individual with the primary source from which this individual Atma had separated at the time of birth of the individual creature, thereby creating oneness between the two. Since a systematic and rational approach is needed to bring about an effective coordination and a final union between the individual’s Atma, which is the pure conscious ‘self’ and the truthful identity of the individual, and the cosmic Atma of the creation much like the merger of the water in a pot with the ocean which is the primary source of all water on earth, Yoga is called a ‘science’. As such, it has several well-designated and systematic steps towards the final goal of obtaining liberation by the pure conscious ‘spirit’ (soul or Atma) from the fetters that tie it down to this gross physical body, and emerge from it to become free like the cosmic wind or air element that pervades throughout the sky and which nothing can ever bind or enclose or capture in a sack.

Yoga helps in this liberating and delivering exercise for the Atma or soul of the spiritual seeker.]

2-5. [These four verses describe the process of Pranayam* or breath control exercises that are integral to doing Yoga.]

It has been prescribed by the self-existent and self-begotten Brahma, the primary creator of the entire creation who is called 'Swayambhu' in the sense that he had no father or ancestor from whom he descended because he is said to be 'self-created', as well as extolled and ratified by the primary scriptures known as the Vedas, that the spiritual aspirant should do Yoga (meditation and contemplation) in a systematic way and according to the stipulated procedure. For this purpose, he should select a calm and serene place, free from all types of disturbances, whether mental or physical, and sit down in a proper sitting posture called Aasans¹.

He should put the wayward and wandering tendencies of the mind and heart, which are intrinsically restless and in a state of constant flux, under strict control and tight leash by withdrawing his mind and heart from all worldly attractions and the distractions that they inherently create much like a tortoise withdrawing its limbs into its shell when it decides to do so².

This inhalation process is called 'Purak', meaning one that fills up. The time taken to inhale this breath should be equivalent to the time taken to mentally pronounce twelve Matras (letters or syllables) of Pranav, or the sublime and ethereal word OM³. During this process of inhaling air from the outside into the body, the practitioner should close all the so-called 'doors' or exit points in the body through which the wind could escape⁴.

The practitioner should sit ram-rod straight, with the spinal cord, the neck and the head in a straight line, and the chest fully expanded. While in this position, he should allow the inhaled wind to be retained in the body and spread through it. That is, the inhaled rejuvenating air is allowed to permeate throughout the body and get absorbed by the tissues. [This stage of Pranayam is called 'Khumbhak' or filling the pot. It is a metaphoric way of saying that the pot-like body is filled with fresh air after it is been emptied of stale air laden with all the gaseous impurities present in the body when it was exhaled earlier. This is done to oxidize every tissue and cell inside the body with fresh oxygen and energy, thereby stoking the inherent fire element present in these tissues and revitalizing them with new and fresh energy. It is like removing the covering ash from the pit of the sacrificial fire and blowing fresh air into the ambers lying underneath the ash to re-kindle the latent fire which had become dormant. This fire then jumps into life and burns with new vigour, thereby infusing new life into the body of the practitioner.]

Finally, when the body has sufficiently absorbed fresh oxygen present in the inhaled air and all the tissues and cells freshly revitalized by it, the different toxins and other impurities present in these tissues and cells are then expelled as noxious gases from them and collected by the residual air which has now become polluted and needs to be expelled from the body. This is done by exhaling it through the nostrils slowly in the reverse process. [This reverse process is called 'Rechak'.] (2-5).

[Note—**Pranyam* is central to Yoga practices and all the Upanishads dealing with Yoga deal with it in one or the other context. Refer to Sam Veda's Yog Chudamani and Jabal Darshan, Shukla Yajur Veda's Trishikihi Brahmin, and Krishna Yajur Veda's Amrit Naad, Yog Tattva, Dhayan Bindu and Tejo Bindu Upanishads.

¹The proper sitting postures or *Aasans* for doing Yoga (meditation and contemplation) and practicing Pranayam (breath control) have been described in

Amrit Naad Upanishad, verse no. 19. The complete process of Pranayam is dealt with in this Upanishad in substantial detail.

²In other words, he should prevent his thoughts and emotions from spreading out into the world of material sense objects like the tentacles of an octopus, and then get entangled in them and remain entangled. Then he should inhale the outside air representing the cosmic life-giving wind element metaphorically called the Atma because it infuses a fresh lease of life into the otherwise inane and inert gross body of the aspirant. [In other words, inhaling air is like blowing fresh air into the furnace of life burning inside the body of the aspirant and kindling the 'fire of life' which has become weak without proper ventilation. Inhaling air or the wind element is like giving the Atma, which is pure consciousness and the true identity of the aspirant, a fresh lease of life by stoking the latent 'fire element' which keeps it energised.]

The 'inhalation of fresh air' is a metaphoric way of saying that the spiritual aspirant imbibes eclectic virtues and qualities that are exemplarily auspicious and noble by remaining ever vigilant and conscious towards what is right and what is not. This acceptance of good and noble from the outside world is equivalent to 'breathing in fresh air or the Purak' phase of Pranayam. Now, when good ideas and virtues enter the inner self of the aspirant and are retained by him instead of just letting them pass off as a transient change then they are bound to have a permanent positive effect on his overall personality, mentality and temperament. This is equivalent to the 'holding of breath or the Kumbhak' phase of Pranayam. It is obvious that when good and positive virtues are in the ascendant the bad and negative ones would be on the decline; when fresh air enters a closed room the stale air is pushed out. This is equivalent to 'exhaling of breath or the Rechak' phase of Pranayam.]

³The word OM has three basic letters, viz. A, U and M. Therefore, pronouncing the *twelve Matras of OM* would here mean that the word is said four times—3 Matras x 4 times = 12 Matras. Refer also Amrit Naad Upanishad, verse nos. 24 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.

⁴The symbolic *doors* of the body are the following—two ears, two eyes, two nostrils, one mouth, one anus, one urethra and one Brahm Randhra (the hair-like slit on the top of the head).]

6-7. When the practitioner has developed sufficient expertise in controlling his vital winds called Pran by doing Pranayam in the way described above, and is able to concentrate the Pran consciously in any part of the body where he wishes it to be willingly focused, he should consciously feel that this Pran is moving or pulsating or radiating up and down two times in the region of the leg between the tip of the toes and the ankle joints (during the Kumbhak phase). That is, he consciously and willingly allows his mind to visualise that there is a sensation of conscious life pulsating or radiating solely in the foot between the tip of the toes and the ankle joints in a wave like fashion to the exclusion of any other parts of the body.

Then he draws his attention to the region of the leg between the ankle joints and the knees, and visualises that this region is the only conscious part of the body. He consciously allows his mind to perceive the existence of consciousness exclusively in this region of the body. He feels that life is pulsating in wave like pattern between his knees and ankle region, and moving up and down three times (during the Kumbhak phase).

Moving upwards, he then focuses his attention in the region between the hip joint and the knees. He allows his mind to visualise that conscious life is radiating up and down in this region in a wave like pattern two times.

Then he should shift his attention to the area between the anus and the genitals and visualise this area as the center of consciousness radiating in it. Here, the Pran is visualised as moving between the anus and the genitals in a wave three times.

Pulling up the vital winds upwards, they should be concentrated in the region of the navel, and the practitioner of Yoga should imagine that all the vital factors of life inside his body are concentrated here (6-7).

[Note—This process helps in training the mind to be focused on the job at hand, and learn not to be distracted by anything else. By pinpointing the presence of consciousness in a specific part of the body to the exclusion of any other part is a difficult proposition and requires a lot of practice. It is like training the wild horse or elephant to obey the command of its master.]

8. In this region of the navel, there is a cluster of Naadis (tubular ducts; the nerves and veins). The chief amongst them is called ‘Sushumna’ and it is surrounded by ten other Naadis such as Ida, Pingla etc. These Naadis are micro-fine in dimension and have different colours, such as red, yellow, dark hue, copper-coloured (8).

[Note—All Yoga Upanishads describe these Naadis in some context or the other.]

9. One should allow his Pran or vital winds to move amongst these Naadis just like a spider moves along the fibers created by its own saliva that forms the web on which this insect moves. [This helps to rejuvenate the Naadis, or nerves and veins, by shaking them out of their inertial mode of inactivity and lethargy, ventilating them and activating the latent energy lying dormant in them due to their being clogged and lying inactive out of long-lasting inertia and poor upkeep which has made them full of toxins and other harmful chemicals].

While at it, the wise and expert practitioner should carefully channelise his Pran into that Naadi which is very subtle, micro-fine and white or grey in colour (i.e. the Sushumna Naadi) (9).

10. Above the navel region, the next most important and glorious region in the body is known as the ‘lotus’ in the Upanishads. [This is because the pure consciousness called the Atma or soul of the creature has its divine and exalted location here.] This is the region of the heart. This area is radiant like a vibrant and blooming red lotus flower (10).

11. After ventilating all the Naadis present in the region of the heart, the Pran wind moves ahead from here and reaches the region of the throat. [That is, the practitioner of Yoga consciously feels that his vital winds have moved up from the lower part of the body and are moving in the throat. His mind is focused in this region to the exclusion of all other parts. He visualises that consciousness is pulsating in his throat region; all other parts of the body are lifeless now for all practical purposes for his mind.]

Above this is the area of the subtle mind called Mana, and above it is the region of the subtle intellect called Buddhi. This intellect or Buddhi is most potent, powerful, sharp and penetrating; it is pure, untainted and uncorrupt in its primary and natural form; it is most magnificent and mysterious in its actions and behaviour (11).

12. The practitioner of Yoga should now concentrate his mind on the private parts located in the region between the two thighs (i.e. the genitals). This area is called ‘Indra-Vajra’¹. This area is to be mentally controlled or literally ‘ruptured or bored through’ by diligent efforts and a determined will power².

This control of the genital and its natural source of stupendous creative energy which is inherently present in all the living beings enable the ascetic to harness sufficient energy and stamina to move his Pran or consciousness to the next step in his Yoga practice. So he should now move his vital Pran or life forces upwards from the genitalia and let the Pran enter the four sensitive areas³ above it by rupturing through them. [In other words, the vital winds are allowed to stoke the hitherto dormant energy centers located in these four areas, thereby igniting the latent fire element present there and unleashing its stupendous potentials and powers.] (12-14).

[Note—¹The word *Indra Vajra* refers to the hardened and invincible weapon of the king of Gods known as Indra. In the present context, the word is used to symbolise the male phallus.

²In other words, the aspirant should learn to exercise strict control over his natural sexual impulses and ensure that this organ does not cause any emotional or physical discomfort to him in his rigorous meditative and contemplative exercises. Of all the natural impulses, this impulse of sexual arousal is the most difficult to resist and control. If the ascetic is successful in exercising control over his sexual instincts, he is not only able to concentrate better on his spiritual practices but also preserve his vital energy more effectively from being wasted away, and thereby divert it in more constructive channels and spiritual activities. 'Rupturing or boring thorough or breaking in' means to overcome the impenetrable fortress-like shell representing a creature's formidable and virtually irresistible natural sexual inclinations that are inherent to all the living beings, and thereby preventing this sexual instinct from getting aroused or activated, and raising its ugly hood to create unnecessary disturbance to the mental poise and mental concentration of the spiritual aspirant, causing undue hindrance in his path and obstructing his progress to reach his desired objective in life. Thus, rupturing or breaking of this hardened shell of formidable sexual instincts having their physical location in the region of the genitals is a metaphoric way of saying that the ascetic has overcome one last strong resistance to his spiritual liberation and enlightenment.

He should consciously fix his attention in this region of the genitals between the thighs, and consciously withhold or harness the energy of his vital life forces. That is, by observing self control over his sexual urges, by diligently following the principles of abstinence and continence, the ascetic is able to accumulate a great reservoir of energy within himself which he can use to divert his Pran from wasting its vital resources and energy in pursuing pleasures of the senses and gratification of sexual impulses to more nobler and higher objectives in life.

³The four vital energy centers that are expected to be ruptured are the four 'Chakras' located in the region of the body above the genitals. These Chakras are whirling subtle energy centers in the body where great energy is lying trapped. The main objective of meditative exercises is to unleash this astounding source of subtle energy lying dormant in the body of an ordinary man, but activated in the body of a successful practitioner of Yoga. By activating these subtle energy centers, the ascetic or any practitioner of Yoga is able to master great mystical powers and authority that can be used by him for his own spiritual upliftment as well as for doing something good for others by being a source of their inspiration and moral guidance. It enables the practitioner to perform certain tasks that the ordinary man is not able to do with the limitations of his physical body.

The heated and energised and specially empowered vital winds are able to penetrate these four energy centers and help release their energy. The four Chakras are Muladhar Chakra located in the region of the genital, Nabhi Chakra located in the navel region, Anahat Chakra located in the chest region in the vicinity of the heart, and Kantha Chakra located in the throat.

Earlier it has been said in verse nos. 6-11 that the Pran representing consciousness should be diligently and consciously moved up from the lower region

of the body to the throat, traversing the navel and heart regions one by one. Now, this present verse nos. 12-14 clarifies what is meant by ‘consciously’ moving it up. It means that all the vital energy centers located in these regions are activated by being stoked by the vital wind forces moving around them much like a dormant fire in an oven is aroused when fresh wind or air is blown into it.]

15-16. Then the ascetic should diligently move the vital winds in the cluster of Naadis present in the throat. [That is, he should visualise that his consciousness is pulsating in the region of the throat where the energy center called Kantha Chakra is located.] This cluster has one hundred one Naadis. They trap within themselves the most stupendous and magnificent source of divine and supernatural energy called ‘Para Shakti’¹.

Some of the great Naadis located here are the Sushumna Naadi which remains perpetually submerged in the bliss obtained by realisation of the supreme transcendental Truth (and if the Pran enters this Naadi, it obviously also gets submerged in an everlasting ocean of bliss and contentedness that comes with realisation of the ultimate Truth). The Naadi called Virjaa is directly linked to the supreme Brahm (i.e. it has direct link with the supreme consciousness residing in the body of the individual creature, and when this Naadi is activated the individual can have direct access to that consciousness). The other two important Naadis here are called Ida which is located to the left side of the throat, and Pingla that is located in the right side of the throat. [These two Naadis move up to the nostrils located in their respective sides.] (15-16).

[Note--¹This *Paraa Shakti* represents the supernatural transcendental dynamic powers of the pure conscious Atma, and it is revealed in the form of the ability of the man to ‘speak’. This is because the very first sign of creation coming into being is deemed to be the ‘Naad’ or the cosmic sound element that was generated when there was some activity in the calm surface of the cosmic ether. This Naad was envisioned as the first cosmic movement in the otherwise calm and tranquil ether which created a ripple that formed into a wave moving across the surface of ether, causing energy to be generated, which in due course powered the cosmic dynamo at the time of the initial phases of creation at the time of its very beginning. Naad was conceptualised as the word OM, and the whole gamut of spoken language is incorporated in the basic sound created when this OM is pronounced. So, the ‘voice’ or ‘sound’ generated in the throat of a living being is the most evident and irrefutable proof of the supreme Consciousness, which is responsible for the unfolding of this entire creation, being present inside the body of the individual.]

17. Between these two Naadis (i.e. between the Ida and Pingla Naadis) is the one Naadi which is considered the best and the most magnificent one amongst all the Naadis from the spiritual perspective¹. A wise and expert practitioner of Yoga who is acquainted with this Naadi is deemed to be knowledgeable about the Vedas and their tenets. He is deemed to have acquired truthful knowledge and understood the real meaning and purpose of the doctrines of the Vedas and other scriptures, such as the Upanishads. [This is because the main thrust of Vedic and Upanishadic teaching is to provide liberation and deliverance to the soul of the spiritual aspirant. Since this Naadi, called the Sushumna Naadi, helps in achieving this aim, it follows therefore that a person who has been able to gain access to this Naadi by means of Yoga and Dharna (strict self discipline, singularity of purpose, diligent practice of various tenets and doctrines with a steady mind and firm determination, and having unwavering faith and conviction in the teachings of the scriptures) is the one who has realised the main objective of studying and preaching of the Vedas and the Upanishads by finding the ultimate emancipation and salvation for himself, i.e. for his Atma—which is pure

consciousness and synonymous with his Pran or vital life forces, as well as is his true identity—by breaking free from the fetters of this gross body and escaping from its enclosure to mingle and inseparably merge with the primary air or wind element which pervades uniformly in the cosmic space outside the limitations set by the physical structure of the body.]

There are said to be a total of seventy two thousand fine Naadis in the body². These are called 'Taitil' (17).

[Note--¹This *Naadi* is called the Sushumna Naadi which goes up to the Brahm-Randhra and provides liberation to the diligent practitioner of Yoga when his 'Pran Yau' or his vital winds, along with his consciousness representing all his vital functions and life in its entirety, makes its exit from the body through this hair-like slit located at the top of the skull. According to the philosophy of Yoga, this Sushumna Naadi is the only duct in the body which can provide liberation to the practitioner's soul when the latter rides piggy-back on the vital winds as they find their way inside this duct from its lower end at the base of the spine, at the place called the Kundalini, and then, pushed up by the energy released from this ruptured Kundalini, sneaks up this Sushumna Naadi to finally reach the top of the head where the Brahm-Randhra is located. Finally, when the Pran is sufficiently heated and energised by constant practice of Yoga (physical exercises of meditation) and Pranayam (breath control and harnessing the latent energy of the wind element), it manages to rupture or split open this aperture and escape from the body into the outer free cosmic space. This is just like a prisoner escaping from the walls of the prison and set free in the outer world. Refer verse nos. 18-19.

²The Jabal Darshan Upanishad and Yogchudamani Upanishad of the Sam Veda tradition, the Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, and the Yog tattva, Tejo Bindu and Dhyan Bindu Upanishads of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition are amongst the major Upanishads which deal with this concept of the Naadis and Yoga. Separate appendices of this volume also explain these concepts in quite detail.]

18-19. 'Dhyan Yoga', literally meaning meditative exercises done by intense concentration of the mind and use its energy as if it were a sharp-edged knife (much like the use of laser beams to perform complicated surgery in modern medicine), can be employed by the practitioner of Yoga (i.e. by the seeker of true liberation and deliverance) to rupture or pierce through or bore into all the Naadis and let the Pran enter them. But the Sushumna Naadi is the only one which cannot be broken through or its sanctity violated¹.

A wise and sagacious person is one who pierces all the Naadis in this life itself. This is to ensure that his Pran or vital winds and life forces present in his body, which had been till now wandering aimlessly in the subtle space inside the gross body, is able to enter into these ducts and move up the correct path that can lead to its proper destination. Since the wind trapped inside the body has originated from the all-pervading free wind or air element present in the cosmic space, its 'natural destination' is this cosmic space, and its 'liberation' is its escape from the enclosure of the gross body and mingling with the parent body of the cosmic wind outside. This is its final 'deliverance' from all artificial entrapments created by the gross body because once outside, the air element would merge indistinguishably with the cosmic wind element and lose its independent identity. A realised ascetic allows this to happen when he uses the will power and determination of his mind to forcefully make his Pran to bore into the various Naadis, and move inside them. Once inside, the energised and heated Pran unclogs all the veins and nerves by its mere power of force and de-toxifying abilities, and moves freely inside them. It gradually moves up the body much like hot air, allowed to enter a network of tubes, has a propensity to move

freely inside them and head upwards because of the fact that any hot air moves up and not down. Pran, being lighter or 'subtler' than all the other elements in the body because it now resembles hot and energised air or vital wind element, has overcome all resistance and is able to enter that path that leads to arousal of the hitherto dormant spiritual energy lying trapped in the heart as the pure consciousness of the creature. Determined and steadfast practice of meditation, along with contemplation on the main objective of doing Yoga and concentrating upon the Truth, keeps the ascetic firmly on his path.

In its final leg, the Pran is able to sufficiently gather enough energy and force and momentum to unfurl the energy in the coiled Kundalini² at the bottom of the spine. When the Pran sneaks into it, it finds entry into the Sushumna Naadi which has its lower end blocked by this Kundalini. Heated vital winds then snake up this tube, much like mercury moving up the thermometer, and finally reach the top of the head at the spot called the Brahm-Randhra. When the pressure builds up, the final explosion occurs, and this Brahm-Randhra splits open, allowing the Pran to escape into the outer space for ever. This stage is called 'Kaivalya Mukti', or the 'one of its kind' of liberation and deliverance for the aspirant seeking freedom, because once the Pran merges with the cosmic wind or air element, there is no question of its re-entering the body. This is because the body of such an ascetic is allowed to disintegrate into its basic elements, such as the earth, water and fire. The subtle space inside the body would then automatically coalesce with the open space outside. No trace of the earlier creature remains. This is obviously the final closure of the scene for him.

Thus, the wise and sagacious practitioner of Yoga should use the inviolable authority and majestic influence of his Atma, i.e. the astounding supernatural power of the pure conscious 'self', to firmly direct and strictly order the mind and the intellect to use their stupendous abilities and skills along with the energised and heated vital winds called Pran present inside the body to jointly rupture and bore through the different Naadis and penetrate them. That is, the wise ascetic uses the stupendous and powerful authority inherently bestowed in his own 'self', called his pure conscious Atma, to diligently and purposefully divert all the efforts of the two powerful instruments that he has at his disposal, i.e. the Mana (mind) and the Pran (vital winds and other life forces inside the body), to actively practice strict Yoga (as described in this Upanishad).

This Yoga practice then becomes as potent, powerful and effective as a heated sharp-edged knife or 'Kshuri' that enables the ascetic to symbolically cut through the Naadis in a surgical and precise fashion. The revitalizing Pran then enters them and completely fills them. Then the Naadis become as vibrant and invigorated as the healthy Jasmine flower which gives out a sweet fragrance typical of it (18-19).

[Note--¹In other words, since this Sushumna Naadi symbolically represents the eternal and irrefutable Truth in creation, and remains soaked in its exuberant glory as mentioned in verse no. 16 above, it is impossible to subdue it and cause any disturbance in its serenity. This is a metaphoric way of saying that once the ascetic reaches that stage of self-realisation and Brahm-realisation when he has realised the actual Truth and the eternal fount of beatitude and felicity attendant with it, no force in creation can ever sway him from his exalted stature. He is deemed to have reached the pinnacle of spiritual achievement where he becomes invincible for the myriad temptations and delusions surging in the world which drown all other creatures in their swirling whirlpool.

The word *pierce* when used in the spiritual context is to overcome the resistance of the physical body and its various components, including the Naadis, to any effort

that causes inconvenience or discomfort to it. Yoga is a rigorous self-disciplining spiritual exercise that does not compromise on principles. Since the body is accustomed to remaining engrossed in comforts and enjoying pleasures emanating from the material world, it is natural for it to resist any change in the status and be subjected to control and discipline. The Naadis are singled out for such ‘piercing or rupturing’ or vanquishing or overcoming or subduing because it is through the network of Naadis that the body keeps itself alive as consciousness flows through them. The Naadis carry sense impulses from one part of the body to the other; it is through them that the blood flows; it is through the Naadis that the mind is able to receive the sensory inputs from the sense organs located on the surface of the body and then help the body to respond; it is the Naadis which are like the central network of wires and circuits of an electronic equipment. If the Naadis are blocked or made to stop working, the body would be as good as dead. Hence, the best way to control the entire edifice of the body is to control its command and control network in the form of the Naadis.

²*Kundalini*—The Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 3, verse nos. 12-16 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition is dedicated entirely on this concept of Kundalini; it is Chapter 27 of this volume. Other major Upanishads that deal with the topic of Yoga also deal with the concept of Kundalini because both are intertwined concepts.]

20. In this way, the wise ascetic should properly understand how to establish his control over the different Naadis, those which are conducive to his spiritual upliftment and therefore considered ‘Shubh’ or auspicious (such as the Virja, Pingla and Ida Naadis mentioned in verse no. 16) as well as those which relate more to his worldly interactions and mundane existence (such as the Naadis that control his digestive, excretory and reproductive functions).

The Sushumna Naadi is superior to all the Naadis in the body, and the wise and sagacious ascetic is one who focuses his attention on this Naadi. That is, he diligently practices to divert his Pran (vital winds and life-infusing conscious factors) into this duct and channelise the Pran’s energy into activating it so that the Pran can ultimately reach the point on the top of the head, the Brahm-Randhra, from where it can finally make its exit from the body for good, thereby liberating the ascetic from the shackle of the gross body for ever, and delivering his soul from the compulsion of having to live in this body to the accompaniment of its associated torments.

When his attention is exclusively and firmly fixed on this Sushumna Naadi, he obtains access to the supreme transcendental Brahm representing the eternal fount of truth, beatitude and felicity. This achievement provides him with permanent liberation and deliverance from the body. In other words, he does not have to take birth again with a body¹ (20).

[Note--¹This is because he has already detached himself from all the deeds done by the body, being totally unattached with the latter, and not-involved in the world in which the body lives, thereby freeing him from either being associated with these deeds and their consequences, whether good or bad, or with any of the entrapments of the world and the latter’s tainting effects. He has also realised the delusory nature of the artificial world of material objects, and therefore has lost all charms and attractions for it along with the material comforts and sensual pleasures that it offers to the creature. With no baggage of insatiate desires and yearnings, no unfulfilled aspirations and hopes, he has nothing pending and unfulfilled at the time of death for which he would want to take another birth in order to finish off his incomplete tasks or fulfill his dreams. This state of total and sincere renunciation entitles him to become a ‘liberated’ soul, and since ‘soul’ is an disembodied ethereal body of infinite cosmic proportions, being another form of the cosmic wind or air element, it simply

coalesces with this element as soon as the ascetic dies and the Pran leaves the gross body by rupturing the skull at the point of the Brahm-Randhra.

In this context, refer Amrit Naad Upanishad, verse no. 27, and Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 3, verse nos. 12-17 both of which belong to the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

21. A person who has won control over his mind and intellect by strict diligence and discipline, who has been able to effectively control his senses and has learnt to focus his attention at the place he wishes it to be focused instead of becoming a mute spectator and a humble serf of the natural wayward and wandering tendencies of the mind as well of the various sense organs, who has inculcated the habit of self-restraint and self-discipline, who has vanquished his natural instincts and willingness of the body and the mind to become prey to delusions and illusive charms of this world—such a person should move to a calm, quiet, serene and uninhabited place where there is no disturbance of any kind, physical or mental.

In such an environment conducive to spiritual upliftment, he should practice meditation and contemplation which enables him to establish a union or coordination between his own consciousness (Atma) and the cosmic Consciousness that pervades throughout the creation as the eternal, ubiquitous and quintessential Truth. This is called ‘Nishang Tattwa Yoga’¹ because it involves the application of the principles of Yoga (both physical exercises of meditation and its mental aspect that helps to fix attention on some high and noble objective using the method of contemplation, deliberation and research) to arrive at the elementary principles of Nature that are irrefutable, unequivocal truths do not need props to support them.

By constant and diligent practice of this type of Yoga, he should become totally neutral and full of equanimity, dissociating himself from both the gross body as well as the world. He should be dispassionate towards everything in this world. [In other words, it should not matter to him whether he dies or lives, whether his body suffers or enjoys the comforts of the world, and whether or not the world exists at all.] (21).

[Note--¹The word *Nishang* (or *Nishung*) means without any accompaniments; with no support and help; lonely and one of its kind. The word *Tattwa* means the underlying principle of anything in existence; the essential and fundamental aspect of anything; the basics of any entity; the essence; the ‘principal principles’ of any philosophy. *Yoga* of course means to bring about a union or establishing coordination between two entities; the practice of meditation and contemplation; the physical exercises involved in these practices as well as the mental abilities to contemplate, deliberate and research and arrive at the desired results.]

22. Even as a Swan flies off into the vast sky after breaking free from the net which had kept it imprisoned, a wise and enlightened living being (the ‘Jiva’; in this case the ascetic or a practitioner of Yoga) is able to break free from all the fetters that shackle him to this artificial deluding world resembling a vast, fathomless and seemingly uncrossable ocean with its rapidly swirling whirlpools, endless stretch and numerous other hurdles which literally keep the creature trapped and hallucinating in their midst¹.

Practice of Yoga as described in this Upanishad enables the creature to overcome these insurmountable hurdles and finally cross over this ocean-like world and become free for all times to come (22).

[Note—¹Refer Shwetashwatar Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 5, 8 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition. In it the world is compared to a surging river and this metaphor is

beautifully employed to describe the horrific characteristics of this world. This Upanishad is Chapter 5 of this volume.]

23. Even as the flame of the oil-lamp exhausts all the oil and burns down its wick at the time of its final dissolution into the fire element (i.e. like the time when the flame finally flickering away and dying when all the oil is exhausted and even the wick has been burnt to ashes, leaving nothing behind), the realised and acclaimed Yogi (ascetic) also burns all his deeds and their associated results, good or bad, in the powerful fire of Yoga (meditation and contemplation)¹ to obtain final liberation and deliverance from this body by merging his soul or pure conscious 'self' represented by his life-giving vital winds called Pran into the eternal and infinite cosmic Consciousness which is the supreme transcendental 'truth' and the essential primary 'element' in creation from which all other things have emerged. This is called his 'Nirvan' or final emancipation and salvation from where there is no return (23).

[Note—¹See note to verse no. 20.]

24. A wise, erudite and expert ascetic who has sharpened his knife symbolising his steady mind and sharp intellect as well as firmness of conviction and a determined will, by rubbing this knife vigorously against the stone symbolising profound renunciation and total detachment from anything related to this world and the body, employing the powerful force associated with Pranayam done by using the ethereal word OM for the purpose of rubbing the knife against this stone, is not only able to cut through all the fetters symbolising various faults associated with this perishable world of material objects and artificiality but also ensures that no fetter pertaining to this delusory and entrapping world would ever trap him in its tentacles (24).

25. When that self-realised and wise man has abandoned all his desires and yearnings pertaining to this world, he would not have any kind of expectations and hopes from it. [That is, when he has no desires, no wishes, no longings, no aspirations and no greed, he would not expect any return for the deeds done by him with his body. This makes him greatly dispassionate towards the world and detached from its entrapping enticements.]

When he is not under any delusions, when he has no worldly obligations to fulfill which might force him to bend rules and do things even unwillingly, when he is not deluded by foisted false promises of getting imaginary happiness and joy emanating from this perishable world, and mislead by illusionary sources of Amrit (which is the ambrosia of eternal beatitude and felicity), it is only then he can sincerely pursue the path of spiritualism that leads to the truthful source of Amrit. In other words, he acquires the mystical ability to ferret out the 'truth' from the labyrinthine alleys of illusions and falsehoods that are the hallmarks of this artificial world and its material objects of comfort and pleasure.

This truthful source of Amrit provides him real and eternal beatitude and felicity. Such a realised and fortunate ascetic does not get tied to any fetters any longer, or be ever shackled to this body or the world. Nothing can trap him; nothing can tie him down. This is verily what this Upanishad proclaims; this is its profound and glorious teaching (25).

-----Shanti Paath-----

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Chapter 12

Sarwasaar Upanishad/Sarwasaaro-panishad

This Upanishad follows the traditional pattern of raising queries and answering them in order to elucidate profound metaphysical maxims and axioms in a very succinct manner by way of precise and clear-cut definitions, highlighting their basic tenets and fundamental precepts. Thus, concepts such as ‘Bandhan’ or getting bound in shackles, and ‘Mukti’ or being liberated from the fetters that confine the creature’s soul or Atma and prevent its independence and salvation, the concept of ‘Vidya’ or truthful knowledge of the reality and expertise in it, and its opponent ‘Avidya’ or lack of this knowledge which is tantamount to ignorance, remaining deluded and bound in fetters, the concept of the four states of existence of the pure consciousness and the five ‘Koshas’ or the sheaths that surround the true ‘self’ of the creature, the concept of a ‘Jiva’ or the independent living being, and the ‘Kshetragya’ or the authority who has complete command over this individual being, the concept of ‘Jiva-Atma’ or the soul of this individual creature and the ‘Parmatma’ or the supreme Soul of the creation, the concept of ‘Maya’ or delusions and misconceptions about the reality etc.—all have been beautifully explained in this Upanishad.

This is also the reason why this Upanishad is named ‘Sarwasaar’—for the word ‘Sarwa’ means ‘all and comprehensive’, and ‘Saar’ refers to ‘essence, fundamental, basic, principal tenets or definitions’.

When the questioner is made aware of the fundamental principles about these metaphysical concepts, he is made to realise the truth about the Atma which is his truthful and pure conscious ‘self’. It is asserted that this ‘self’ is beyond the purview of death and birth, of the idea of being a ‘doer’ of deeds and therefore being either a sufferer from or enjoyer of their consequences, of having a name and form with a physical body having sense organs, of being subjected to and affected by the numerous pains and miseries arising out of various torments and sorrows that are natural to this mortal material world and the equally mortal gross body engulfed by Maya (delusions, illusionary attachments and misconceptions about the truth).

This Atma or pure conscious ‘self’ of the individual creature is immaculate and wholesome. This ‘self’ is eternally free and unshackled, and the notion of ‘being bound’ is simply out of ignorance of the truth and the true nature of the ‘self’. It is a microcosmic counterpart of the cosmic Consciousness known as the supreme transcendental Brahm. This last awareness is the main thrust of all Upanishadic teaching efforts.

We should note here that the basic tenets of the Upanishads have a striking similarity to the religio-philosophical beliefs of the great Christian saint named *Thomas Aquinas*. An entire set of religious doctrines based on his philosophy of the soul, human knowledge and God is known as *Thomism*. St Thomas was born 1224/25 A.D. and died 7 March, 1274. He was a leading philosopher and theologian of the Catholic Church and taught at the University of Paris. He was a prolific writer and penned about eighty great books on the subject of theology and philosophical aspects of religion. One of his great works is *Summa Theologica* which he wrote between

1265-73, and was his last major treatise on religious philosophy. His profound doctrine is known as *Thomism*. This is a philosophical and theological system developed by him which has great similarity with the philosophy of the Upanishads. Briefly it states that 'the human soul is immortal and a unique subsistent form, that all human knowledge is based on sensory perceptions that are experienced by him but it also depends upon the mind's reflective capacity, and that all creature's have a natural tendency to love God that can be perfected and elevated by grace and application'.

-----Shanti Paath-----

ॐ_सह_नाववतु_।_सह_नौ_भुनक्तु_।_सह_वीर्यं_करवावहै_।_तेजस्वि_नावधीतमस्तु_।_मा_विद्विषावहै_।
 _____ॐ_शान्तिः_।_शान्तिः_!!_शान्तिः_!!!_

The meaning of this Shanti Paath is given in appendix no. 1.

1. What is 'Bandhan' or being tied in shackles? What is 'Mukti' or being freed, getting unshackled and finding liberation? What are known as 'Vidya' or knowledge and special awareness about anything, and 'Avidya' or the ignorance and its accompanying misconceptions about the same subject?

What are the four states of existence of the creature which are known as 'Jagrat' or the waking state of consciousness, 'Swapna' or the dreaming state of consciousness, 'Sushupta' or the deep sleep state of consciousness, and 'Turiya' or the state which transcends these three states?

What is the meaning of the five 'Koshas' or sheaths that surround the Atma and which are known as 'Anna Maye Kosh' or the food sheath, 'Pran Maye Kosh' or the vital wind or air sheath, 'Mano Maye Kosh' or the mental sheath, 'Vigyan Maye Kosh' or the intellect sheath, and 'Anand Maye Kosh' or the bliss sheath?

What is meant by the following terms—'Karta' or the doer of deeds, 'Jiva' or the individual living creature, 'Panchvarga' or five classes of subtle elements that constitute the entity known as the creature, 'Kshetragya' or the sole authority that rules over the individual creature, 'Sakshi' or the neutral observer and witness to all that is happening in this world and is being done by the body in which the pure consciousness known as the 'self' of the individual creature lives, 'Kutastha' or the eclectic entity which subtly and secretly resides as the Atma or the pure consciousness of all living creatures and which lives even after the gross as well as the subtle bodies perish, 'Antaryami' or the omniscient and all-knowing pure consciousness that resides in the inner self of all living beings, 'Pratagyatma' or the visible, tangible and verifiable form of the cosmic Soul in the form of the living creature, and 'Parmatma' or the supreme transcendental Soul of the creation that is invisible, intangible and imperceptible but is an irrefutable, immortal, absolute and unequivocal Truth of creation?

Finally, what is this entity known as 'Maya', or delusions and misconceptions about the actual truth, and how does it affect the creature and entangle it in its vicious and uncompromising net? (1).

2. The same pure consciousness known as the Atma assumes two roles, one as the 'Jiva' or the individual living creature who has a body and is therefore subjected to

the influence of all the characteristics attributed to this gross and perishable body, as well as to the various limitations imposed by it on the Atma, and as the 'Ishwar' or the supreme Lord of all that exists, including the individual creature, who is not under such influences or limitations.

This exalted, sublime, divine and eclectic entity known as the Atma—which is most wise and enlightened and the Lord of all existence in its role as the supreme transcendental truthful consciousness needing no proof such as the existence of an active physical gross body to establish its veracity and existence—assumes (under delusory effects of the various misconceptions that are integral part of the artificial world in which this Atma lives as a creature) that it has a 'physical body'. This conception that 'I have a body', which is actually a misrepresentation of the actual truth, creates a sense of ego and pride in the Atma, a sense of belonging and attachment¹. It is this misconception that is at the root of all fetters that tie down the inherently and eternally free Atma of the creature, and prevents its liberation and deliverance from the body as well as the world in which this body lives and with which it is intricately entangled, along with their attendant problems which are natural and inherent to them. This is called 'Bandhan'—literally, a bondage, a tie or fetter that shackles the Atma.

On the contrary, to be dispassionate towards the body, to have no sense of ego and pride in this body and its achievements or feel dejected and fallen at its failures is called 'Moksha' or 'Mukti', which is being liberated and delivered from all shackles that tie down the creature and prevent its emancipation and salvation (2).

[Note--¹The Atma is inherently and primarily un-encumbered and unattached to anything, being a disembodied 'spirit' much like the wind or air element. It is, like this wind or air element, all-pervading and omnipresent as well as eternally free and liberated. But when this same wind is enclosed in, say, a mud pot, it appears to have a body which is the 'mud pot'. Essentially, the air inside the wall of the pot and the one outside its wall are the same and non-differentiable, but they appear to be two separate airs due to ignorance about the fundamental truth both about the air element as well as the mud pot.

The same thing applies to the sky element inside and outside the pot. The ignorance that both the skies are the same leads one to name the space inside the clay pot as the 'Ghatakash' (Ghat = pot; Akash = sky) and the one outside it as 'Mahakash' (Maha = greater; Akash = sky). The purity and basic characters of the air or sky within and without this pot remain unaffected by the physical mud wall of the pot.

Similarly, the Atma in its cosmic form as the supreme transcendental Consciousness and as the soul of the individual creature is the same and one, being non-dual in its essential character like the air or sky cited above. It is due to the misleading and corrupted vision created by the intervening delusions called Maya that act like a veil surrounding the Atma when it assumes the form of the individual creature living in this gross world characterised by this special quality of covering everything in a thick layer of Maya that the Atma begins to think it has a 'physical gross body'. Once caught in this delusory whirlpool, it gets sucked in its vortex of more misconceptions, leading to the situation that the basically pristine pure Atma forgets about its natural character and becomes a worldly creature who thinks that his true identity is the body, and therefore begins to link himself with everything with which the gross body is linked. The Atma becomes proud of its grand status of being a human being, for example, and looks down upon other creatures in creation; the Atma begins to treat other creatures with contempt and disdainfully looks upon them as if they were much inferior to it; the Atma looks upon all the achievements of the body as its own accomplishments, becomes proud of them and consequentially haughty of the possession of the body and its abilities; the Atma thinks that all the

deeds done by the body during the natural course of its interaction with the material world in which the body lives as being done by it (the Atma), and therefore is entitled to the rewards of these deeds, etc.

These misconceptions of the Atma vis-à-vis the body is called 'ignorance-based delusion' about its 'truthful self'. In fact, the Atma is an ethereal cosmic disembodied pure conscious 'spirit' much like the cosmic wind or air element, or even the sky element which has no forms and colours of their own.

The concept of Mukti or Moksha have been expounded in other Upanishads as well, some of them are Muktiko-panishad, Mandal Brahmin 2/4/3-4; Paingalo-panishad, 3/9-11; Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 4; Maho-panishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 36-73 etc.

A very simple example would illustrate how the Atma gets trapped in this world. A river has its origin in the mountain glacier and cascades down its slopes and heads straight to the ocean. This is the ideal situation. But it is not so in practice as it faces numerous natural and man-made obstacles in its path. There are hills and other geographical obstacles which are natural, and dams, cities and other man-made hindrances which force it to change its normal course, get diverted and sometimes lost in this maze. Waste, city and industrial effluents and other forms of pollutants taint its pristine clarity and purity, thereby tarnishing it and robbing of it of its life-rejuvenating character. The river is milked of its dynamism and energy, and by the time it reaches the ocean it is reduced to a forked delta which appears a distant faint image of the gush of sparkling and frothy milk-like ambrosia that appears to be descending directly down from the heavens upon the earth. The Atma or the individual creature's consciousness or his soul is similarly subjected to numerous impediments in its natural course heading to its primary resting place with Brahm, the supreme transcendental Consciousness. As a result, the Atma gets distracted from its course, getting entangled in Maya and its delusory effects.]

3. This misconception about the true and real nature of the 'self', called the Atma of the creature, as being the 'gross and perishable body' is due to the lack of truthful and holistic knowledge about the Atma's fundamental and essential form as the ethereal, sublime, divine and holy entity which is synonymous with the supreme transcendental Brahm. This erroneous view that the 'self' is the body instead of the immaculate, pure conscious, eternal and imperishable Atma which remains totally detached, distinct and separate from the body is the basic cause of generating the sense of ego and pride because the creature thinks that the achievements of the body are his own achievement, that 'he' as the body has such and such marvelous potentials and powers. This creates a tendency of getting attracted to and attached with this gross body.

Once mislead into believing that the body is one's true 'self', the creature begins to remain engrossed in enjoying the sensual pleasures and comforts that the organs of the body derive from the sense objects of the material world, as well as suffer from the countless miseries and pains that this body is subjected to.

'Avidya' is defined as the fundamental ignorance about the truth and reality of the Atma. It is the basic misconception about the Atma vis-à-vis the body and the world, the deluding idea that the 'self' is the gross perishable body and not an independent exalted entity which is eternal and imperishable as well as completely different from the body, having got nothing to do with anything related with the grossness of the body.

On the contrary, that means by which this ignorance about the truth is dispelled, that which removes all sense of ego and false pride that the creature has

developed about the body and its abilities and powers, its strengths and potentials, its beauty and charm etc. is called 'Vidya' or truthful knowledge (3).

4. The living creature has fourteen instruments or organs in its body, such as the 'Mana' etc.¹ by which it perceives the existence of the gross external material world in the form of various stimuli emanating from the latter's sense objects. The state of consciousness which 'illuminates' the world for the creature, or makes it possible for the creature to be able to perceive the external material world of sense objects by its various sense organs much like the Sun illuminating the earth and making its objects visible, is called the creature's 'Jagrat state' or the waking state of consciousness. This is the first state of existence of the consciousness and it enables the creature to receive the world through the various sense perceptions which have their origin in the sense objects of the external world, such as the inputs of sound known as the perception of hearing etc. [The others being—the inputs of feeling known as the perception of touch, the inputs of shape, forms and colours known as the perception of sight, the inputs of various odours and fragrances that are grouped together and titillate the olfactory organs to produce the perception of smell, and the inputs of different chemicals which manifest themselves as the perception of taste.]

When the creature sleeps, the gross organs of perceptions (ear, eye, nose, tongue and skin) become inactive, and therefore the creature does not receive any impulses from the outside world. But the various 'Vasanas' or worldly passions, desires, yearnings, aspirations, greed, hopes and expectations that the creature has accumulated while in its waking state of consciousness are carried over to this state of sleeping state because though the gross body is virtually inactive, the subtle body consisting of the mind-intellect complex is very much active and agile. So, it creates its own world of imaginations, called the 'Swapna state of existence' or the dreaming state, which is often more fascinating, colourful, mysterious and majestic as well as more potent and far-reaching in its import than the physical world during the waking state of consciousness. [This is because during the waking state, the creature was constrained by the limits imposed by the grossness of the physical body, whereas during the dreaming state no such barriers exist as the interior mind and intellect are subtle instruments of the body as compared to the external organs of perceptions and actions of this body.] This is the second state of existence of the consciousness.

When the sleep progresses further, a stage is reached when the subtle mind-intellect instrument of the creature also become inactive and immune to all perceptions much like their gross cousins, the physical external organs of the gross body, and this state of consciousness is called 'Sushupta state' or the deep sleep state of consciousness. During this state, the creature does not even dream of anything, and there is complete state of oblivion which is tantamount to bliss and peace. This is the third state of existence of the consciousness.

Finally comes the fourth state of existence of the consciousness called the 'Turiya Chaitanya state' or the transcendental state of pure conscious existence which goes beyond the third stage. In this state, the creature exists in its purest form as the pure consciousness which is undiluted, uninterrupted and unpolluted by any impulses or inputs from the external world. This results in its pristine and immaculate form as 'consciousness' to shine through (much like the flame of the candle which shines with all its brightness and splendour once the tainted glass covering around it is removed). This consciousness is the true 'self' of the creature and his real identity. Thus, it is the 'self' as pure consciousness that is the witness of the existence of the other three states of existence of the creature. This 'self' is imperishable and without a birth or

beginning. [This is because the other three states continue to appear and disappear in a rhythmic cycle as the creature wakes up to face the world after his phase of sleep is over, only to go back to sleep again when it is exhausted, and wake up again refreshed and rejuvenated from sleep. But the fourth state is like the Sun in the sky which shines on the world and lights it up, making it visible to the creature. This Sun is unaffected by anything happening in and to this world, and remains completely dispassionate and detached from anything mundane and terrestrial. Nights and days appear and disappear in a cyclic manner, but the Sun remains the same. During the night it is erroneously assumed that the Sun is no more, but as science has proved the Sun is there in the sky though it might not be visible to the creature during that period of time called the 'night' as it is shining on the outer side of the globe. This 'self' is called the Kutastha of verse no. 10.]

Thus it is observed that the creature's 'self' or pure consciousness has four states of existence² (4).

[Note—¹The *fourteen organs or instruments of the body* by which the creature perceives the external world in which it lives are the following—one Mana or the faculty of the mind, one Buddhi or the faculty of the intellect, one Chitta or the faculty of the memory, the sub-conscious mind, and the power to focus and fix attention, one Ahankar or the sense of pride in the body and its achievements as well as its stupendous abilities, five organs of perceptions such as eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin, and the five organs of action such as the hand, leg, mouth, excretory and reproductive.

Reference of Upanishads describing the four states of existence of the Atma or pure consciousness--Brihad Aranyak Upanishad of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition 1/1/17-20, 2/1/16-20, 4/3/9-38; Brahmo-panishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, verse no. 1, 20-21; Kaivalyo-panishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, verse no. 12-14; Paingalo-panishad, 2/10-16 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition; Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 2/4-2/5 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition.]

5. The gross aspect or part of the physical body which is build up of and nourished by the food eaten by the creature and the fundamental elements that this food contains as its basic nutrients is called the 'Anna Maye Kosh' or the food sheath. [This Anna Maye Kosh acts as an envelop that surrounds the Atma or pure conscious self of the creature, and hence the name 'Kosh' or a shell or a veil that acts as an enclosure surrounding the 'self' like an envelop enclosing its contents.]

When Pran and other fourteen types of life-infusing vital winds enter this gross and basically lifeless body formed by the food eaten by the creature and begin moving inside it, thereby lending it their own dynamic forces of 'life' and making it show all signs characteristic of 'life', then the part of the body in which these vital winds move about is called the 'Pran Maye Kosh' or the vital air sheath. [This sheath is subtler than the earlier sheath because it has air or wind element as its basic constituent instead of the grosser elements of food eaten by the creature that constitute the outer shell known as the Anna Maye Kosh.]

The third layer that surrounds the Atma is the 'Mano Maye Kosh' or the mind sheath because it consists of the subtle mind which helps the creature's pure consciousness or 'self' to perceive the presence of the body and the external world in which it lives by the means of the fourteen instruments (as described in verse no. 4 above). This Mano Maye Kosh is internal to the other two sheaths, and closer to the Atma than them. [The mind is the subtle reception center and coordinator of all inputs originating in the external world received through the organs of perception, and it gives commands to the organs of action present in the distant corners of the body. The

mind acts as the head clerk of the Emperor known as the Atma of the creature. The inputs are sorted out by the mind and necessary information stored for future retrieval in the archives of the memory and the sub-conscious. But like all head clerks, the mind cannot decide policy matters and take important decisions, and for this it relies upon the intellect called Buddhi.]

When the conscious Atma or the pure ‘self’ of the creature coordinates the inputs of all the earlier three instruments at its disposal (i.e. the ‘food sheath’ consisting of the gross body with its sense organs of perception and action, the ‘air sheath’ which enables the body to breathe and live a fruitful life as an active entity instead of lying like a dead log of wood, and the ‘mental sheath’ which helps the Atma to make sense of all the inputs that it receives and which helps it to coordinate between the different disjointed facets of creation into one meaningful existence) and ponders over the alternatives and take intelligent decisions, it (i.e. the Atma) is helped in its endeavour by the subtler aspect of the mind called the ‘intellect’ or the ‘thinking, analytical and discriminating aspect of the mind’. So, when the Atma is attended to by the intellect which aids in its intelligent thinking, helping it in analyzing the pros and cons of a given situation, discriminating between any given two options depending upon their worth and goodness, it is said to be surrounded by the intellect sheath called the ‘Vigyan Maye Kosh’. [Vigyan implies that knowledge which is based on intelligent thinking by the instrument of the ‘intellect’ that is ‘rational, well thought after, well deliberated and well balanced’, taking into considerations all the pros and cons of any given circumstance. It is different from impulsive actions which the emotional ‘mind’ might take. So, the intellect is analytical and clinical in its approach to any given situation in this world. It acts like the chief advisor and prime minister of the Emperor represented by the Atma.]

When the Atma, along with all these instruments at its disposal, lives in a state of oblivion about its true self and its nature even though it is being provided with all the necessary instruments represented by these four layers of metaphoric ‘helpers’ who can aid the Atma in its research and ferreting out the actual ‘truth’ about its self as well as the fact that this body which it erroneously thinks to be its true ‘self’ is actually not so, it is said that it (i.e. the Atma) lives in a cocoon of ‘blissfulness’.

It is like the case of the banyan tree not knowing or being unaware of the fact that it had its origin in the small ‘seed’ which is its actual and truthful form because the whole tree is subtly and secretly present in this seed and it is from this seed that it originates, and not in the external visible format as is seen of it in this world. This external form of the tree is mortal as one day or the other it would decay and die. Similarly, the creature remains oblivious of the fact that his body is perishable and would die some day, and the only entity that would not perish is the Atma. The new birth of the creature depends upon the Atma and not the body. [This mystery is beautifully explained by sage Yagyavalkya in Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 3, Brahmin 9, verse nos. 28/1-28/7.]

The creature is unaware that this body is a bundle of grossness and reprehensible things (such as flesh, muscles, bones, blood, mucous, nerves and veins, faecal and other garbage etc. enclosed in a sac-like skin—refer Yagyavalkya Upanishad, verse nos. 14-17 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition; it is Chapter 17 of the third volume in this series), that this body is like a prison for him, that it is a swamp of miseries and torments. Similarly, the creature takes this world to be real and everlasting quite contrary to the reality of the situation; he thinks that the pleasures and comforts that the world provides is the best thing to be had and there is no better form of happiness

and bliss. And this basic misconception leads the creature to get neck-deep in this swamp and remain oblivious of the reality.

This ignorance about the truth makes it live in a fool's paradise when it remains engrossed in the world and enjoying its comforts and pleasures. This fourth state of blissfulness is known as 'Anand Maye Kosh' or the bliss sheath because the Atma is surrounded by bliss and happiness (5).

[Note-- Refer *Mudagal Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse 5 which lists these five Koshas. According to *Paingalo-panishad*, canto 2, verse no. 4 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, these are the following—" 'Annamaye Kosh' or the food sheath, 'Pranmaye Kosh' or the vital wind sheath, 'Manomaye Kosh' or the mental sheath, 'Vigyanmaye Kosh' or the intellect sheath, and 'Anandmaye Kosh' or the bliss sheath. These sheaths cover the Atma or pure conscious self like various coverings or shrouds wrapping any object.

The *Annamaye Kosh* is that which was created by the intake of food, was nourished and developed by food, and at the end it finally disintegrates into the basic ingredients that constitutes food and merges with the earth element from where the food has derived its original ingredients. This forms the gross body of the creature.

The *Pranmaye Kosh* consists of the five vital winds (Pran, Apaana, Vyan, Udaana, and Samaan) along with the five organs of action (hands, legs, mouth, excretory and reproductive).

The *Manomaye Kosh* consists of the mind and the five organs of perceptions (ears, eyes, nose, tongue and skin), while the *Vigyanmaye Kosh* consists of the combined apparatus made of the intellect and these five organs of perception.

A combination of these three sheaths, i.e. Pranmaye Kosh (vital wind sheath), Manomaye Kosh (the mental sheath) and Vigyanmaye Kosh (the intellect sheath) is what is known as the 'Ling Deha' of a creature, or the ethereal form of the corporeal body. This is the subtle body of the creature.

The sheath in which the pure conscious self is not aware of the 'Ling Deha' is called *Anandmaye Kosh*. This forms the causal body of the creature".

These five sheaths are called the 'Panch Kosha'.]

6. The way a creature interprets any given circumstance and sees any given thing creates either a sense of attraction towards them in the mind and intellect of the creature, or a sense of apprehension, fear, dislike or outright revulsion for them. In other words, when the creature feels that the given circumstance or thing would provide him with comfort and pleasure, that they would be conducive to his general well being and good, the creature gets tempted by their allurements and begins to love them, thereby showing interest in them and drawing solace and happiness in being associated with them. The mind and intellect that has been conditioned to think positively and endearingly about any given circumstance or thing in this world in the hope that they would bestow comfort, pleasure and happiness to the creature, gratifying his needs for them in this world, then such a tendency of the mind-intellect complex is called the 'Sukha Buddhi'. [That is, when the mind thinks that the particular aspect of the world is good for the welfare and happiness of the principal, i.e. the creature, it advises the intellect accordingly, and then this intellect in its turn makes the Atma convinced that the particular thing is good for it. Even as an Emperor depends upon his ministers for feedback and advice, the Atma has to rely upon the mind and intellect to interpret and take decision in all matters pertaining to this world. This mind-intellect that perceives a sense of pleasure and happiness in anything pertaining to this world is called a pre-conditioned mind favourably disposed towards the material world and the comforts, pleasures and happiness provided by it. This notion makes the mind-intellect to be automatically favourable towards this world and

be positively inclined towards its material sense objects. This tendency of the mind-intellect is classified as 'Sukha Buddhi'.]

On the contrary, when the same mind and intellect interprets a given circumstance or thing in an adverse manner as not being conducive to the general happiness and well being of the creature and harming the latter's self interest, thinking that it might cause miseries and problems for the creature, it develops a sense of natural apprehension, fear, distaste or disinterest in it, even to the extent of creating an outright sense of repugnance and hatefulness for this given circumstance or thing. This natural negative bearing of the mind towards any circumstance or thing in this world is called 'Dukha Buddhi'.

The creature is called a 'Karta' or a doer of deeds because it consciously does so many deeds and takes so many actions in order to either acquire things or create circumstances that its mind-intellect is interested in, and avoid those in which it is not interested. [Since it is the physical body that actually does the deed or carries out the action under the inspiration of the mind and intellect, so when the creature begins to erroneously identify himself with the body as being his 'true self' instead of the Atma, it is said to be the doer of deeds. Actually, a wise and erudite creature is one who realises the subtle difference between the 'true self' which is the sublime, divine, subtle and ethereal Atma, and the gross physical body which is 'non-Atma' in the sense that it does not possess the auspicious eclectic virtues that characterize the Atma. The Atma is primarily pristine pure and a neutral witness to whatever is happening around it, being unattached to anything pertaining to the artificial world, being unaffected by the sorrows or joys that buffet this body, and being totally dispassionate towards everything that concerns both. Since the Atma has no desires, it need not make any efforts to fulfill them, and therefore it need not get involved in doing any deed to accomplish success in this fulfillment. On the other hand, the body is never satisfied as its organs yearn for constant gratification. This perpetually impels the body to compulsorily perform endless deeds as its obligatory function and duty. It fears that it would be labeled as lethargic, indolent and lazy if it does not remain active and constantly involved in some or the other activity. Even when doing Yoga (mediation) when there is no visible external activity, the creature thinks that he is 'doing' Yoga. So the creature becomes a 'doer of Yoga'. But this entire notion of doing and not doing is based on the fallacious premise that the body is the 'self' of the creature instead of it being the Atma which does not do anything, whether Yoga or anything else for that matter.]

The primary cause of all notions of sorrows and miseries as well as of happiness and joys is the existence of the five sense perceptions which are the senses of hearing having its focus in the sound emanating from the outside world, the sense of feeling something when it touches the skin, the sense of sight when something with a visible and tangible form and shape is seen, the sense of taste when anything touches the tongue and titillates the taste buds, and the sense of smell when the same titillation occurs in the nose. [In other words, when the creature has once experienced and witnessed the sense of happiness and satisfaction, or has literally 'tasted' the sweetness of worldly charms, no matter how transient and sorrowful they may be in the long run, it gets virtually hooked to them much like a drunkard gets hooked to his favourite drink or a chain smoker to his favourite pot in spite of being aware of their fatal health hazards. Once trapped, the creature would break all rules in the book to get at his desired object which gave him his illusive pleasure and comfort. This obviously leads to a chain of problems and their attendant consequences.]

When the Atma, which is the true self of the creature, is enticed into falling prey to this body's illusive charms and begins to participate in the body's actions and the deeds in the hope of deriving comfort, happiness, joy, pleasure and peace from this involvement, it gets entangled in the web of delusions and begins to hallucinate. In order to acquire that illusive happiness and peace, that comfort and pleasure that remains beyond its reach, the creature plunges into doing all types of deeds and taking all sorts of actions, whether they are auspicious, righteous and noble or not. The creature does not even bother to consider the consequences of such deeds and actions because he is under the influence of great delusions and is therefore hallucinating.

This delirious situation when the Atma lives inside a gross body and thinks that the body is its true self and identity, when it begins to think that the deeds done by the body are being done by its own self, when it remains ever engrossed in these deeds and either suffering from or enjoying the consequences of such deeds, when it never attains permanent peace and satisfaction from these deeds, when it yearns for more and still more in order to gratify its natural instincts and impulses, it is said that the Atma has become a 'Jiva' or a living being with a physical gross body. This term 'Jiva' is like a title attached to the Atma when it has a gross body and perpetually unsatisfied (6).

7. The Atma, which is the pure conscious self of the creature, is surrounded by five classes or groups of subtle elements that constitute the body of the creature. They are called the 'Panch Varga'. They taint the natural character of the immaculate Atma and impinge upon its freedom by influencing it and virtually keeping it bound in their characteristic shackles. This translates into the creature's distorted personality which is much divergent from what it ought to have been as the immaculate and pristine pure Atma.

This Panch Varga consists of the following group of subtle elements—viz. (a) the Mana or mind along with its other companions (i.e. the mind, the intellect, the Ahankar or the sense of ego, pride and self righteousness), (b) the Pran or vital winds that sustain life in the body and its various forms (such as Apaana, Vyan, Samaana, Udaana etc.), (c) the ability of the creature to have Ichha or to have desires, wishes, passions and aspirations, along with their astounding powers and potentials, (d) the three Gunas or qualities that are inherent to all the living beings and which determine the character and behaviour of the individual, such as the quality called Sata (which is the best of the three qualities and gives rise to noble aspirations and makes the creature righteous and upright), Raja (which is the medium quality creating worldly passions and the tendency to delve into things worldly) and Tama (which is the lowest quality creating a sinful tendency and a predominance of inertia and indolence), and (e) the various deeds broadly classified into those that are righteous, noble and auspicious, and those that are the opposite.

When the 'Bhut Atma', or the pure conscious self of the living being (creature) which has acquired a gross and perishable body consisting of the primary elements called Bhuts, lives inside this body and identifies its 'self' with it, then it has to bear the burden of this body which has been classified into five sections depending upon the above five classes of subtle elements, called the 'Panch Varg' as narrated above, which give the body of the individual creature its characteristic personality, define its basic characters and govern its behavioural patterns. The Bhut Atma cannot free itself from their influences as long as it lives in the body. [That is, as long as the consciousness lives in a gross body made up of the five elements such as the earth, water, fire, air and sky called the Bhuts, it is trapped in it like the air or the sky

element present inside the clay pot. Unless the clay pot is broken, it is not possible for the enclosed air or sky to merge with their primary cosmic forms present outside the wall of the pot.]

Thus, all the characteristic attributes and qualities that are inherent to these 'Panch Vargas' become invariably associated with the Atma; the Atma cannot disassociate itself from them and their influences as long as it lives in the body and identifies itself with the latter. The Atma becomes inseparably affiliated to and linked with these Panch Vargas and assumes their special characters because of its close association with them. Therefore, when the Atma has assumed the characters of the Panch Varga (or, when the pure self is influenced by the characters typical to these five classes of subtle elements mentioned above), it acquires a subtle body of its own, and it is called its 'Linga Deha' (the ethereal form of the corporeal body).

This attachment to the body consisting of the Panch Varga and assuming its typical characters and specific attributes are manifested in the form of the metaphoric 'knots' that tie the Atma to this body and assume all its flaws and drawbacks as its own. [Therefore, as it is obvious here, in order to find true freedom from this knot, the Atma would have to free itself from the basic cause of this entanglement, and it is ignorance and delusions about its actual and truthful nature and form. What is it? The answer is that the Atma has nothing to do with the body, whether gross or subtle; it is eternally pure and without any attributes whatsoever; it is pure consciousness and beyond the purview of any worldly taints and blemishes; it is perpetually liberated and therefore there is no question of it getting entangled or trapped; it is eternally enlightened and wise and so there is no scope of ignorance ever engulfing it, and the fact that it is behaving like an ignorant entity is due to its own willingness to get entangled. Then, how can the Atma break free from this fetter of ignorance and become awakened? The obvious answer is acquisition of truthful knowledge, because it is the brilliant light of knowledge alone that can remove the darkness of ignorance that surrounds the Atma.] (7).

8. The living consciousness that is present in this 'Linga Deha' (described in verse no. 7) is the authority known as 'Kshetrageya' or the Lord who has complete knowledge of his area of influence and is in command of it. [Here, this 'authority' is the Atma, or pure the consciousness of the creature. It is this Atma that is the Lord of the body, both the gross as well as the subtle.] (8).

9. The Atma or pure eternal consciousness is all-knowing and omniscient because it knows and is well versed about the three points that form the 'Triumvirate of Knowledge', i.e. the entity that is to be known (here referring to the supreme transcendental Absolute Truth of creation as well as the true nature of the Atma and the pure self), the entity that endeavours to know it (here referring to the creature who strives to attain freedom from the shackle of ignorance and delusions and makes efforts in this direction to ascertain the Truth), and the process of knowing and acquiring this knowledge of the Absolute Truth (by various means, such as study of the scriptures, meditation and contemplation, hearing discourses and discussions).

Being all-knowing and omniscient, being wise and enlightened, it is well aware of and witnesses first hand the process of creation and destruction of the visible creation. But it remains profoundly neutral and unmoved even under these circumstances, showing the magnificent degree of its detachment and neutrality.

Such a neutral and dispassionate Atma is a mere witness or 'Sakshi' to everything around it. [In other words, how can one expect such a wise, erudite and

sagacious Atma getting actually trapped by the delusions created by the body and the world in which it lives? Therefore, the notion of the Atma getting ‘trapped’ is a misnomer and not the correct depiction of the state of existence of the Atma. When the creature becomes aware of this fact and realises the truth of this observation, he instantly gets liberated from all bondages.] (9).

10. That entity that lives as an integral and inseparable constituent part of the intellect and mind of all the living beings in this creation (in the subtle form as the virtues of wisdom, erudition, sagacity, enlightenment, knowledge, skills and expertise as well as the ability to intelligently think and clinically dissect a given situation to arrive at a rational conclusion, to research, remember, discriminate, decide and imagine the unimaginable in all matters), right from the creator Brahma to the humblest insect, and which outlasts the body even after its complete destruction (i.e. the entity which is eternal and imperishable), is called the ‘Kutastha’¹. This exalted entity that occupies the highest of existential place in creation is the Atma of the individual creature (10).

[Note--¹The word *Kutastha* means that which occupies a high place; that which is unchanging, unalterable, hidden, secret, mystical, imperishable, indestructible, immovable, steady, constant etc. All these epithets are applicable to the conscious Atma. According to Nyaya Darshan of Hindu philosophy, the supreme Lord called Parmeshwar (Param = supreme; Ishwar = Lord) is regarded as a Kutastha. The Parmeshwar is free from the cycle of birth and death. According to Sankhya Darshan of which sage Kapil is the ancient exponent, Kutastha is the Atma as a manifestation of the Purush (the Viraat Purush, the invisible macrocosmic gross body of Brahm from which the rest of the creation has emerged). This Atma has no shape, features, dimensions and specific defining attributes. This Atma-Purush prevails in all the three states of existence of the creature, viz. the waking or Jagrat state, the dreaming or Swapna state, and the deep sleep or Sushupta state. The Atma-Purush remains steady, uniform, universal, immutable and constant in all these changeable situations of existence in which the creature lives in this world. It remains unaffected or uninfluenced by, unattached to and uninvolved with anything in this world because it is inherently neutral and detached from everything. It is simply a dispassionate witness and observer of everything. It is the Jiva that is perishable, and not the Kutastha—refer the 4th paragraph of verse no. 4 above.]

11. That mystical and enigmatic entity which has so many magnificent qualifications and grand attributes such as being a ‘Kutastha’ (verse no. 10) etc. assumes as many forms with as many qualities as are possible in this creation. Though all these individual forms appear to be different from one another in some way or the other, they all have one thing in common—and that is the presence of this eclectic, sublime and divine entity in its subtlest form which is invisible, imperceptible and beyond the reach of the mind and intellect. It pervades throughout the creation, wafting and weaving intricately through it, holding it in place and preventing its scattering around into inconsequential units much like the thread that binds and holds the beads of the rosary together and gives the latter its unique characters, shape, value and identity though this thread itself is not visible from the outside.

This unique and eclectic, most mystical and esoteric, profoundly majestic and gloriously divine, most sublime and subtle entity is known as the Atma which resides in the bosom of all the living beings. Since it resides inside the creature itself and nowhere outside it, since it is omniscient and all-knowing, it is therefore called the ‘Antaryaami’ or the one who is present internally and knows even the most secret of things that are hidden in the bosom of the creature. Hence, this Antaryaami knows

even the secret thoughts of the creature, as nothing is concealed from it and nothing is inaccessible to it (11).

12. This divine, holy, sublime and eclectic entity known as the Antaryaami is the pure conscious Atma or soul of the creature. It is an embodiment of Satya (something that is an irrefutable and unequivocal truth), Gyan (knowledge in all its sublime connotations) and Anand (bliss and cheerfulness); it is devoid of all definable attributes, has no specific defining characteristics, and has no titles and epithets appended to it; it is not bound by any fetters or shackles symbolised by the bracelet or bangle or armlet or the metal ring fitted on the tusk of an elephant (called a 'Katak'), and neither does it need any honour symbolised by a crown and a tiara (called a 'Mukut') worn by an emperor to establish its authority and sway.

In other words, it does not need extraneous appendages to prove its value, magnificence and authority much like pure gold which does not need extra titles to establish its importance and worth.

This Atma or Antaryaami is the richest treasury of Gyan (knowledge in all its glorious forms) as well as an embodiment of pure consciousness called Chaitanya (literally meaning an entity that perceives everything, is sensitive, observant, alert, cautious, attentive, wide awake, most rational, discriminating, intelligent, analytical and understanding, as well as is supreme and beyond comprehension).

When the wise and enlightened creature is able to perceive this Atma in this form, when the Atma's existence is experienced and witnessed in this divine and eclectic form, it is then honoured by the exalted title of 'Twam', or 'thou art' or 'you are'. [That is, when the spiritual seeker realises that the Atma is an embodiment of pure consciousness and a microcosmic form of the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness of creation known as Brahm, that this Atma is the person's true and real identity, he exults and suddenly exclaims 'You are That', or 'Oh Lord, it is You!'. This 'you' is the supreme Brahm in the form of the Atma or true 'self' of the spiritual seeker; the 'self' of the person is none but 'that' supreme Brahm in the form of the Atma residing in his own bosom and no where outside of him. He therefore need not search for the ultimate 'truth' and his 'roots' outside his own self, but turn inwards to find them concealed inside his own bosom. It is like a great discovery for him, and he feels exhilarated and ecstatic at this discovery, making him proclaim 'Twam' spontaneously. It is like the case when children play hide and seek, and one child suddenly discovers the other concealed under the blanket of his own bed while he was being searched everywhere else in the house.]

Brahm is said to be an embodiment of 'Satya' (profound, irrefutable, unequivocal and absolute 'truth'), 'Anant' (one which has no end; an infinite and imperishable entity), and 'Gyan' (truthful knowledge about the reality; knowledge in all its sublime connotations; knowledge in all its glorious forms; a comprehensive knowledge which does not leave anything to be known; knowledge that can help the seeker obtain liberation and deliverance for his soul from the fetters have been shackling it to ignorance and delusions).

That which does not decay and perish is the 'Satya' or the absolute and imperishable truth.

That which survives and outlasts everything that is subjected to the affects of circumstances, time and age is called 'Avinaashi' or that which does not perish.

The fundamental body of knowledge that is of a universal and uniform nature and dimension, which neither decays, diminishes or gets old with time nor created anew, which is neither enhanced nor revived in any form, which lasts even after the

last vestiges of the present creation come to an end and before the next cycle of creation starts, that knowledge which is untouched by the dimensions of time, age, circumstance and geographical or cosmic distances is called the real and truthful 'Gyan'.

That universal Truth in the form of pure consciousness uniformly pervades throughout the entire creation in an undiluted and untainted form, forming its basic texture and constituent, its basic ingredient and identity without which this creation would not have been in existence in the first place much like the presence of clay in a clay-pot, gold in all golden ornaments, and cotton in all cotton clothes or fabrics made from cotton thread. This universal and all-pervading authority is known as 'Anant' or that which has no end. [This is because the creation has no end too, for it is an infinite and fathomless entity that continuously oscillates between decay and resurgence. If one corner of the universe is dying, there is another corner where another nascent universe is taking shape.]

That which is an embodiment of 'Sukha' or happiness and joys, as well as of comforts and pleasures, that which is an embodiment of 'Chaitanya' or pure consciousness that is enlightened, wise, erudite and wide awake, that which is a fathomless ocean of infinite 'Anand' or bliss and ecstasy, and which personifies the pristine form of beatitude and felicity that remains after all artificial happiness and joys are eliminated—such an eclectic and magnificent entity is known as 'Anand' or an entity that personifies true and purest form of bliss (12).

13. The eclectic, sublime, divine, holy and supreme entity which possesses these four magnificent and glorious virtues (of Satya, Gyan, Anant and Anand as described in verse no. 12 above), and which remains uniform and unchanging in all circumstances and in all times and eras, is known by the epithet 'Tat', meaning 'That Thing' or 'The same thing' or simply 'It'.

This entity known by the name of 'Tat' is the supreme transcendental Brahm who is the Supreme Being and the only Truth in creation as it is Absolute (13).

[Note—When the two observations or statements, i.e. 'Tat' of verse no. 13 and 'Twam' of verse no. 12 are taken together, the meaning becomes abundantly clear. It refers to the Atma as a personification of the supreme Brahm, and vice versa. This combined phrase is one of the great sayings of the Vedas, and it implies that the spiritual aspirant has realised the basic spiritual truth about himself and the rest of the creation.]

14. Both these titles of 'Tat' and 'Twam' indicate the same exalted and eclectic entity which is non-dual, supreme, transcendental and ultimate in creation though they are used separately and have different literal meanings. The entity which is indicated by these two words is the most subtle and sublime Authority which is all-pervading, all-encompassing, omnipresent, uniform and universal like the sky element. This eclectic entity is therefore known as the supreme transcendental Brahm (14).

15. The subtle, esoteric and mysterious but most astounding and potential cosmic powers wielded by this Brahm and the matching dynamic energy that it possesses, is called 'Maya'¹. This Maya is infinite, having no beginning and no end. [This is because it is a characteristic part of Nature and a manifestation of Brahm's supernatural powers. Since Brahm is infinite, Maya is also infinite.] It makes its appearance when the time comes for the decay and destruction of anything in this world because it has a magnetic pull that spares none and pulls everything along with it towards their end. [Anything overshadowed by ignorance and delusions for which

Maya is used as a metaphor, is sure to get to ruin, sooner or later.] It is neither true nor false. [It is like a mirage, or an illusionary scene created on stage by an expert magician. It is so fabulous and make-belief that no one can accept that it is not true, and since it is actually seen on stage it therefore cannot be false either.] It casts a veil of various faults around the creature, creating numerous flaws in the latter's character and nature, but it itself appears to be faultless and flawless. [Maya acts much like magic that creates so many extraordinary scenes but remains indifferent to them because magic is simply an art or science employed by the expert magician to implement the tricks that he has conjured up in his mind. The magician knows the trick behind these scenes and is therefore not interested in them. The art and science of magic is equally not concerned with what happens to the audience because it is simply acting on the instructions of the magician.] Similarly, Maya creates numerous qualities and characteristics in creation, but it itself has none. [Maya is a manifestation of Brahm's dynamic powers to conceive, create, develop, wind up and destroy this creation. If the principal Brahm has no specific attributes and defining qualities that can be limiting for it, it is expected that Maya would also not exhibit any such attributes and qualities which are not possessed by its principal and originator, the Brahm. Maya is as indefinable as Brahm.]

This entity known as Maya is very deceitful and cunning in nature. It is lowly and scheming. It represents lack of knowledge, it is an embodiment of ignorance and delusions, and it is falsehood and illusions personified. But the irony is that stupid people with low intellect and wisdom think it to be true and real, as having a real existence and very honest in its approach under all circumstances and in all three dimensions of time (i.e. in the past, the present and the future periods of time). [That is, foolish people think that since the Maya has its origin in Brahm, it would also be like Brahm. But they forget the fact that this Maya was willingly created by Brahm to act as an invisible tool in his hands to help create a situation whereby the creation created by him can go on perpetually moving on and on endlessly till the time Brahm decided to wind up the game. It is just like the art of magic employed by the magician to keep the show up and going till the time comes to wind up. No one in his wildest of imagination can say that the magician and the art of magic are one and the same entity. Similarly, Brahm has set up this cosmic show by employing Maya as a powerful tool.]

In other words therefore, 'Maya' is such a concept that is beyond definition and impossible to precisely comprehend much like its principal, the supreme transcendental Brahm. It is impracticable to construct any confirmed view about it and its nature. It is certainly most intractable and enigmatic entity related to this creation (15).

[Note--¹*Maya* is a word which has two parts, Ma + Ya. The first half means a 'mother', while the other half refers to the notion of doubt, of either this or that. The word 'Ma' also means 'to measure, mark off, by any standard; to show, to exhibit, to display; to infer, to conclude; to be formed, built, made of'. Therefore, the composite word Maya refers to a situation which harbours uncertainties, where it is uncertain whether what is said or understood or seen or witnessed or experienced is actually the truth or not. It is virtually the 'mother of all confusions and perplexities'. It therefore refers to something or some situation which creates doubts and confusions, something that is not real; that which is deluding, illusionary, deceptive, mirage-like and deceitful, and is caused by the ignorance about its truth and reality; something that has no substance or pith; displays no certainty and leads to wrong inference. The term Maya is used to define all these phenomenon. Hence, Maya is a synonym used for all that is deceptive, faulty, false, deluding, ignorance based, illusionary, deceptive,

deceitful, invisible and super-natural; all that which has no reality or substance; all that is hollow. It creates hallucinations in a creature's mind leading him to believe that what he sees is the truth. It is the deluding and magical powers of the supreme transcendental Lord that hides the reality and creates an imaginary world of deceptions and misconceptions

Maya has three basic constituent qualities. Hence it is called Trigunmayi, i.e. one which has the three Gunas or qualities. These three Gunas or qualities are— Sata, Raja and Tama. 'Sata' is the most auspicious, virtuous and noblest quality in a man and raises him to a high moral and spiritual pedestal. It marks predominance of righteousness and the highest standards of spirituals and mental evolvement leading to high thoughts, noble actions and righteous behaviour. 'Raja' is the medium quality in a person, and it is marked by worldly passions, desires, yearnings and greed. It makes a man more worldly than spiritual. 'Tama' is the third and most lowly of the three qualities and is used has a synonym for darkness and evil. Obviously, 'Tama' means ignorance, delusions and all the forces or qualities that are evil, mean, lowly, miserly, wicked and base. They pull down a man from high pedestal and virtually dump him in the dust yard of creation to rust and decay.

These *three qualities* together, in various permutations and combinations, decide the innate nature of a man. The greater presence of 'Sata' makes a man nobler as compared to a high ratio of 'Tama' which makes him wicked, pervert and evil. Various proportions of these qualities will therefore produce innumerable varieties of creatures having different temperaments, thought processes, behaviours, demeanors and mental setup in this world.

When a man understands any 'Truth' after rigorously examining the 'truthfulness' of that truth, when he has established the veracity of facts, he believes in it more firmly and more convincingly. No matter what other people tell him about the truth being not the correct or the whole truth, he would not listen to them, simply because he has verified the facts for himself, he has witnessed the truth himself, he has logically eliminated all falsehoods to deduce that what he knows is the 'truthful Truth'. His Truth is based on rigid and solid foundation; he is unwavering and steady in it. If he is steadfast and convinced in his knowledge, no matter how much ignorance and delusions (Maya) try to push him away from the absolute 'Truth', he will remain steadfast and unwavering in it. There will be no doubts and confusions in his mind.

The basic idea here is that Maya is like a transparent sheet which covers the supreme 'truth' in the creation. Since it is transparent, it assumes the attributes of the truth that it covers, because for all practical purposes an ordinary man is unable to see that veil because of its transparency. This is a simple way of understanding what is called 'illusion and Maya vis-à-vis the Truth and Reality'. Maya nevertheless hides the truthfulness of the Truth, and instead lends its own attributes and characteristics to that Truth known as the 'Nirgun Brahm' by the Upanishads when the latter is observed through this veil, while at the same time assuming the glorious attributes of Brahm itself. So ignorant fools think that the Maya is the real thing, whereas they are actually seeing the 'veiled truth' as observed through this covering of Maya, because the actual 'truth' is hidden from view by this transparent sheet which has lend it its own colour and hue to it . As a result, that Nirgun appears to have some attributes, and it thereby becomes 'Sagun', or the one with attributes and characteristics, by the interference of Maya.

The eight forms that Maya takes--The eight forms of Maya are the delusion and ignorance creating powers of Brahm without which the creation would neither be conceived nor expanded, because if everyone becomes aware of the reality, if everyone realises that everything is perishable and immaterial, that whatever is seen and enjoyed are like a mirage seen in a desert, then all would renounce the world, there would be no marriages and procreation, there would be no creation of wealth and strife and tension to protect this wealth, there would be no desire to have

dominance over others, for all are equal and one in the eyes of Brahm and they have the same Atma which prevails uniformly in the breadth and length of the creation. So Brahm uses Maya as a tool to maintain a veil of ignorance and delusions to carry forward his game plan, until the time he decides that he had had enough of it and then initiates the folding-up process of concluding this creation for good, or for at least that time when he decides to roll the carpet once again.

Now, these *eight forms that Maya takes* are the following—the five elements forming the basic building blocks of the gross creation (i.e. the elements of earth, water, fire, air and space which form the gross body of all the living creatures) + mind + intellect (together called the subtle body of the creature) + Ahankar (the ego, pride and arrogance that the creature possesses, leading to the notion of ‘I’, ‘me’, or ‘mine’ = eight entities.

Actually, a wise man understands that whatever exists in whatever form is nothing but one or the other form of the same universal entity known as Brahm. To take an example, a scientist knows that water in whatever form and colour and shape consists of the same two atoms of Hydrogen and one atom of Oxygen. Further, he also realises that everything is made of atoms and their basic structure consists of sub-atomic particles such as electron, proton, neutron etc. With this erudition and view point, a wise man sees these basic ingredients in all things that he observes around him, because everything is made up of atoms and molecules. But an ordinary man talks of the water of the ocean, of the well, of the drain and of the river etc. He talks of gold, of silver, of wood or of iron, not realising that all consist of the same building block called the ‘Atom’. Similarly, due to ignorance a man is deluded into thinking that the gross world that he sees is has an independent existence and it is real. He forgets to analyse its fundamental ingredient which is the pure consciousness that is making it alive. The five elements that are used to make up this world are all perishable and gross, and they are the creation of the mind. The mind itself is perishable because it dies with the body. Then, what is the reason why a man has so much ego and pride in himself and his abilities? It is Maya. It is his ignorance that has held him by his collars, as it were. He forgets that if his true self is imperishable, then how come he dies; if his true self is enlightened and wise, then why he suffers from so much misery and disillusionment; if his true self is eternal, then why does he have to take a birth and then die? A wise man then begins to ponder why does he treat those entities which are transient, mortal and the cause of so much misery and consternations and confusions as true; why does he not realise that the truth is imperishable and eternal and universal? This is due to the influence of delusions and ignorance created by Maya. This is how Maya keeps everyone trapped under its net.]

Maya has *three names*—viz. (a) Maha Maya—or the great powers exhibited by Brahm at the cosmic level. This Maya is the progenitor of all other types of Mayas which keep the individual creature trapped in their net. The Maha Maya is the virtual mistress of all the delusions and misconceptions and their attendant ignorance that keep all the creatures of this creation enthralled by their deceptive charm. (b) Yog Maya—this is the stupendous magical powers created by the union of the supreme authority of creation known as Brahm, and the mystical and esoteric powers that delusions and hallucinations can create for the creature. (c) Maya Shakti—this is the ‘shakti’ or power and authority displayed by Maya in association with Brahm from whom it acquires its stupendous energy and powers.

‘Yog Maya’ can be further understood as follows—The word ‘Yogmaya’ has two parts, viz.-Yog and Maya. Yoga means meditation and contemplation, while Maya refers to the cosmic energy and delusions created by the Lord at the time of creation. ‘Yog’ also means union or conjunction or fusion of two entities. Therefore, Yogmaya refers to the fusion of the cosmic energy with the delusion-creating powers of the supreme Brahm when he did decide to start the process of creation. The illusion created by him removed the distinction between the truth and falsehood so much so that both appeared the same and became interchangeable. That is why, what appears

true on the surface is actually false, and vice versa. But to enable this to happen, Brahm had to meditate and focus his attention to ignite that inherent but latent energy that is an integral part of creation. In other words, he had to do Tapa, which is another form of Yoga. The resultant stupendous forces of Nature that were unleashed by Brahm's meditation led to the chain of events that culminated in the revelation of the cosmos as it is known today. This magnificent event or the primary force that set this chain in motion has been conceptualized by the Purans as a deity known as 'Yogmaya'; she has been depicted by them as the female counterpart of the maverick Lord of creation, who has been personified as the Viraat Purush. In the case of Lord Ram, who is that Viraat Purush also known as Vishnu, that Yogmaya is represented by Sita. The other connotation of 'union' implies that this Yogmaya establishes a link between the ignorant and deluded creature, and the unadulterated, supreme and ultimate Truth represented by the Lord. The word also refers to the magical and mystical powers displayed by mystics and ascetics, which they have acquired by the virtue of their meditation and contemplation.

We can understand this phenomenon of how the Maya of the Lord has created this vast canvas of creation with a simple example. A painter wishes to paint a landscape. He starts with a pure white canvas, and using his imagination and powers to visualise a magnificently beautiful scene, he starts painting with numerous primary colours and then goes on mixing these colours to produce umpteen numbers of colours of varying hues and shades. Besides the colour, he continuously adds a stroke here and a brush there as he tries to reveal on the lifeless canvas the conception of life as he visualises in his mind; he is never satisfied with his work and goes on and on endlessly adding colours and lines to the canvas. The result is most astounding and stupendous to behold. But still the painter is not satisfied; so the net result is that the canvas gets being redone over and over again, and layers after layers of lines that had been made and erased, of paints that had been painted over numerous times, of shapes and figures that had been visualised, rejected and reconceived and placed on the canvas only to make the painter uneasy about them. In short, the basic canvas that was pristine pure at the beginning has been reduced to scrap! The painter then keeps it aside or if totally disgusted with it, he may throw it in the garbage bin.

This all but sums up how the supreme Lord creates, develops and concludes the creation. The clean white canvas represents the Satwic qualities with which the Atma starts out. The painter is the supreme Lord or Brahm, the landscape he imagines is equivalent to Maya because it has no actual existence but is imagined by him, and he is so skilled a painter that once the painting is ready, the scene that is depicted on the canvas appears to be very real and live, creating an illusion of the grandeur of the actual thing; this is a deception because the painter has used his imagination as the subject of the painting, but an ignorant man who is not aware of this fact would believe that the painting has been inspired by some actual landscape that the painter must have seen somewhere. As a matter of fact, it might also happen that the scene does actually exist, but the painter has added touches of his own imagination to add vibrancy and colour to the scene about which the observer is unaware. The scene and the 3-dimensional landscape is equivalent to the creation and the colourful Nature. The paint and the primary colours used by the Lord during the process of creation to make it vibrant and lively are the different Gunas (virtues, qualities and characteristics), the various Vasanas (desires and passions) and Vrittis (inherent tendencies and inclinations of a creature; his nature and temperaments) as well as the Tattwas (elements) which are fundamental to and inseparable from creation. The innumerable varieties of shades of characters, virtues and qualities that are present in the creature represent these myriad colours that the creator uses to paint his creation. Until at last the Lord stands back and is stumped at the Frankenstein Monster that he has unleashed! Then he decides to call it quits, and this is equivalent to annihilation of the creation. But as a painter he cannot sit quiet; and so starts the process once all over again!

Supposing the painter did not add his own name to the painting, or he had added a pseudonym. Then in such a case, there would be conjectures about his identity, leading to so many theories and debates. Then some wise man would look up the archives and dig up some evidence about who he was. This is exactly what happens here in the case of creation—no one knows for sure who that creator is, what is his name, etc. Some wise and enlightened man came to unearth the truth about him, and he tried to tell others in the words he could muster. This is how the great maverick Lord has been known and recognised by us. When his glories are sung, it is actually praising the great painter for his skills and the matchless heritage that he has created for us to cherish and behold.

Mantriko-panishad of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition describes Maya in substantial detail. In its verse no.5 it says that Maya has *three basic colours*—viz. ‘white’, ‘red’ or ‘dark’, and the various shades in between. These three colours represent the three basic qualities, called Gunas, present in all the creatures and are only symbolic of the innumerable variations in which the basic qualities can combine to produce countless number of characteristics and virtues and behaviours that give individuality and specific characteristics to millions and millions of creatures. These are simply metaphors only meant to explain and help visualise certain things, and therefore should not be taken too literally as meaning that dark skinned people are sinful and pervert and worthy of condemnation, or that fair skinned ones are all righteous and noble, for just the opposite is witnessed daily in our lives.

Even as an offspring gets the colour of the skin of the race to which it belongs, the inherent characters of all creatures are inherited from their mother, and this mother is Maya. The white colour stands for the best category of qualities called Sata Guna, the red colour stands for the second and medium quality called Raja, and the dark colour stands for the meanest quality called Tama. The word Tam itself means ‘dark’ and it stands for the worst type of qualities leading to sinful and pervert nature in a man which makes his life hellish; the word ‘red’ is a metaphor for anger, vehemence, vengeance, agitations, restlessness, short temper, strife, hatred, envy, jealousy and the other such negative worldly characteristics in a person; the colour ‘white’ stands for peace, tranquility, prosperity, happiness and wisdom, all of which are the characters of noble and gentlemanly persons.

Swetashwatar Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 4, verse no. 10 states that—“Prakriti (primary Nature) should be treated as the Maya, and the supreme Lord called Maheshwar (one who is ‘Maha’—great, and ‘Ishwar’—Lord, of everything) as the maverick Lord who inspires and enables the Maya to not only create this world but also imprint it with its own characteristic qualities (much like the offspring bearing the characters and features, or genes, of the parent).

Thus, the entire creation bears the characteristic qualities and virtues so typical and unique to Maya; these qualities and virtues form an integral character and nature of this creation as a whole as well as of all its individual units” (10).

Here it should be noted that the three inherent qualities or Gunas of Sata, Raja and Tama that characterize all the creatures of this creation are like the *genes* that the offspring carries of its parent. Through these Gunas, the Maya resides in the bosom of all the creatures as their defining ‘nature’ and basic ‘temperament’—called the *Prakriti* of the creature. Even as the supreme Brahm as the Great Lord called Maheshwar used his mystical deluding maverick powers to create this illusion of the world at the cosmic level and made it so perfect that it appears to be perfectly true, the same Brahm while residing in the bosom of the individual creature as its Atma also creates this world by using its delusion creating powers, and uses its man-Friday, the mind, to ensure that it is implemented to perfection.

Sage Veda Vyas’ ‘Adhyatma Ramayan’, in its Lanka Kanda, canto 14, verse no.28-29 describes the relationship between Maya and Brahm, albeit in the context of Lord Ram. Let’s see what it has to say—

Verse no.28-- “Oh Sri Ram! It is at your inspiration, using your stupendous Shakti (powers and potentials), at your behest, and as per your wish that Maya creates this whole world infused and injected with all its characteristic features, such as, inter-alia, the quality of having ‘Ahankar’ (arrogance, ego, pride, haughtiness, vanity, boastfulness etc.) This is why you are blamed (accused) for all this deluding creation¹ (28).

[¹It is out of ignorance that one says that ‘you’, i.e. Lord Ram in his primary form as the supreme transcendental Brahm or Lord Vishnu, are the creator of this myriad world with all its faults and blemishes, evils and vices, entrapments and delusions, shortcomings and drawbacks, whereas in actual fact it is your Maya which has done it. Maya had simply employed your great powers to create, which you had delegated to her in order to enable it to carry out your general mandate to create, but once it got going, it lend its own flavor to it just like a master gives a brief to his servant or cook to prepare a meal and then the cook uses that excuse to create a wide variety of dishes the details of which had been decided by the cook himself and the master had no say in it, except the general instruction of cooking a meal. If suppose the cook has used a lot of spices and condiments, then one cannot accuse the master of spoiling the meal; it is the cook who is responsible for it. But once the meal is ready, there is nothing that can be done except to throw it away. In the larger picture of things, the Brahm had ordered the Maya, his maid, to prepare this painting known as the world, and then Maya used this sanction by the supreme Lord to do her own bit in order to please him and, in the process, outsmarted him by creating a creation that even Brahm was wonderstruck to behold. Since Maya had his express orders, Brahm could not even blame her for what she had done, because the details were left to her and she did what she was good at.

Again, even as each original thing has an indelible mark, a special quality that reflects the character and skills of the creator, the world created by Maya also had its share of characters and qualities that are reflective of the hand that created it—and that hand was that of the Lord’s maid called Maya. So logically therefore, the Lord cannot be accused of so many faults that are associated with the world that Maya created. In fact, the word ‘Maya’ itself means something that is illusive, deceptive and false.

It is like a world of magic created by the magician, and if one, out of one’s ignorance and foolishness thinks that this world is real and allows himself to be deluded by its charms, then the magician cannot be blamed because, to begin with, one is already aware that what he sees is a magical show, and even if he is unaware of it, there are other wise ones who tell him that it is so. If one still falls into the trap, then say how the magician can be blamed for the consequences of such ignorance and foolishness? In our example, Brahm is the magician, and the illusionary world is the magical powers that he possesses which are on display. The wise ones are the sages and seers who elucidate upon the scriptures and tell the creature to be wary, but if the creature does not pay heed, say what has the magician and the sage can do about is, except to wind up the game. This is exactly what Brahm does at the end of one cycle of creation when the fairies springing out of the Pandora’s Box just go out of hand to create the Frankenstein Monster.]

Verse no.29--Even as inanimate things like iron become mobile and active under the attractive or repulsive influences/forces of a live magnet, so do Maya creates this whole universe/creation when you glance at it, though it is inert in itself¹ The driving force here is the invisible power of the magnet which infuses the iron with the power to move. The force which activates the Maya is you and you alone (29).

[¹Here, the Lord is likened to a magnet, and the Maya is likened to the magnetic force that makes the piece of lifeless iron, which stands for the gross and lifeless world, to move and show signs of life. Since Maya cannot be seen even as the magnetic forces of a magnet cannot be visibly seen or perceived except being understood by logic and

knowledge of physics and magnetism, one accuses the Lord of creating this world with its myriad characteristics. Even as the iron piece would show signs of movement in spite of the magnet not desiring at all that it does so, the very proximity of the two automatically creates such a situation. Only wise ones realise that the iron is inane and it is the magnet that is responsible for its life, and whatever signs of life that the iron shows is illusive for as soon as the magnet is removed, the iron would not move in spite of it now wanting to do now.

The concept of Maya affecting the Atma has been elaborately dealt with in various Upanishads, especially Maitrayanyu Upanishad, cantos 2-4 of the Sam Veda tradition, an English version of which by this humble author has been published separately.

The example of the water molecule H_2O can be cited to explain the relationship between Maya and Brahm, and how the former distorts one's perception of the facts about the latter.

Water molecules exist in a number of forms—viz. clouds, rain, water vapour/steam, moisture, mist, foam, liquid pure water which we drink, water in the form of numerous water-bodies such as an ocean, a river, stream, well, pond, lake, puddle, pool etc., ice, snow, and water in the form of the basic ingredient of all things that have their existence in a fluid form. A lay person calls this 'water' with so many names; he sees a difference between all of them, but for a wise man who knows the chemistry of the water element all these existential forms of water are nothing but two atoms of hydrogen and one atom of oxygen combined in a fixed configuration which cannot be tempered with if the water has to retain its characteristic basic features, virtues and qualities.

The molecule of water acquires various forms depending on the circumstances in which it has to exist, but none of them would affect the basic nature and facts about water.

Similarly, *Brahm*, which is one indivisible immutable and unfractionable entity, assumes, or appears to exist in myriad forms, having mind-boggling permutations and combinations of shapes, sizes, colours and contours, depending upon the prevailing circumstances and requirements of existence. The same entity when viewed with different glasses appears to have different colours—as is evident when we observe anything with sunglasses of different colours. It acquires different meanings when viewed from different perspective—as is evident when the same event is interpreted differently by people having different views, different intelligence, different cultures, and different mental bearings. The same things changes in size and colour when observed from different distances—as is very clear when we observe a thing from very close quarters and then view it from a great distance; even the same mountain appears to be blue, green, dark and of other colours when seen at different times of the day and varying distances and through changing atmospheric conditions.

So it would be erroneous to say with certainty that what one has observed is the actual truth, for it might be very misleading and at odds to what others have observed. When, say, five people describe a mountain or scenery, each would narrate what he has observed. All of them are correct, but there is much more to that mountain or scenery than what one gathers from these narrations. Herein lye the importance of 'self-realisation', because we may doubt what others say, but we cannot be more convinced when we observe anything first hand for ourselves.

Brahm is like this water molecule; it has revealed itself in the form of this multifarious creation, each unit of the latter is Brahm manifested, but Brahm is not limited to that specific definition. All forms that the molecules of water take are nothing else but 'water', undiluted and uncorrupted. Whether we call it moisture, cloud, rain, steam, ice, river or ocean, none of these should deter a wise man from observing 'water', or better still 'two atoms of hydrogen and one atom of oxygen' in all these forms. A learned man would be amused when people fight over these definitions, and he would call them ignorant ones.

So when we observe Brahm with a holistic and all-inclusive view, we find that the entire creation is 'Brahm manifested'; all the different nomenclatures and definitions pertain to the same entity and therefore all of them are correct. But none of these individual manifestations define Brahm in its entirety, and nor do they become Brahm.

This is Maya, which literally means something which does exist but it is an illusion, a deception and misleading. Water appears in so many forms because of this Maya, and so does Brahm vis-à-vis the world.

Now, there must be something that not only binds two atoms of hydrogen and one atom of oxygen together but also injects it with certain qualities that give the resultant product its uniqueness known as water. And this 'uniqueness of water' is not a small matter to be overlooked, because water is the harbinger of life, it is the sustainer of life, and it is the concluder of life. How? Well, it is the first ingredient necessary for initiation of the process of creation; once life starts it sustains it and nourishes it; and the havoc it causes during severe floods, typhoons, tsunamis, cyclonic deluges and oceanic storms when it completely obliterates all traces of life are examples of destruction water can cause. Quite similarly, in different perspectives, Brahm creates, sustains and concludes this creation.

Taken independently, hydrogen and oxygen would not produce water, and neither does their simultaneous existence in a single place automatically means that water would be there, for had it been so then there would be no question of droughts anywhere because both these gases are present everywhere on earth. Therefore, there must be some supernatural force that helps these apparently innocuous looking atoms of these two gases to acquire a special quality known as water. This is called 'Shakti'. What does this Shakti do? It transforms the latent powers and potentials of hydrogen and oxygen into an entity called water that harbours life, sustains and nourishes it, and that even concludes its own creation, none of which functions would these two gases have done left to themselves. But does this Shakti come from outside? No, it is hidden in the atoms of hydrogen and oxygen, and it simply comes to the fore, does its job and collapses in to oblivion, leaving the rest of the process to take care of its self by being controlled or influenced by other forces of Nature.

This allegory or analogy helps to explain how Brahm uses Shakti to create this world, and how the resultant product creates an illusion called Maya about the essential truth. Brahm uses its creative energy, called its *Shakti*, to create this world, both the visible as well as the invisible. Brahm then resides in this creation as its integral and inseparable part even as hydrogen and oxygen are integral to and inseparable from all forms in which water exists. The ignorance about 'who or what' is the basic truth of this existence, or is the essence in this existence, or is the fundamental principle behind what is seen, witnessed or experienced, is called *Maya*.

Maya also has its importance in this context of existence, because if Maya or illusion does not exist then this world would also cease to exist as we know it. If the world ceases to exist as we know it, then there would be no question of any interaction or any kind of interdependence and relationship between any given two entities because there would be no distinction between them, and they would be all alike. Taking the example of water, if we do not distinguish between an ocean or river, or say between the water of a gutter and a well, telling ourselves that the essence of all these fluids is two atoms of hydrogen and one atom of oxygen, then it would be the height of stupidity for us and create a hilarious situation. So for the purpose of existence these differences have their own importance, but when we wish to learn and get educated about them and not remain ignorant fools then we come face to face with the facts. Even then, as long as we live, we cannot treat the water of the gutter and the water of the well alike for drinking purposes. This is Maya—it creates a piquant situation wherein we know that what we see is not the actual truth but we still cannot do anything about it and continue to treat the falsehood as the real thing.]

16. A self-realised spiritual aspirant who has understood the profound truth about his Atma as his real 'self' and as the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness personified, exclaims thus—'I am never born (as I am eternal and without an end). I am not to be identified with the gross physical body (or, I do not have a physical body) having the ten gross sense organs (five sense organs of perception—ear, eye, nose, tongue and skin) and five sense organs of action—legs, hands, mouth, excretory and reproductive). I am neither a subtle body having a Mana (mind), Buddhi (intellect), Chitta (the various faculties of the mind and intellect pertaining to memory, fixation of attention and concentration), and Ahankar (the sense of ego and pride in one's abilities and achievements) (16).

17. I do not need 'Pran' (various vital winds) to survive, and neither do I need a 'Mana' (emotional mind, sentimental heart and discriminating intellect) to make my presence felt. I am eternally and uniformly immaculate and without any taints, corruptions, blemishes, faults, flaws and shortcomings. In spite of the fact that I do not have any physical body with an intellect and mind, I am still a witness to everything in this creation. [A witness has to be alert and conscious of what he is observing around him in order to make a sense of what is happening and ascertain facts in a dispassionate and neutral manner. For this, he has to have a sharp intellect and a vigilant mind, with all his faculties working in their prime form. Thus, being a 'witness' to everything, the Atma or the pure self of the creature who is making these profound statements is deemed to be intelligent, attentive, resourceful, alert and vigilant—the activities which fall under the jurisdiction of the mind and intellect.]

I remain in a pure conscious form. [That is, I never become gross, inept and inane under any circumstances.] There is no doubt about it (17).

18. I am neither a doer of deeds called a 'Karta', nor a sufferer or enjoyer of the results or consequences of these deeds, called a 'Bhokta'. In fact, I am simply a neutral and dispassionate observer and witness to what is happening and unfolding in Nature.

It is due to my influence and because of being associated with me, who am pure consciousness personified, that other gross entities such as the body etc. behave as if they have consciousness and life of their own (18).

19. I am that pristine pure conscious Atma which is stable and steady, that is eternal and perpetual, that is an embodiment of 'Anand', or extreme bliss and happiness, and that is 'Shudha', or perfectly immaculate, incorrupt and taintless. I universally live in the bosom of all the living beings as a witness to all and sundry. There is no doubt about it (19).

20. I (the Atma) am that supreme transcendental Brahm who is ascertained by the study of the Vedas, the Vedanta (i.e. the Upanishads) and other scriptures. As such, I am also known by the names of 'Akash' or sky element, 'Vayu' or wind element, etc. But it should be noted that I am not bound by or limited to any given definition or specifics, as I am infinite, am beyond comprehension, and am without any attributes. Hence, I do not have a name, nor a form or shape. I am not to be identified by any deeds, as I do nothing and remain neutral towards all deeds. [This is because the deeds are done by the gross body, and I am not the gross body but a pure and sublime conscious 'spirit'.]

I am that Brahm who is an embodiment or personification of ‘Sat-Chit-Anand’. That is, I represent Truth, Consciousness and Bliss in their purest and most sublime form (20).

21. Since I am not a gross and perishable body that takes a birth and dies in due course, say then how can I take a birth and die?

I am not Pran (the factor known as ‘life’ in the gross body of a living creature), so say how then can I be tormented by thirst and hunger (as these are the characteristics shown by all living beings with a physical gross body having life infusing vital winds called Pran flowing inside it, a body which needs water and food to sustain its self, thereby creating the sense of thirst and hunger, and the need to quench them with drink and food)?

I am not the Mana (mind and heart representing thoughts and emotions), so say then how can various sorrows and miseries as well as different attractions and attachments ever afflict or affect me? [This is because it is the mind and heart that feels sorrows and miseries as well as gets attracted and attached to anything in this world. The pure conscious Atma or soul is aloof from such emotions and thoughts, as it is immune to them and a mere witness to all that is happening to the body and its gross as well as subtle organs.]

I am not a doer of any deed (as these are done by the gross body which is very distinct from me, because I am pure consciousness and most uncorrupt, neutral and subtle entity in the whole of creation), so there is no question of my getting tied to the consequences of these deeds, either suffering their bad effects or enjoying their good results, and therefore there is neither liberation and deliverance nor getting shackled or getting tied by any fetters for me.

This is the great secret revealed by this Upanishad about ‘me’ (i.e. the Atma or soul). This is its mystical teaching’. Amen! (21).

-----Shanti Paath-----

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Chapter 13

Shuka Rahasya Upanishad/Shuka-Rahasyo-panishad

This Upanishad is named ‘Shuka Rahasya’ because in it Lord Shiva has elaborately expounded upon the four great sayings of the Vedas, called the ‘Maha Vakyas’, which succinctly sum up the basic maxims and axioms of these eternal scriptures (the Vedas) to unravel their profound secrets and explain their metaphysical importance and spiritual significance for the benefit of sage Shukdeo, the son of sage Veda Vyas who was the legendary classifier of the Vedas and the author of the Purans, at the latter’s request.

The Upanishad describes in detail the due diligent process for invoking these Maha Vakyas which are regarded as the greatest and the most profoundest of Mantras pertaining to the supreme transcendental Brahm, the only Truth, the cosmic Consciousness and the Lord of creation, with the ultimate aim of self-realisation and

Brahm-realisation leading to permanent Mukti of the spiritual aspirant which amounts to liberation and deliverance of the soul from the seemingly endless cycle of birth and death, entitling him to obtain complete emancipation and final salvation. This gives the soul (the aspirant's true identity, his Atma) access to a fount of eternal peace and bliss, an access that provides the seeker wholesome beatitude and felicity.

It so transpired that after gaining this eclectic knowledge about the ultimate Truth, sage Shukdeo renounced all his ties with this material world and became lost in the indescribable bliss obtained upon self-realisation. In this he superseded his own father because both had heard Lord Shiva preach the Maha Vakyas in all their finer details, but it was the son who found the bliss of Brahm-realisation first by renouncing this world, and not the father. It was later that the father followed the footsteps of his son, but that was more out of profound sorrow at having lost his only son which overwhelmed him so much that complete renunciation towards this perishable and deluding material world of sense objects sprouted in his mind and heart than it being the direct effect of becoming aware of the great import of these scriptural sayings called the Maha Vakyas (see verse nos. 50-52).

The four great sayings are the following—‘OM Pragyanam Brahm’ (OM salutations! The highest form of knowledge is Brahm), ‘OM Aham Brahmasmi’ (OM salutations! I am Brahm), ‘OM Tattwamasi’ (OM salutations! That Brahma is you), and ‘OM Ayamatra Brahm’ (OM salutations! This Atma is Brahm). These have been enumerated in verse no. 22/1-4, and elaborately explained in verse nos. 23-42. Other references in this context are the following Upanishads—Paingal Upanishad, 3/2; Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 3/1/6, 3/2; Sarwasaar Upanishad, 12-14, Tejobindu Upanishad, Cantos 2-6, etc.

-----Shanti Paath-----

ॐ_सह_नाववतु_।_सह_नौ_भुनक्तु_।_सह_वीर्यं_करवावहै_।_तेजस्वि_नावधीतमस्तु_।_मा_विद्विषावहै_।
 _____ॐ_शान्तिः_।_शान्तिः_!!शान्तिः_!!!_

The meaning of this Shanti Paath is given in appendix no. 1.

1. Now we shall describe the great Upanishad called the ‘Rahasyo-panishad’. [It is so-called because it unravels the profound secrets of the great sayings of the Vedas as elaborately elucidated herein below.] (1).

2. Once, the great sages and seers called ‘Devarshis’, who were highly acclaimed and had attained the exalted stature which made them as holy, honourable and revered as the great Gods themselves, approached the creator Brahma and humbly requested him, ‘Oh Lord! Please preach us the Upanishad called ‘Rahasya Upanishad’. [In other words, please describe the Upanishad which unravels the greatest of metaphysical secrets and spiritual truths to us, along with explaining their meaning, significance and importance.]’ (2).

3. At this, Brahma replied, ‘In some ancient time, sage Veda Vyas¹—who was most enlightened and glorious in his exalted stature, was highly acclaimed for his erudition, sagacity and expertise in the scriptures, was renowned for his depth of knowledge and

ability to peer behind the external façade and arrive at the truth, was very steadfast and diligent in his Tapa (i.e. strictly observed his religious vows and auspicious life style marked by austerity and penance), and was an embodiment of all the Vedas (because he knew them thoroughly and it was he who had classified the Vedas in their present form, making them easy and readily accessible in the present age)—went to Lord Shiva and bowed before him and Goddess Parvati (his divine consort) most reverentially. Then Veda Vyas prayed to him—(3).

[Note—¹A short note on Veda Vyas would be proper here. Veda Vyas was the great grandson of sage Vashistha, grandson of sage Shakti, and the son of sage Paraashar and his wife Satyawati, a fisherwoman. Since he had dark complexion, he was also called Krishna, and since he was born on an island, he was called Dvaipayaana. Hence his other name was Krishna Dvaipayaana.

He is said to be an incarnation of Lord Vishnu himself. The Lord felt that the vast knowledge enshrined in the scriptures were so huge, jumbled up, abstract and complicated that they were beyond the reach of ordinary mortals. Further, till this time, everything was based on memory—hearing and speaking, passing from one generation of disciple to another generation in the oral form. There was a need to sort them out, to codify, systematize and classify this vast ocean of knowledge contained in the Vedas to make them more useful and handy.

So, Vishnu took the form of Veda Vyas to undertake this mammoth, daunting and formidable task. It is believed that Veda Vyas was born at the end of Dwapar Yug during the period of the Mahabharat war.

Soon after his birth, he took permission from his mother Satyawati and went to Badrinath in the Himalayas to do severe penances and austerities (Tapa), and he established his hermitage there. Hence, he was also called 'Badaraayana'.

Veda Vyas gathered all the Mantras of the hitherto undivided Vedas, edited them and grouped them according to the use to which they were put during fire sacrifices. He named them according to the class or section of the priests (called Ritwiji) who would use them for their ritualistic practices, such as the fire sacrifices. This added another epithet to his name—viz. 'Vyas', the one who knew the Vedas like the back of his hands and was therefore able to classify and divide them into four distinct texts as they now exist; the one who is the best preacher of the subject and made it easy for dissemination and teaching purposes. He classified the Vedas into four basic texts called the Rik, the Atharva, the Sam and the Yajur Vedas.

The four classes of such expert priests and the relevant Vedas were—(i) 'Riks'—they were also the senior most priests who presided over the ritual, and were also called Hota. They chanted the hymns of the Rig Veda. (ii) 'Yajus'—these priests were junior to the Riks and were also called Adhwaryu, and they chanted the verse categorised as the Yajur Veda. (iii) 'Samans'—these priests were the chanters of the holy hymns in chorus, in a loud, clear and melodious voice. They can be called modern day classical singers who attend any great function or festivity. They were also called Udgata. The Sam Veda was meant for them. (iv) 'Atarvans'—these priests did the actual, physical offerings of oblations in the fire pit of the fire sacrifice. They were called Brahma because they represented the senior most God, and the hymns used by them were classified and collected under the name of the Atharva Veda. So, as we have seen, the basic function of this classification was to facilitate the performance of the fire sacrifice.

But this exercise did not give peace of mind to Veda Vyas. His soul was yearning for something higher than these futile ritualistic exercises. So, as a next step, he further classified the Vedas into various Sanhitas, the Brahamans, the Aranyakas and the Upanishads.

The result of this tireless exercise produced a much vaster tome of spiritual, philosophical and metaphysical literature so much so that Veda Vyas thought it necessary and fit to write the basic tenets and maxims of the Vedas into a single

volume for quick referral. This was called 'Vedant Sutra', literally, the key to the Vedas.

The concept of the Vedas was still indigestible and daunting for the masses. So, he rendered the precepts palatable and within the grasp of the common man by resorting to the time-tested and more acceptable method of the story-telling form by writing the eighteen Purans and the eighteen sub-Purans—a stupendous literary achievement of mammoth proportions.

He had also penned the epic Mahabharat besides these eighteen Purans and eighteen sub-Purans. It is said that Ganesh, the most revered and wise son of Shiva who has the head of an elephant, was the scribe who wrote down the dictation of Mahabharat as Veda Vyas narrated it non-stop, a job which is not a child's play. It is also believed that inspite of remaining a chaste saint for life, he had begot the three legendary figures of Mahabharat, viz. Dhritraashtra, Pandu and Vidur, from the wives of Vichitravirya at the behest of his mother Satyawati. He gave divine sight to Sanjay, the charioteer who narrated the on going famous battle of the Mahabharat to Dhritraashtra who was blind. Being a contemporary sage of the Mahabharat period, he knew almost all the persons of this great epic.

During the reign of Kurus, he was revered by both the Kurus as well as their arch rivals, the Pandavas. Both the heroes of the epic Mahabharat war held him in high esteem. When he decided to write the story of Mahabharat—the documentary narration of the epic story of clan-fight and the devastating war that followed it—he chose Lord Ganesh as his scribe; Veda Vyas had dictated while Ganesh had written the epic. It is said that the site where the epic Mahabharat was written is called 'Vyas Gufa' (Vyas' cave) located near Bharoach while the place where he did his final Tapa is called Vyas Ashram located in the village of Mana two miles from the shrine of Badrinath in the Himalayas. His hermitage during the epic Mahabharat war was located in a village about ten miles north of the city of Ambala in Haryana state. River Saraswati flows nearby. This place is also famous as Vyas Ashram.

Time flew by, but still Veda Vyas did not get peace at heart. Once, while he sat near river Saraswati, full of remorse, unsatisfied and contrite, sage Narad came to him and advised him to write *Srimad Bhagwat* containing 18000 Slokas. This voluminous work gave him his final peace, so it is said.

His Guru was sage Yagyavalkya. His son was sage Shukdeo, the parrot saint. Veda Vyas chose five chief disciples who were initiated by him in the four Vedas and Purans. They were as follows—(a) He taught Rig Veda to his disciple named Paila; (b) Yajur Veda to his disciple Vaishampaayana; (c) Sam Veda to his disciple Jaimini; (d) Atharva Veda to his disciple Sumantu; and (e) the Purans to his disciple Ramharshan.

It is believed that sage Veda Vyas still lives, albeit in an invisible, intangible and subtle form in the shape of the vast repertoire of spiritual, philosophical and metaphysical literature that he has created for humankind, something which is not possible for any ordinary human being. These fortify the legend that he was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu and not an ordinary human being, a fact that is extensively covered in Vishnu Puran 3.3.

Summary of His Works :—

Veda Vyas classified the Vedas into four volumes— Rig, Yajur, Sam and Atharva.

Each of the four Vedas had various Sanhitas, Brahmanas, Aaranyakas and sub-Vedas as follows:—

(a) The Rig Veda—It had twenty-four branches out of which only five exist today. These are Shaakal, Baashkal, Aashwalaayan, Shaakhaayan, and Mandukeya. The Brahmanas of the Rig Veda are—Aitareya and Kaushitaki. The Aaranyakas of the Rig Veda are the following Aitareya and Shaankhaayan. The Rig Veda had Artha-Veda as its sub-Veda. It deals primarily with economics, politics and other aspects of life.

(b) The Yajur Veda—This is divided into two major types—viz. the Shukla (white) and Krishna (black or dark). The Krishna Yajur Veda has only four branches existing at present out of the earlier eighty-five—Taitirīya, Maitraayani, Katha, and Kapisthal. Its Brahman is known as Taitirīya Brahman. The Shukla Yajur Veda, also known as the Vaajsaneyi Sanhita, originally had seventeen branches, but now only following two branches exist—Kaanva and Maadhyandeen. Its Brahman is known as Shatpath Brahman. The Aaranyakas of the Yajur Veda are—Taitirīya (of the Krishna Yajur Veda) and Brihad-aaranyak (of the Shukla Yajur Veda). The sub-Veda of the Yajur Veda is known as Dhanur-Veda which deals with the science of archery and warfare.

(c) The Sam Veda—Only three branches are available now out of the total of one thousand that originally existed. These three branches are the following—Kauthum, Jaiminiya, and Raanaayaniya. The Sam Veda has nine Brahmanas as follows—Taandya Mahaa Braahman which is the largest and the most important, and the others are Aarsheya, Devtaa-dhyaaya, Praudha, Shadh-vimansh, Saam-vidhaan, Sam-hito-panishad, Talwakaar, and Vansha. Only one Aaranyaka is known now, and it is called Jaiminiya or Talwakaar Aaranyaka. The sub-Veda of the Sam Veda is known as Gandharva-Veda and it deals with the art and science of classical entertainment which involves music, song, drama, theatre, acting, deception etc.

(d) The Atharva Veda—This Veda had nine branches in early times, but only two survive now—Shaunak and Pippalaad. Its Brahman is Gopath Brahman. The sub-Veda of the Atharva Veda is known as Ayurveda, and it deals with medicinal herbs and the science of healing. No Aaranyaka of this Veda has come to light so far.

Each of the Vedas further had different Upanishads as follows—(a) The Rig Veda—there are 10 principal Upanishads of the Rig Veda, such as Aitareyaopanishad, Kaushitaki Upanishad etc.; (b) the Yajur Veda—there are 19 principal Upanishads of the Shukla Yajur and 32 principal Upanishads of the Krishna Yajur Veda, such as Taitirīya, Svetaasvatar, Katha, Brihdaaranakya, Maitri, Ishavasya Upanishads etc.; (c) the Sam Veda—there are 16 principal Upanishads of the Sam Veda, such as Kena, Chandogya Upanishads etc.; and (d) the Atharva Veda—there are 31 principal Upanishads of the Atharva Veda, such as Mundak, Maandukya, Prashna Upanishads etc.

Veda Vyas also wrote the 18 Purans as follows—Brahma, Padma, Vishnu, Vayu, Bhagwat, Narad, Markandey, Agni, Bhavisiya, Brahamavaivarta, Linga, Varah, Skanda, Vaaman, Kurma, Matsya, Garuda, Brahamanand Purans.

His other contributions to spiritual literature include—Mahabharat, Srimad Bhagwat, Vedant Sutra, Vyas Smriti and Laghu Vyas Sanhita.]

4-5. Veda Vyas said, ‘Oh Lord of the great Gods (‘Dev-Dev’)! Oh the most realised, enlightened and wise one! Oh the Lord who can rupture all the entangling nets and break through the fetters that act like shackles tying down the creature to this mortal world of material sense objects! Oh the Lord who is ever steady and stable in his auspicious vows and diligent in his righteous practices! The time has come when my son Shukdeo¹ has to be blessed with the divine and profound knowledge of the great holy Mantras called ‘Pranav’ and ‘Gayatri’ which would complete his initiation into the fold of disciples who study the Vedas, as this process of invoking these Mantras and blessing an aspirant with them has to be done by someone who is the most acclaimed expert in them. [And I am sure that there is no one more suited for this purpose than you. Though I could have myself initiated him by giving him the necessary Mantras and taught him as my disciple, but I felt that you are the most competent teacher in the field of spiritualism and metaphysics, and so I decided to approach you to become my son’s moral preceptor, spiritual guide and teacher. Every father wants the best of education for his son, and that his son excels and outshines

him in the field or vocation he chooses. Besides this point, this would give so many other great saints, sages and seers to hear spiritual discourse from you which itself would be a god-sent golden opportunity for all of us; it would be a rare privilege because it is not always that you preach yourself. So--] Oh the moral preceptor, the spiritual guide and teacher of the entire world! Please accept this request of mine and treat it as your moral duty to bless him (Shukdeo) and initiate him with these Mantras'. [It is a moral duty of any learned person that if any eager student comes to him seeking knowledge then the teacher should not refuse to teach him. If he does refuse, the patron Goddess of knowledge, i.e. Goddess Saraswati, feels dishonoured. No wise man should refuse to part with knowledge to an eager seeker just like a person should never refuse water to a thirsty person. It's a great sin if he does so.] (4-5).

[Note—¹Sage Shukdeo was the son of the legendary seer and renowned sage Veda Vyas. He was highly respected and was born of the celestial maiden named Ghrittachi when she had taken the form of a parrot, called Shuka in Sanskrit, to produce Shukdeo. He had his education under the expert guidance of his father Veda Vyas as well as from the legendary king Janak, the father of Sita of the Ramayan fame and the most self-realised and enlightened king of his time. His self restraint was so profound that the celestial Apsara, the dancing damsel of the court of Indra, the king of Gods, failed to trap in her honey trap. Shukdeo learnt the epic Bhagvata Mahapurana from his father and then narrated it to Parikshit at the culmination of the Dwapar Yug (the third era of the four-era celestial cycle of mythology) and the beginning of the present era called Kali Yug.

In Maho-panishad of Sam Veda tradition there is an incident where the sage Shukdeo had to wait for twenty-one days before king Janak granted him an audience to test his sincerity and steadfastness. Shukdeo had been sent by his father Veda Vyas to king Janak to learn certain secrets of metaphysics (Maho-panishad, 2/21-28).

There are two Upanishads that owe their revelation to sage Shukdeo—on in part and the other in full. The first one is Maho-panishad of Sam Veda whose Canto 2 is especially dedicated to the discourse given by Veda Vyas and later on by king Janak to satisfy the metaphysical queries of Shukdeo. The second is the present Shuka Rahasya Upanishad.]

6. Lord Shiva replied, 'Oh great and enlightened sage! If I teach your son about the grand truth and reality about this creation by enlightening him about the immaculate, pristinely pure, eternal and imperishable supreme transcendental Brahm in a holistic way, without concealing anything and in a truthful manner, then he would be overcome with a profound sense of renunciation and detachment which would inspire and impel him to leave aside all worldly involvement, lose all interest in anything to do with the mundane life, and instead become a reclusive mendicant or friar. Then of course he would be as radiant, splendidous and self-illuminated as the glorious concept of a 'brilliant light' itself. [In other words, when your son learns about the futility of pursuing this world and its false nature as opposed to the truthfulness of his pure conscious self called the Atma, and how and why this Atma has become trapped in the body which is now called 'Shukdeo', there are great chances that he would renounce the world and become a great Sanyasi or a reclusive monk right now. Would any father want his son to become a mendicant and not enter the household phase to raise a family? Suppose this happens, are you ready for this eventuality? Would you not then blame me for the fate of your son?]' (6).

7. At this rejoinder from Shiva, sage Veda Vyas replied respectfully, 'Oh Lord! Come what may, but I still request you to faithfully and diligently teach my son about the

grand truths of Brahm so as to complete his initiation process called the ‘Upnayan’¹ (7).

[Note—¹The *Up-nayan* is the sacred thread ceremony when a new disciple is initiated into the religious fold by accepting certain religious vows and Mantras from his moral preceptor called the Guru. This is the beginning of his career by studying the scriptures under the guidance of some wise and learned teacher. It is much like the investiture ceremonies held in schools, colleges and Universities nowadays.]

8. Oh the great Lord of the Gods (or, oh great God—‘Maheshwar’)! Let my son become all-knowing; let him be an expert in all subjects as well as in all branches of knowledge under your expert guidance and by your divine grace. Let him attain Mukti (liberation and deliverance from this cycle of birth and death) in all its four subtle forms¹ which best suits him.² (8).

[Note—¹The *four types of Muktis* are the following--(i) *Salokya* which refers to finding an abode in the supreme divine abode of the chosen deity of the seeker; (ii) *Sayujya* which refers to intimate union between the individual soul of the creature and the supreme Soul of creation which is the supreme transcendental Brahm manifested in the form of the Lord whom the aspirant worships has his patron deity or Lord God. It implies to become one with the Lord; to merge one’s own identity with the Lord so that one becomes inseparable from his Lord; this form of salvation is very similar to the one that comes under the definition of Kaivalya; it is also called the ‘Param Pad’ or supreme state of being one with the Lord. (iii) *Samipya* which refers to being able to reside near the Lord to serve him; and (iv) *Sarupya* which implies that the aspirant becomes one with the deity whom he worships as his ideal. This last form of Mukti is almost similar to the Sayujya type of Mukti and is very much like the Kaivalya form of Mukti which literally means ‘the only one of its kind’, thereby implying that there is no other forms of Mukti except the one when the Atma abandons the gross body which is like a shackle for it, and then inseparably and indistinguishably merging with the supreme transcendental Soul of the cosmos. This ‘Kaivalya’ Mukti is the ultimate, eclectic and holistic form of Mukti extolled by the Upanishads. This Mukti means the dissolution or merger of the individual soul with the parent supreme Soul. The realisation that the soul of the individual creature is the same as the cosmic Soul residing in all the creatures of this world, to see the supreme Brahm as a resident of the inner-self of the individual creature as its Atma, and identifying oneself with that Atma which is synonymous with that supreme Brahm, which in turn leads to the recognition of non-dual nature of the soul of the creature and the supreme Soul of the cosmos, realising therefore that there is no notion as ‘duality’ when dealing with divinity and the supreme transcendental being called ‘Brahm’ vis-à-vis the creature, and other such basic tenets of Vedanta are the foundation upon which Kaivalya Mukti rests. According to Yoga Upanishads, Kaivalya Mukti is achieved even when the creature is alive because it primarily involves total realisation and disassociation from the body and the world with which it has to interact. When the seeker dies, he simply abandons his mortal coil, the gross body consisting of the different sense organs, and merges his Pran or the Atma with the macrocosm outside. Since the word ‘Kaivalya’ means ‘the only’, this form of Mukti refers to the realisation of the one and the only spiritual Truth which is the absolute and irrefutable Reality in creation. This concept of Mukti from the metaphysical point of view has been described in Sarwasaar Upanishad, verse no. 2 which is Chapter 12 of this volume.

²It is to be noted here that sage Veda Vyas did not hesitate even for a fleeting moment at the prospect of his only son renouncing the world and becoming a reclusive monk or friar. Rather he would expect it from his son if he had actually understood the essence of the teachings of the Vedas. This clearly shows that in

earlier times the great sages not only lectured about religion but practiced its great tenets in their own lives.]

9. Gladly accepting the prayerful request of sage Veda Vyas, Lord Shiva along with his divine consort ‘Sambi’ (or Bhagvati Parvati, also known as Uma) went to the place where a grand congregation of great sages and saints had assembled to hear this divine discourse. The Lord took his auspicious seat with a cheerful state of mind (9).

10. Sage Shukdeo felt most honoured and privileged at having the golden opportunity of being in the company of the great Lord Shiva in the assembly of renowned sages and seers, and also at being initiated by Lord Shiva personally. He accepted the Mantra of Pranav¹ (Brahm) from him with full devotion and conviction at his command.

After that, he most reverentially prayed to the Lord—(10).

[Note—¹The Mantra of Pranav is OM, and it is described in detail in verse no. 20 below.]

11. Sage Shukdeo said, ‘Oh the primary and most ancient God who precedes all other Gods! [That is, Lord Shiva is the greatest, the most ancient, the most revered and the most exalted God in the pantheon of Gods—and this is why he is honoured by the epithet ‘Devadidev’.] Oh the all-knowing and omniscient Lord (‘Sarwagya’)! Oh the Lord who is an eternal embodiment of genuine and unadulterated Truth as well as is a personification of infinite and true blissfulness (‘Sacchidnand’)! Oh the dear Lord of Uma (i.e. the loving and dear husband of Goddess Uma or Parvati—‘Uma-raman’)! You are the Lord who is eternally benevolent and munificent towards all the living beings, and are like an infinite treasure of compassion and mercy for them. Be pleased with me (11).

12-13. I am highly obliged to you because you have not only given me the Pranav Mantra (of OM) which pertains to the invisible, all-pervading and macrocosmic primary manifestation of the supreme Divinity, but also have made me enlightened about that Principal Absolute itself that is irrefutable, universal and absolute Truth of creation and for which this OM is used, which is the target of this Mantra.

But I am especially interested to learn about the essential great sayings called the ‘Maha Vakyas’ as proclaimed by the scriptures, such as ‘Tattwamasi’, ‘Pragyanam Brahm’ etc. complete with their intricate meanings and finer nuances, in a systematic and chronological manner, along with their specific ‘Shadang-Nyas¹’ etc. [This is because this due diligent process would help me to realise that the Truth more systematically and in an orderly fashion. I would then be able to identify myself more closely with that Absolute Truth of creation in more practical terms rather than simply in a hypothetical way.]

Oh the eternal and imperishable Lord Shiva who is ever-present, eternal, steady and unchanging (‘Sadaa-Shiva’)! Please be kind to unfold this profound metaphysical secret for me’ (12-13).

[Note—¹The concept of *Shadang Nyas* has been described in note to verse no. 20 below along with the other form of Nyas called the *Anga Nyas* which complements it.]

14. Lord Sadaa-Shiva began to preach—‘Oh the great and auspicious sage Shukdeo! You are indeed enlightened and wise. You have asked me a question which pertains

to the practical aspects of the profound but most esoteric and secret spiritual knowledge enshrined in the tenets of the Vedas (14).

15. Therefore I shall describe for you this great secret knowledge in the form of this Upanishad, complete with its various connotations along with its Shadang Nyas. When an aspirant becomes well versed in it, when he has acquired this knowledge in a holistic manner, when he has witnessed and personally verified the veracity of the truth enshrined in this knowledge, and when there is not even an iota of doubt in his mind about their trustworthiness, it is certain that such a realised and erudite aspirant would obtain Moksha or permanent liberation from the fetters of ignorance that tie down the creature and prevent his deliverance from this delusory world with its attendant problems. In other words, the aspirant is able to attain emancipation and salvation for his soul (15).

[Note—The signs of a self-realised person are enumerated in Sarwasaar Upanishad, verse nos. 16-21 of Krishna Yajur Veda among others. This Upanishad is Chapter 12 of this volume.]

16. The proper way to preach these Maha Vakyaas, or the great sayings of the Vedas, is to teach them in a holistic and systematic manner, complete with their Shadang Nyas and other connotative finer nuances, by a competent teacher, and not merely as hollow and meaningless statements meant to be memorized by heart without having any faith and conviction as to their truth and veracity, for then it becomes an exercise in futility and a waste of time and energy (16).

17. Even as the Upanishads are regarded as the crown jewels of the Vedas, this particular Upanishad which expounds and elucidates upon the great sayings is like the best amongst all the Upanishads. [This is because it teaches and explains the fundamental and essential tenets which are regarded as the best essence of all the numerous philosophies, various doctrines and ideas, and the uncountable maxims and axioms that are propounded and affirmed by all the scriptures. It virtually distills them and presents the nectar in a nutshell.] (17).

18. That enlightened, wise, intelligent and diligent spiritual seeker who has delved deeply into the profound secrets of the supreme transcendental Truth known as the divine and mystical Brahm as envisioned by and described in this most profound of Upanishads, who has contemplated and pondered on the grand and esoteric secrets of this Brahm in order to access this glorious entity and become acquainted with its inherent truths, who has become firmly convinced about it, and who has, as a result, obtained the refined form of spiritual nectar and learnt the essence of all scriptural teachings that endeavour to show him the path of emancipation and salvation of his soul, the path leading to the creature's liberation and deliverance from all the worldly delusions having their genesis in ignorance and misconceptions about the reality and truth—such a seeker need not perform other rituals or observe certain religious duties for this purpose, such as going on a pilgrim to religious places to perform religious rites, offer oblations to Gods and do penances and other purifying deeds there, or study, chant and repeat the different Mantras. What is the use of all these when the nectar has already been accessed by him in the first place? (18).

19. The great spiritual benefit that is obtained by studying, discussing and debating these Maha Vakyaas for a period of one hundred autumns (i.e. one hundred years) is

obtainable by doing Japa (constant repetition) of them even once in a systematic and prescribed manner. This is done by following the well laid-out process for invoking these Mantras by first honouring the great Rishis, or the sage who had first conceptualised this Mantra and who is remembered first in order to pay homage to his memory and seek his blessings, guidance and graceful intercession. It is to be followed by doing Shadang Nyas of the Maha Vakya (as described in note to verse no. 20 below) (19).

[Note—This verse emphasises the astounding mystical potentials of these *Maha Vakyas*. The important point to note here is the importance of having unwavering faith and firmness of conviction in any spiritual pursuit as implied in the observation that merely doing Japa once has the same effect as debating the Maha Vakyas for a hundred years. This is a figure of speech to effectively drive home the point that anything done with skepticism and doubts in mind, especially in the field of spiritualism, is bound to fail. On the other hand, when there is firm conviction, there is bound to be a steadiness in his gait and commitment of purpose; he would move ahead in his spiritual pursuit with firm steps and not wobble, flounder and totter at every pitfall and turn. He would not fall prey to delusions and enticements, but move on steadily towards his spiritual goal.]

20. [In this verse, the due process of invoking the Divinity by way of doing ‘Shadanga Nyas’* and ‘Anga Nyas’** of the Mantras is being elaborately described.]

‘OM’—this is one ‘Maha Vakya’ or the first great saying, the first maxim and axiom of the Vedas¹. The Rishi² of this Mantra is known as Hans (literally meaning a divine Swan, but used as an epithet to describe the sage who was most wise and enlightened amongst his peers so much so that he selected this monosyllable Mantra from amongst the numerous group of words and syllables available to holistically describe that entity which is supreme and transcendental Truth in creation). The Chanda³ is Gayatri⁴; the Devta⁵ is Paramhans (the supremely enlightened Divinity); the Beej⁶ is ‘Hum/Hun(g)’ (pronounced as *sum*, or *sung*); the Shakti⁷ is ‘Saha’; and the Kilak⁸ is ‘So-a-ham’ (i.e. ‘that is me’, implying that the aspirant who has understood the real essence of this Mantra and its spiritual import exults in the ecstasy of self-realisation when he realises that he is the entity to which this Mantra OM is referring, and it is the supreme Truth known the transcendental Brahm).

In order to successfully obtain access to the supreme transcendental Being who is the patron deity of this great Mantra (OM), the deity known as and honoured by the epithet ‘Paramhans’, I am now describing the process by which this Mantra should be invoked in a ritualistic manner so that desired mystical results are obtained, a process called ‘Viniyog’ (literally meaning a humble and prayerful invocation of the patron God and establishing a union between the individual aspirant and this Divinity).

The aspirant should first touch the thumb (with the closed fingers) and say with firm conviction and faith ‘I most reverentially and devotedly invoke Brahm who is eternally truthful, an embodiment of Gyan (truthful knowledge and enlightenment), and without an end. I invoke him and establish him in my thumb along with his astounding divine powers and stupendous potentials. Namaha⁹.’

Next, he should touch the first finger with the thumb and say with firm conviction and faith ‘I most reverentially and devotedly invoke Brahm who is an embodiment of eternal bliss and felicity. I invoke him and establish him in my first finger along with his astounding divine powers and stupendous potentials. Swaha¹⁰.’ [The use of the word ‘Swaha’ indicates that the aspirant is mentally performing a fire sacrifice.]

The second finger is next touched by the thumb and the following statement is said with firm conviction and faith 'I most reverentially and devotedly invoke Brahm who is eternally and perpetually blissful and full of felicity. I invoke him and establish him in my second finger along with his astounding divine powers and stupendous potentials. Vaushat¹¹.'

Next, the third finger is touched by the thumb and the following statement is said with firm conviction and faith 'I most reverentially and devotedly invoke Brahm who is honoured by the title of 'Bhuma'¹². I invoke him and establish him in my third finger along with his astounding divine powers and stupendous potentials. Hum¹³.'

The fourth finger is touched next by the thumb and the following statement is said with firm conviction and faith 'I most reverentially and devotedly invoke Brahm who is even the Lord of this Bhuma. [Here the reference is made to the supreme transcendental Brahm, the Supreme Being who is the Lord of all that exists and from whom even the Viraat Purush, the Bhuma, has emerged or evolved.] I invoke him and establish him in my fourth finger along with his astounding divine powers and potentials. Vaushat.'

The palm and the opposite side of it should then be touched by the opposite hand and the following statement is said with firm conviction and faith 'I most reverentially and devotedly invoke Brahm who is one and non-dual, who is unique and without a second. I invoke him and establish him in my palms and hand along with his astounding divine powers and stupendous potentials. Phat¹⁴.'

Next, the heart should be touched and the following statement is said with firm conviction and faith 'I most reverentially and devotedly invoke Brahm who is Satya (the truthful Being; the personification of Truth), an embodiment of Gyan (knowledge and enlightenment), and Anant (without an end). I invoke him and establish him in my heart along with his astounding divine powers and stupendous potentials. Namaha.'

Next, the head should be touched and the following statement is said with firm conviction and faith 'I most reverentially and devotedly invoke Brahm who is an embodiment of eternal beatitude and felicity. I invoke him and establish him in my head along with his astounding divine powers and potentials. Swaha.'

Next, the 'Shikha' (the tuft of hair on the top of the head on the crest of the cranium) should be touched and the following statement is said with firm conviction and faith 'I most reverentially and devotedly invoke Brahm who is an embodiment of eternal beatitude and felicity. Brahm is perpetually and infinitely blissful. I invoke him and establish him in my Shikha along with his astounding divine powers and stupendous potentials. Vaushat.'

Next, the two shoulders should be touched and the following statement is said with firm conviction and faith 'I most reverentially and devotedly invoke Brahm who is honoured by the epithet of 'Bhuma' (one who is vast and colossus; the Viraat Purush) and revered as such. Hum.'

Next, the two eyes should be touched and the following statement is said with firm conviction and faith 'I most reverentially and devotedly invoke Brahm who is honoured and revered as the Lord of the one who is known as 'Bhuma' (i.e. the supreme transcendental Brahm). Vaushat.'

Next, the right hand should be raised and moved in the air above the head in a circle, brought down and a light clap is made by striking it against the left palm. While doing so, the following statement is said with firm conviction and faith 'I most reverentially and devotedly invoke Brahm who is one of his kind and non-dual. He is

unique and matchless in this creation. Let him protect me like a shield around my body. Phat.’

Let this supreme transcendental and almighty Brahm protect me from all the directions represented by the words ‘Bhu’ meaning the terrestrial world and the mortal creatures living in it, ‘Bhuvaha’ meaning the sky in which the creatures that fly live, and the ‘Swaha’ meaning the upper heavens where the Stars and the Gods reside.

This last invocation also refers to the aspirant’s acknowledgement of the fact that the supreme Brahm is present in all the three aspects of creation—the mortal gross world represented by the earth (Bhu), the subtle but visible world represented by the sky (Bhuvaha), and the subtlest and invisible world represented by the heavens (Swaha).’ (20).

[Note—*The concept of *Shadang Nyas* in the context of Vedic hymns or Mantras refer to the six limbs or basic divisions into which any given classical phrase, such as the Mantra, is broken or divided into for the purpose of study. These six divisions are the Rishi of the Mantra, i.e. the sage who had first visualised it in his mind and proved its efficacy, the Chanda which the classical style in which it is composed, the Devta or deity to whom it is dedicated, the Beej, literally the seed or syllable which is the basic sound form from which the Mantra has sprouted much like a tall tree having its origin in the humble ‘seed’, the Shakti or the divine and holy powers that the particular Mantra possesses, and the Kilak or the peg which helps it to be established in the body or the mystical worship instrument used during occult practices to invoke the supernatural powers of this Mantra.

** *Anga Nyas* is the process of ritual worship by which certain fixed points in the body are designated where the chosen deity is mentally invoked through the specific Mantra. This envisions that the mystical divine powers of the patron God or deity being worshipped by the Mantra are mentally invested in these fixed cardinal points of the body, thereby empowering the aspirant with their stupendous potentials as well as symbolically assigning the body to the tutelary God or deity to whom the particular Mantra belongs for his protection and blessing. Usually these six cardinal points are the following—the two legs, two hands, one head and one waist region. But according to this verse, they are the thumb, the tip of the fingers, the heart, the shoulders, the tuft on the top of the head, and the palm of the hand. There are prescribed ways of invoking the Mantras, and when done in a proper way it empowers the ordinary body of the worshipper with extraordinary divine and mystical powers.

Therefore, process of doing Anga Nyas is to symbolically establish the Mantra’s divine mystical powers in the worshipper’s own body and make it holy, auspicious, sanctified and empowered. The deity being worshipped is symbolically requested to come and take his seat in the body, thereby ensuring that the worshipper is getting constant protection from this godhead. In the present context, since the Maha Vakyas speak of the supreme transcendental Brahm, the latter’s invocation and seating in the worshipper’s body would ensure that he becomes a versatile personification of Brahm. He is literally transformed from being an ordinary human being to an exalted being who is as revered and honourable as Brahm as well as a living embodiment of Brahm. Herein lies the importance of having firm faith in these Maha Vakyas because assuming the mantle of Brahm is not an easy task. The worshipper is expected to live up to his responsibilities as Brahm personified!

¹The concept of *OM* has been elaborately described in other Upanishads too.

²The *Rishi* of the Mantra is the sage who had first conceived or visualised it in his mind and proved its efficacy, and who is remembered first in order to pay homage to his memory and seek his blessings.

³The *Chanda* is the classical style in which a particular hymn or great saying is composed.

⁴The *Gayatri* is a special type of poetical composition having twenty four letters or syllables divided into three lines or steps or stanzas.

⁵The *Devta* or God is the patron deity to whom the particular Mantra is dedicated.

⁶The *Beej*, literally the seed, is the syllable which is the basic sound-form from which the Mantra has sprouted much like a tall tree having its origin in the humble 'seed'.

⁷The *Shakti* is the divine and holy powers that the particular Mantra possesses. It refers to the Mantra's dynamic energy that is subtly present in it in a coded form. Proper use of the Mantra helps to de-code this energy and unleash or activate it.

⁸The *Kilak* is the peg which helps a Mantra to be established in the body of the worshipper of that Mantra, or to the mystical worship instrument used during occult practices to invoke the supernatural powers of this Mantra and invest this instrument with these divine and mystical powers. It is like a nail to fix the Mantra at the designated point in the body.

⁹The word *Namaha* is used as a submissive word used to show supplication, great honour and respect to the deity adored by the worshipper. It literally means 'I most reverentially and devotedly bow to you.'

¹⁰The word *Swaha* is pronounced at the time of offering oblations to the holy fire during a fire sacrifice. It is said that when this word is said, the Fire God accepts the offering on behalf of the patron God for whom it is meant.

¹¹The word *Vaushat* refers to the symbolic second leg on which the formal fire sacrifice is based, the other leg being Swaha. Thus, they are often used to mean the same thing, and refer to the oblation offered to the patron deity or God who is being worshipped by the means of the fire sacrifice (Taittiriye Sanghita 7/5/5/3). That is why Vaushat is also related to the Vaishwanar Agni (the all-pervading subtle fire element in the cosmos) (Maitrayani Brahmin, 4/6/7) and the Sun God (Shatpath Brahmin, 1/7/2/11).

¹²The word *Bhuma* literally means the one who is vast and colossus as the visible world of which he is the undisputed Lord. It refers to the Viraat Purush who is the cosmic gross body of the Supreme Being known as Brahm, and from whom the rest of the visible creation has evolved.

¹³The word *Hum* refers to the sanctified food that is kept aside during a formal fire sacrifice and is meant for human consumption as sanctified food. In ancient times, householders used to keep aside some food, equivalent in quantity to sixteen eggs of the peacock, to be offered to guests or mendicants. This formed the symbolic third leg of the formal fire sacrifice.

¹⁴The word *Phat* refers to the sound of clap made by striking the two palms together. It is one of the practices observed during formal occult worship.]

21. [This verse pays respects to the enlightened Guru or moral preceptor and spiritual guide of the aspirant. Careful reading would show that a person who possesses the virtues listed herein is like a personification of the Supreme Being known as Brahm. He deserves the same honour and respect that one gives to Brahm. He is deemed to possess all the mystical powers and potentials, all the authority and divinity possessed by Brahm.]

One should mentally remember one's Guru, show due respect and pay homage to him most reverentially in the following words—'He (i.e. the wise, erudite, sagacious, most learned, enlightened, and self-realised moral preceptor, spiritual guide and teacher) always sports a cheerful and pleasant disposition.

He is an embodiment of the best of blessings and virtues that bestow all round welfare and happiness to his followers (disciples), and whose mere presence is very comforting and reassuring for them.

He is a living personification of Gyan (which is pure and truthful knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment).

He is beyond the reach of perplexities and vexations created by the sense of duality in this world, leading to contradictory thoughts, emotions and sentiments that create unnecessary doubts, dichotomy and confusions. That is, he is mentally stable and steadfast in his convictions and beliefs; he is not swayed by the buffeting effects of adversities, turmoil and suspense that are so characteristic of this delusory world.

He has the subtle and sublime characteristics that are so unique to the sky. That is, he remains aloof and detached from everything like the sky; he is not tainted or affected by anything or any circumstance in this world much like the sky in which uncountable varieties of things are embedded in Nature but which remains inherently untainted and uncorrupted by any of them. This is in spite of him (the Guru) being surrounded by all the material objects, impurities and delusions that are so characteristic of this world. The Guru is constantly being buffeted by so many numerous and divergent impulses originating from this material world which is like a trap in which even the most learned persons fall, but in spite of these distractions and constant gnawing he remains flawless and faultless like the sky. He is a repository of knowledge and has a depth of enlightenment that is as vast, endless and fathomless as the sky; he remains calm and serene like the distant recesses of the vast and endless sky. In short, a true Guru is comparable to the grand virtues as possessed by the sky element.

He keeps his attention fixed on one essential 'truth', the element which is supreme, transcendental, non-dual and most truthful, instead of allowing his mind and intellect to wander here and there in myriad theories, doctrines and philosophies, leading to immense confusions, uncertainties and consternations as well as distress and vexations for the spirit much like a ship that is being tossed around in a choppy ocean.

He is 'one and perpetual'. That is, he is steady and stable as a rock in his beliefs, convictions, words, emotions, sentiments and thoughts; he is not of a fickle mind and character; he is not swayed by and swept off his moorings by myriad distractions and divergent influences which are characteristic attributes of this material world of delusions; he is unchanging and unwavering; he believes in one non-dual supreme Truth which is eternal and infinite.

He is most pure, uncorrupt, untainted and without any blemish of any kind.

He remains unruffled and unmoved, maintaining his equanimity and calmness even under adversities and unfavourable circumstances, such as during periods of extreme emotional turmoil and stress because he is full of the eclectic virtues of being dispassionate, calm, neutral and detached from everything. Instead, he remains ever submerged in a perpetual state of equanimity and bliss.

He is like an all-knowing, wise, expert and sagacious, but a neutral and detached witness to what the mortal world and its inhabitants do, being a dispassionate and un-involved observer to the happenings around him in this world.

He is full of equanimity, fortitude and evenness of mind and heart, remaining untouched and unaffected by the rocking effects of various emotions and sentiments that continuously pummel his heart, mind and intellect, and perpetually disturb him by intruding into his stoic calmness and peaceful demeanors.

He is free from being tainted or affected by the apparent good or bad effects of the three legendary Gunas or qualities inherent in all the living creatures, and which create distortions in the basically clean fiber symbolising the inherently pure and immaculate character of any individual's true self (i.e. his Atma; his consciousness).

[These three Gunas are Sata or the noble quality which creates propensity for righteousness and noble behaviour, Raja is the second quality which creates worldly desires and aspirations, leading to the predominance of such characters that make a creature worldly wise, and Tama which is the meanest and lowest quality, creating the tendency for sinful conduct. All these three qualities are present in a person, but his individuality is decided by the ratio in which these three are present. The 'inherent purity' refers to the immaculacy of the Atma which is the 'true self' of all living beings. These Gunas cast their shadow on the shine of the self-illuminated and immaculate Atma, making the individual appear to exhibit certain artificial taints and characteristics that are extraneous to his true self. This is like the case of the shadow of the moon falling upon the earth when it comes between the sun and the earth, giving rise to the solar eclipse. The sun has not lost its shine and neither is there a night during the day, but the optical impression created by this intervention of the moon makes it appear to be so. Similarly, the immaculate Atma appears to be tainted and darkened when these Gunas cast their shadow upon it. The resultant effect is that the individual does not appear to be as holy and divine as he actually is. In the case of a wise Guru, it is deemed that he has gained sufficient control over his self that none of these three Gunas are able to display their characteristic behaviour, thereby making the Guru absolutely neutral and pristine pure like a piece of crystal.]

I bow most reverentially and devotedly to such a Guru who possesses these virtues as narrated in this verse. [It is to be noted here that the eclectic and sublime virtues enumerated here are the virtues of the Supreme Being or Brahm. In other words, that Guru who is possessed of these attributes is no less revered than Brahm; he is equivalent to Brahm; he is Divinity personified.] (21).

[Note—The word *Guru* has two parts—viz. 'Gu' meaning darkness, and 'Ru' meaning light. Hence the word 'Guru' means a person who can remove the darkness symbolising ignorance and illusions that has engulfed the disciple from all sides and act as a hindrance or an obstacle in his emancipation and salvation by showing him the truthful path, or lighting his path with the light of knowledge and holding out his hands to support him when he falters. Therefore he is an exalted, revered and much sought after person who can remove the darkness of ignorance of his follower by showing him the light of knowledge and guides him whenever he finds himself in a moral dilemma and quandary. He is the person who is both the moral preceptor as well as the spiritual guide of his disciple. He is supposed to act as a neutral advisor to his ward in all matters temporal and spiritual. The disciple is expected to confide in him his greatest of secrets without the fear of betrayal or blackmail. He is the one who is expected to have risen above all kinds of vested interests and keeps the welfare of the disciple as his main objective. He is the one who has transcended the mundane and has acquired sublime awareness of the supreme Reality, because only those who are themselves aware of anything can hope to tell others about it. Therefore it is deemed that only a person of high mental, intellectual, spiritual and ethical caliber can become a true Guru.

A true Guru is treated as being equivalent to the 'Trinity Gods'—(1) Brahma, the creator, because he creates or helps to take birth good virtues and noble qualities in his disciple; (2) Vishnu, the sustainer, because he nourishes, sustains and helps to inculcate and develop wisdom and enlightenment in his disciple and leads him on the truthful path; and (3) Shiva, the concluder, because he helps to end, conclude and eliminate ignorance and negative traits in his disciple. He is 'God like' because he functions in all these capacities at the same time, besides being exalted in all knowledge, being virtuous, of high moral character and beyond reproach, being a source of unbound spiritual energy, being self realised and enlightened, and being eternal in the sense that what he advises to his disciple, the path he shows, the light

that he lights in the dark heart of the creature, makes him immortal. Therefore, a Guru is honoured for the divine virtues that he represents and embodies, that he teaches and implements in his life, for the divinity, for the Lord and for the personification of the great teachings of the scriptures that he exemplifies. It is not his physical body that is of any value for veneration, for the soul and not the body is venerable.

The importance of a Guru and his eclectic qualities have been lauded in other Upanishads as well, notably the Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 5, verse nos. 56-59, the Shatyayani Upanishad of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse no. 39, the Tejobindu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in Canto 6, verse no. 44, Dwayo-panishad, verse nos. 1-7, and Advai Tarak Upanishad, verse no. 14-18 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition.]

22. Now in this verse, the four great maxims and axioms of the Vedas, called the 'Maha Vakya's', or the great sayings which form their fundamental teaching and are the essence of their doctrines, are being enumerated. (1) 'OM Pragyana Brahman'. [OM salutations! The truthful and pristine pure knowledge which is all-inclusive, most sublime and eclectic in nature is Brahman personified.] (2) 'OM Aham Brahmasmi'. [OM salutations! Indeed, I am Brahman.] (3) 'OM Tattwamasi'. [OM salutations! That Brahman is you; that Principal Absolute and essence is you; it is you; or 'that art thou'.] (4) 'OM Ayam Atma Brahman'. [OM salutations! This Atma, the pure conscious soul or 'self' of the creature, is Brahman.]

Out of these profound statements, the word 'Tattwamasi' establishes the oneness between the individual creature and the cosmic supreme Brahman. It is the statement of great metaphysical import and spiritual significance as it establishes the doctrine of 'non-duality'. [It essentially states that whatever that exists in this living creation is an image of Brahman, it is a manifestation of Brahman, it is none but Brahman. When the spiritual aspirant sincerely understands the import of this eclectic statement, he exults in joyous abandon because he would have understood the essence of the teaching of the Vedas that proclaim unequivocally that the creature is a revealed form of Brahman that resides as the Atma or pure consciousness of the former. This Atma is the 'true self' of all living beings. Since the Atma is the same in all of them, and since this Atma is the cosmic Brahman in a microcosmic form, it follows that all the living beings are a personification of the same divine entity known as Brahman. This Brahman is one, non-dual, eternal, immutable and constant. The importance of this Maha Vakya 'Tattwamasi' has been elaborately elucidated in verse nos. 40-41 below.]

A wise, erudite and enlightened spiritual aspirant who meticulously contemplates and deeply meditates upon this one 'Maha Vakya' (Tattwamasi) and understands the profound metaphysical implication of its doctrine, obtains the grand and glorious reward of attaining the 'Sayujya' from of Mukti by becoming one with Lord Shiva. [In other words, he becomes as wise, enlightened and self-realised as well as spiritually untainted, auspicious, holy and divine as the greatest God known as Lord Shiva who personifies these divine and glorious virtues all at once. The aspirant realises the non-dual, pristine pure conscious nature of his Atma which is the microcosmic form of the cosmic supreme transcendental Consciousness known as Brahman. Since this Atma is the true identity of the aspirant vis-à-vis the body, the uniformity, inseparability, indivisibility and oneness between him and the supreme Brahman is a forgone conclusion.] (22).

[Note—The Maha Vakya's are described in a number of Upanishads, such as the Atmabodh of Rig Veda; Paingala 3/2 and Mandal Brahman 2/2/5, 2/4/4, 3/1/6, 3/2/1, 3/2/2 of Shukla Yajur Veda; Kaivalya 16, Sarvasa 12-14 and Tejobindu Upanishad, Cantos 2-6 of Krishna Yajur Veda; Atma of Atharva Veda traditions.]

23. [Now, the process of ‘Shadanga Nyas and Anga Nyas’¹ of the phrase ‘Tat’ (meaning ‘that’) pertaining to the Maha Vakya ‘OM Tattwamasi’ is being described in this verse. The aspirant hopes to invoke this great Mantra to obtain the form of Mukti (liberation and deliverance; emancipation and salvation) known as ‘Sayujya’ whereby the worshipper obtains oneness with his chosen deity, which in this case is the supreme transcendental Brahm. The word ‘Tat’ refers to the supreme transcendental state of non-dual existence where the creature’s conscious self, known as his Atma, becomes one with the cosmic Consciousness of creation known as Brahm, because the word implies oneness between the Atma, i.e. ‘twam’, with the supreme Divinity referred to by the word ‘Tat’ meaning ‘that’. Refer verse no. 40 below.]

First and foremost, the worshipper should do ‘Shadanga Nyas’ pertaining to this Maha Vakya as follows:--‘The Rishi of the Maha Vakya is ‘Hans’; the Chanda is ‘Abyakta Gayatri’²; the Devta is ‘Pramhans’; the Beej or basic syllable of the Mantra is ‘Hum’; the Shakti is ‘Saha’; and the Kilak is ‘So-a-Ham’.

I do Japa with this Mantra by paying attention to these six components of it in order to achieve success in obtaining the most exalted stature of ‘Sayujya Mukti’. [That is, I devotionally and with due respect and firmness of conviction repeat this Mantra referring to the supreme transcendental Brahm--‘Tat’--while diligently paying attention to the finer nuances and different components of it so as to derive maximum spiritual benefit from it and become sufficiently enlightened and enabled to achieve oneness with the cosmic Divinity to which this Mantra is dedicated.]’

Now, since the worshipper is offering oblations and worship to the supreme Divinity known as ‘Tat’ or Brahm, the process of Anga Nyas which is being described here is also addressed to that supreme Brahm.

First, the thumb is touched (by the closed fingers) and the following statement is to be said with due respect, devotion and conviction—‘I bow most reverentially and devotedly to the supreme Purush, the Supreme Being’.

Next, the first finger is touched by the thumb and the following statement is to be said with due respect, devotion and conviction—‘Similarly, I bow most reverentially and devotedly to Ishan (Lord Shiva). Swaha.’

Next, the second finger is touched by the thumb and the following statement is to be said with due respect, devotion and conviction—‘I also bow most reverentially and devotedly to Lord Aghorai (i.e. the patron God of a special type of mendicants who worship Shiva and live in the cremation ground; the word literally means ‘most terrible and formidable’ Lord). Vaushat.’

The third finger is touched next by the thumb and the following statement is to be said with due respect, devotion and conviction—‘I likewise bow most reverentially and devotedly to Lord Sadyojataye (i.e. the patron God of new-born; the Lord of the ever evolving creation which is always new and different from its earlier version which keeps changing and evolving every other second). Hum.’

The fourth finger is then touched by the thumb next and the following statement is to be said with due respect, devotion and conviction—‘I also bow most reverentially and devotedly to Lord Vamdeo (i.e. one of the names of Lord Shiva). Vaushat.’

I bow most reverentially and devotedly to the supreme Lord who is the Lord and the ultimate Authority of all other Gods such as Ishan, Aghor, Sadyajat, and Vamdeo. [This is an obvious reference to the Supreme Being known as Brahm, for the latter is the final Emperor above whom there is no other Lord or Authority.]’ Saying

this, the worshipper should clap the hands by mildly striking the palms together, and say 'Phat' (to indicate the clapping sound made by striking the palms together).

This last invocation is repeated while touching the heart as well so as to invest it with the mystical powers and blessings of the Supreme Being. Or to symbolically invite the supreme Lord to come and take up his residence in the worshipper's heart.

Finally, the right hand is to be turned clockwise in a circle around the top of the head while saying the three words 'Bhu' to indicate the terrestrial world, 'Bhuvaha' to indicate the sky, and 'Swaha' to indicate the heavens. This means that the aspirant acknowledges the fact that the supreme Brahm is present in all the three aspects of creation—the mortal gross world represented by the earth, the subtle but visible world represented by the sky, and the subtlest and invisible world represented by the heavens. It also implies that the Supreme Being's blessings are sought for all-round protection³ (23).

[Note—¹The concept of *Shadanga Nyas* and *Anga Nyas* has already been described in verse no. 20.

²*Abayakta Gayatri* Chanda is the subtler and implied form of the Chanda, and is like a silent letter in any word without which the word would be incomplete and misspelt. The word 'Abyakta' means something that is not clearly mentioned and is hidden and implied. Since this word 'Tat' refers to the most esoteric and mystical divine entity in creation which is beyond comprehension and reach of the mind-intellect complex as well as any of the sense organs, it is apt to address it with an epithet that is in tune with its enigmatic and mysterious nature of being invisible and imperceptible.

³These concepts have been elaborately described in the text as well as the note of verse no. 20 above.]

24. The spiritual aspirant should contemplate about that supreme transcendental Being in these terms—'He is an embodiment of perfect and refined form of Gyan (truthful knowledge, high wisdom and profound enlightenment); he is the mystical entity worthy to be researched and known; he is accessible, approachable and attainable only by the means of truthful Gyan, but he is so esoteric, enigmatic and mysterious that he is beyond the reach of every form of Gyan itself. [In other words, though Gyan is the only instrument by which some idea can be had of what constitutes this supreme transcendental Truth known as Brahm, but whatever that is known by pursuing the path of Gyan is not the complete thing and an entire description of Brahm as much remains to be researched and known about him which is beyond the reach and grasp of the mind and the intellect of any living being in creation.]

He is a personification of purity of all sorts at its best and pristine form, of intelligence, wisdom, sagacity and erudition in all their glorious finery, stupendous reach and astoundingly powerful forms, of liberation and deliverance, emancipation and salvation in their best, truthful and real sense, and of eternity, infinity and imperishability in all their nuances and connotations.

It is that divine, eclectic supreme and transcendental entity which is an embodiment of Absolute Truth, of knowledge, erudition and wisdom, and of blissfulness characteristic of pure consciousness that is worthy of constant 'Dhyan'—i.e. it is worthy of being constantly remembered, being pondered upon, contemplated and meditated upon it, and remaining focused upon.

Indeed, we should constantly worship and remember that supreme Divinity which is most glorious, eclectic and magnificent (24).

[Note—Refer Shwetashwatar Upanishad, verse no. 16-21 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

25. [This verse is dedicated to the exposition of the spiritual and metaphysical significance as well as the importance of the phrase ‘Twam’, meaning ‘you’ or ‘thou’, of the Maha Vakya ‘Tattwamasi’, and it refers to the individual creature’s pure self or Atma which is treated as the same entity as the ‘Tat’ or that supreme transcendental Being known as Brahm whose microcosmic counterpart is deemed to be ‘Twam’ (individual creature). The process is the same Shadanga Nyas and Anga Nyas as narrated for ‘Tat’ in verse no. 23.]

Now we shall describe the Shadanga Nyas of the Maha Vakya ‘Twam’. The spiritual aspirant should deeply contemplate upon its six components in order to derive its best results. He should meditate as follows—‘The Rishi of this Maha Vakya is Vishnu, the cosmic sustainer, nourisher and protector, its Chanda is Gayatri, its Devta is Parmatma (the supreme Soul, the cosmic Consciousness), its Beej is ‘Aiyang’, its Shakti is ‘Kling’, and its Kilak is ‘Souha’.

I duly and devotedly worship and invoke this Maha Vakya in the prescribed manner in order to obtain Mukti (liberation and deliverance, emancipation and salvation).’

Now, the Anga Nyas is to be done in the following steps—The thumb should be touched and the following statement is to be said with due respect, devotion and conviction—‘I bow most reverentially and devotedly to the Vasudeo (one of the names of Vishnu)’.

Next, the first finger is touched and the following statement is to be said with due respect, devotion and conviction—‘Similarly, I bow most reverentially and devotedly to Sankarshan (one of the names of Vishnu). Swaha.’

Next, the second finger is touched and the following statement is to be said with due respect, devotion and conviction—‘I also bow most reverentially and devotedly to Pradumna (one of the names of Vishnu). Vaushat.’

The third finger is touched next and the following statement is to be said with due respect, devotion and conviction—‘I likewise bow most reverentially and devotedly to Anirudha (one of the names of Vishnu). Hum.’

The fourth finger is then touched next and the following statement is to be said with due respect, devotion and conviction—‘I also bow most reverentially and devotedly to Vasudeo (one of the names of Vishnu). Vaushat.’

I bow most reverentially and devotedly to the supreme Lord who is the Lord and Authority of all other Gods and all other forms by which Vishnu is known, such as Vasudeo, Sankarshan, Pradumna, and Anirudha. [This is an obvious reference to the Supreme Being known as Brahm because Vishnu is one of the many names by which the Viraat Purush is known. This Viraat Purush is the macrocosmic all-inclusive and all-pervading gross body of Brahm, and it is from this Viraat Purush that the rest of creation has come into being, including Brahma the cosmic creator, and Shiva the cosmic concluder.]’ Saying this, the worshipper should clap the hands by mildly striking the palms together, and say ‘Phat’ (to indicate the clapping sound made by striking the two palms together).

This last invocation is repeated while touching the heart as well so as to invest it with the mystical powers and blessings of the Supreme Being. Or to symbolically invite the supreme Lord to come and take up his residence in the worshipper’s heart.

Finally, the right hand is to be turned clockwise in a circle around the top of the head while saying the three words ‘Bhu’ to indicate the terrestrial world, ‘Bhuvaha’ to indicate the sky, and ‘Swaha’ to indicate the heavens. This means that the aspirant acknowledges the fact that the supreme Brahm is present in all the three aspects of creation—the mortal gross world represented by the earth, the subtle but

visible world represented by the sky, and the subtlest and invisible world represented by the heavens. It also implies that the Supreme Being's blessings are sought for all-round protection (25).

26. Oh Lord! You are inherently present in all the creatures as their 'Jiva' or 'life in its most subtle and elementary form as the pure consciousness or Atma'. You are universally and uniformly present in the entire creation and in the form of all the creatures as one non-dual, immutable, indivisible and wholesome entity. Or, this multifarious world and its countless inhabitant creatures are one single image of your indivisible divine form (though these individual creatures appear to differ one from the other, but this difference is only superficial because their Atma is the same).

You (as the pure and enlightened consciousness) are the supreme Authority which exercises control over our 'Chitta' (the sub-conscious mind; the intellect and its faculty of discrimination and rational thoughts; the mind and its memory and ability to focus and remain steady in its course), along with Ahankar (or the negative trait of having vanity, pride, ego, arrogance and haughtiness).

I worship the Supreme Being in all his divine glories, magnificence, radiance and splendour when I worship, honour and pay obeisance to the word 'Twam' or 'you' (or 'thou') which refers to the individual creature in his purest form, i.e. to the Atma of the creature, to the pure consciousness that is the 'true self' of all living beings. ['Twam' is an integral component of the Maha Vakya 'Tattwamasi', meaning 'that is you'—where 'tat' refers to 'that Absolute Truth, that essence, that Principal' which is the supreme transcendental Brahm, while 'twam' refers to 'you, the pure consciousness, the Atma' of the individual creature that is his 'true self' and an entity that is being preached by the wise teacher with the avid intention of kindling profound enlightenment in him which is also the main objective of all scriptural teaching and all spiritual endeavours.] (26).

27. [This verse is dedicated to the exposition of the spiritual and metaphysical significance as well as the importance of the phrase 'Asi', meaning 'is or are, indeed, certainly', of the Maha-Vakya 'Tattwamasi', and it refers to the assertion, the confirmation of the fact that it is indeed true that the supreme transcendental Being represented by the word 'Tat' is the same as the individual creature's pure conscious self or Atma represented by the word 'Twam'. This 'Twam' is a microcosmic counterpart of 'Tat'. The word 'Asi' links or bridges the two aspects of creation—viz. the 'Tat' and the 'Twam' corresponding to the 'supreme Brahm' and the 'individual creature' respectively by unequivocally asserting and affirming that both are the same non-dual universal Divinity and there is no difference or dichotomy between them whatsoever. That is, the individual creature is indeed Brahm personified. The process is the same Shadanga Nyas and Anga Nyas as narrated for 'Twam' in verse no. 25.]

Now we shall describe the Shadanga Nyas of 'Asi' which is an inseparable component of the Maha Vakya 'Tattwamasi'. The spiritual aspirant should deeply contemplate upon its six components in order to derive maximum spiritual and mystical benefits from them. He should meditate as follows—'The Rishi of this Maha Vakya is Mana (mind-intellect and heart)¹, its Chanda is Gayatri, its Devta is 'Ardha-Narishwar², its Beej is 'Abyakta³ (untold, undefined, un-manifest, imperceptible, secret and concealed but implied and truthful), its Shakti (energy, powers, authority and potentials) is represented by 'Narsingh⁴ (the incarnation of the supreme Brahm as a half-lion and half-man to protect his devotee Prahalad who was being tormented

endlessly by his cruel demon father Hiranyakashipu), and its Kilak or peg is the supreme transcendental Soul of creation known as 'Parmatma'.

I duly and devotedly worship and invoke this part of the great Maha Vakya (i.e. 'Asi') in the prescribed manner in order to forge a union between the creature (i.e. my 'self' in its purest form as the Atma or pure consciousness) and the supreme Consciousness of creation known as Parmatma (or Brahm).'

Since the body of the worshipper is made up of the five primary elements in creation, viz. earth, water, fire, air and sky, in their grosser manifestation as compared to the subtle Nature which has them in their primary form representing the invisible Brahm, the worshipper now invokes the supreme Brahm in the form of these five primary elements and invests the body consisting of these elements with the subtle and sublime dynamic powers of their principal originator, the Brahm.

Hence, the Anga Nyas is to be done in the following steps—The thumb should be touched (by the closed fingers) and the following statement is to be said with due respect, devotion and conviction—'I bow most reverentially and devotedly to 'Prithivi', the earth element which is a fractional part of the non-dual cosmic Brahm and which exists in two forms, in its gross form in the physical world as the planet earth which harbours and sustains the living world, and the subtle form as one of the primary elements of creation'.

Next, the first finger is touched by the thumb and the following statement is to be said with due respect, devotion and conviction—'Similarly, I bow most reverentially and devotedly to 'Apaha', the water element which is a fractional part of the non-dual cosmic Brahm and which exists in two forms, in its gross form in the physical world (as wells, springs, rivers and lakes etc.) which harbours, nourishes and sustains the living world, and the subtle form as one of the primary elements of creation. Swaha.'

Next, the second finger is touched by the thumb and the following statement is to be said with due respect, devotion and conviction—'I also bow most reverentially and devotedly to 'Tej', the fire element which is a fractional part of the non-dual cosmic Brahm and which exists in two forms, in its gross form in the physical world (as terrestrial fire on earth) which nourishes and sustains the living world, and the subtle form as one of the primary elements of creation. Vaushat.'

The third finger is touched next by the thumb and the following statement is to be said with due respect, devotion and conviction—'I likewise bow most reverentially and devotedly to 'Vayu', the air or wind element which is a fractional part of the non-dual cosmic Brahm and which exists in two forms, in its gross form in the physical world (as the wind blowing on earth and the air inhaled and exhaled by the creature when he breaths) which nourishes and sustains the living world, and the subtle form as one of the primary elements of creation as well as the Pran living inside the body in the form of the many forms of this element (such as Pran, Apaana, Samaana, Vyan, Udaana etc.). Hum.'

The fourth finger is then touched by the thumb next and the following statement is to be said with due respect, devotion and conviction—'I also bow most reverentially and devotedly to 'Akash', the sky element which is a fractional part of the non-dual cosmic Brahm and which exists in two forms, in its gross form in the physical world (as the visible sky above the earth in which flying creatures move about, clouds float, dust and gases dwell, and which appears in various hues of colours and full of so many visible physical objects) which harbours and encloses the manifested gross world from all the sides, and the subtle form as one of the primary

elements of creation which imperceptibly pervade throughout the entire length and breadth of creation, inside as well as outside of it. *Vaushat*.'

I bow most reverentially and devotedly to the supreme Lord who is the Lord and Authority of all the elements such as earth, water, fire, air and sky, and the creation formed out of them. [This is an obvious reference to the Supreme Being known as *Brahm*.] Saying this, the worshipper should clap the hands by mildly striking the palms together, and say '*Phat*' (to indicate the clapping sound).

This last invocation is repeated while touching the heart as well so as to invest it with the mystical dynamic powers and blessings of the Supreme Being. Or to symbolically invite the supreme Lord to come and take up his residence in the worshipper's heart.

Finally, the right hand is to be turned clockwise in a circle around the top of the head while saying the three words '*Bhu*' to indicate the terrestrial world, '*Bhuvaha*' to indicate the sky, and '*Swaha*' to indicate the heavens. This means that the aspirant acknowledges the fact that the supreme *Brahm* is present in all the three aspects of creation—the mortal gross world represented by the earth, the subtle but visible world represented by the sky, and the subtlest and invisible world represented by the heavens. It also implies that the Supreme Being's blessings are sought for all-round protection (27).

[Note—¹*Mana*, or the mind and heart combine, is the center where all types of emotions and sentiments have their origin. It is the mind and intellect where all sorts of thoughts and decisions are centered. The *Mana* plays a pivotal role in the creature falling into the trap of worldly delusions or being liberated and delivered from it. Further, all Mantras have had their origin in the mind and heart of ancient sages and seers when they contemplated upon any aspect of Divinity and the real Truth in this creation. The great *Maha Vakyas* were then 'revealed' to them in their meditative trance. Hence the importance and primary source of everything in this creation as the *Mana* cannot be neglected or even over-emphasised.

²*Ardha Narishwar* is the half male and half female form of Lord Shiva indicating the primary form in which the Supreme Being revealed himself to initiate the process of visible world which relies upon the union of the male and the female to come into existence. This 'union' is a metaphoric way of saying that the Supreme Being, the divine entity known as the transcendental cosmic Consciousness and *Brahm*, allowed himself to be associated with *Maya*, which is the female revelation of *Brahm*'s delusion creating powers, to unfold the cosmos in all its astoundingly colourful scheme. Even as energy and abilities are needed to undertake any great enterprise of an unprecedented scale, the other half of *Brahm* is also known as '*Shakti*', literally meaning power, potentials, energy and strength. When the union materialized, the resultant offspring was the vast world.

The concept of '*Ardha Narishwar*' also indicates that the supreme *Brahm* is inseparable from Nature and the creation that it represents. They are two aspects of the same coin and intricately related to one another, one being complimentary to the other and supplementing the other's functions. So, while the male half symbolises *Brahm* as *Viraat Purush*, the cosmic gross body of creation that carried the 'genes' of the primary parent known as *Brahm*, the female half represents the stupendous cosmic energy, potentials, powers, abilities and strength that *Brahm* naturally possesses and which have revealed themselves as Mother Nature. Both aspects are supreme Divinity personified.

Lord Shiva is usually depicted in this form of a half male and half female to indicate the primary form of the mortal creation based on union of the supreme *Brahm* in the form of male aspect represented by Lord Shiva, and his *Shakti* represented by the female aspect of Divinity revealed as Mother Nature. That is why, amongst all the

Gods in the Hindu pantheon of Gods, Shiva is honoured by the epithet 'Mahadev' or the greatest God.

³*Abyakta* literally means that which is not said, or which cannot be described in words; something which is invisible and implied but not clear, visible and articulate; something that is an unrevealed and untold secret. Here it refers to the fact that Brahm and the individual creature are one and the same entity—because of the fact that Brahm is a non-dual universal entity, and the fact that the entire creation is nothing but a manifestation of this eternally indivisible and uniform entity which cannot be fractioned and mutated. This is a universal, irrefutable and unequivocal 'truth' though it is very secret and little known. It is impossible to prove its veracity and authority by visible material proof and logical arguments. The only way to become acquainted about its truthfulness is to experience and personally witness this 'truth' in all its splendorous finery and stupendous glory.

Hence, the Mantras or hymns of the Vedas which refer to the supreme transcendental Brahm which is most esoteric, secret, enigmatic and mysterious so much so that it cannot be described in words by the tongue, smelt by the nose, seen by the eyes, heard by the ears, and felt by the skin, i.e. which is beyond the pruvuew and reach of any of the powerful organs of perception as well as the intellect and the mind of the creature, is known as 'Avyakta Brahm', and the Mantra or hymn composed in the pattern of a Gayatri chanda dedicated to this Brahm is called 'Avyakta Gayatri Chanda'.

⁴*Narsingh* is the half lion and half man incarnation of Lord Vishnu to slay the demon Hiranyakashipu who had been tormenting Prahalad, his son, because the latter worshipped Vishnu. This 'half lion and half man' form of the Lord is a visible image that has a cosmic counterpart as the 'half man and half female' manifestation of the Lord that is known as 'Ardha-Narishwar'. This cosmic form of Brahm as Ardha-Narishwar has two components—the right half is depicted in iconography as being a male representing Shiva, the great God, the other half is female representing his divine Shakti known as Parvati or Uma. This Shakti represents the dynamic energy of Shiva. When this applies to Brahm, the male aspect refers to the Supreme Being himself while the female aspect applies to Maya which is the dynamic power that Brahm employed to initiate this magical creation. This depiction is basically envisioned to drive home the point that Brahm and Shakti are inseparable in the context of the creation of the world. This elementary method of reproduction is known as 'asexual reproduction' and is depicted by many asexual plants and animals even today. For instance, the one-celled amoeba reproduces itself by cleavage. On the other hand, if we were to regard Brahm in its purest form as the cosmic Consciousness, then Brahm would not need the other half of the Maya, and would only be one and universal entity which has no definite and describable form and shape, it has no attributes and qualities. This form of the sublime and most subtle Brahm is known as either the Hiranyagarbha or the Viraat Purush depending upon the level of subtlety and grossness which is assigned to it, the former being more subtle than the latter.

Coming to the present context of the Narasingh form of Brahm, the 'lion' part is a metaphor for the grand qualities of unmatched stupendous strength, physical prowess and complete sway over the entire domain of the forest and its inhabitant wild animals that the lion possesses and which are symbolic of the inherent stupendous might of the supreme Brahm as the unquestioned Lord of this forest-like world inhabited by myriad variations of creatures just like a dense forest infested by wild animals. Similarly, the 'man' part symbolises the fact that Brahm is the most highly placed Lord much like a human being who represents the highest level in the ladder of evolution.

In other words, even as the lion is the unquestioned lord of the wilds and the man of all the living beings, the supreme transcendental Brahm is the unquestioned Lord of all that exists in all its variations, whether in its primary form represented by the

wild animals of the jungle or in its more evolved and developed form represented by man.]

28. The spiritual aspirant should deeply contemplate upon the truth of the statements called Maha Vakyas, especially 'Tattwamasi', i.e. the great saying establishing oneness between the creature and the supreme Brahm (pertaining to which the Shadanga Nyas and Anga Nyas have been described in verse nos. 23-27). He should steadily ponder on the essential meaning and spiritual import of this grand observation that Brahm is the creature himself; that the individual creature is a personification of the supreme Brahm—'that Brahm is you', as well as the profound impact of this statement which establishes and endorses the tenet of 'non-duality', along with fixing his mind and attention on its implied universal truth about the 'self' vis-à-vis the rest of the creation.

By constantly meditating upon the truth of this great maxim and established axiom, the aspirant is able to finally establish a union between his own self and Brahm on the one hand, and on the other hand merge all the five elements in creation (such as earth, water, fire, air and sky) into one single unit representing their primary form as the un-manifested, indefinable, attributeless and invisible Brahm who is almighty, omnipresent and omniscient as the supreme transcendental Absolute Truth in creation that cannot be described and comprehended (i.e. the 'Abyakta Brahm') (28).

29. We have discussed the Maha Vakyas and their six limbs or components are ritualistically invoked to invest the body with their stupendous dynamic powers besides making it holy and purified (29).

30. Now, the metaphysical meaning of these Maha Vakyas is being described for the benefit of the spiritual aspirant (30).

31. That faculty by which a creature sees, hears, smells, speaks and experiences different tastes in this world is called 'Pragyaan' (31).

32. [Verse nos. 31-32 describe the meaning and importance of the 1st Maha Vakya 'Pragyaanam Brahm'.]

The same Pragyan (enlightened consciousness) prevails as the Atma (the 'self' as pure consciousness) uniformly and universally in all forms of living entities in this creation, whether it is the four-headed Brahma (the creator), Indra (the king of Gods), all the other Gods and humans, or horses, cows and other domestic (four-legged) animals, as well as all other species of life forms in this creation. This conscious entity is the supreme transcendental Authority known as Brahm. It is this consciousness called Brahm that is also present in me (as my pure conscious 'self' or Atma) (32).

33. [Verse nos. 33-34 describe the meaning of the second Maha Vakya 'Aham Brahmaasmi'.]

This gross body is the medium by which that pure consciousness is realised and experienced. This body is the competent instrument by which complete and holistic knowledge pertaining to the supreme transcendental Truth known as Brahm can be obtained¹. When the knowledge or awareness of the presence of this Brahm inside the body sprouts in the bosom of a wise and enlightened spiritual aspirant, he is

said to be 'self-realised' as he is then able to witness the presence of the supreme Brahm in his 'self' as the pure consciousness which is a neutral witness to what is happening around it, and which is a dispassionate observer of what the body does².

When this wisdom and erudition finds a firm footing in the conscious being of the aspirant, when he is convinced of its veracity by personally witnessing and experiencing it, it is then that he declares 'Aham'—'it is me'. In other words, he says 'that Brahm is my true self, and not the body which only acts as a dwelling in which that Brahm resides as the pure conscious Atma or soul, and which is also the medium by which that Brahm can be experienced and realised'. It also implies that the wise and enlightened aspirant has understood that 'he' is not an ordinary mortal creature surrounded by worldly delusions and miseries, but a divine eclectic entity that has an exalted heritage and ethereal lineage as the Holy Spirit that is eternal, all-pervading and all-encompassing like the cosmic Brahm (33).

[Note--¹This is because it is with the help of the body that a spiritual seeker reads and hears the great scriptures, contemplates upon their profound teachings, understands their maxims and axioms, and can endeavour to rectify past mistakes and mend the future. Meditation, contemplation, good deeds, selfless service etc. are done with the help of the body. The pure consciousness in its primary form as the 'spirit' cannot physically perform auspicious deeds, cannot read and implement the great tenets of the scriptures, cannot do meditation and contemplation. That is why it is believed that the human body is the best form of body and the finest opportunity that the soul gets to obtain final liberation and deliverance from the seemingly endless cycle of birth and death. This is because animals and birds cannot read scriptures, cannot go on pilgrims and perform religious sacrifices, cannot serve others and do other auspicious deeds as done by humans. All forms of life have a body and soul but it is only a human being who is given the privilege to choose his path and decide his future. It is the man who can take decision regarding his spiritual destiny and mould his deeds and outlook of the world by reading and discussing the Maha Vakyas and understanding their great import which no animal or plant can do. This is what distinguishes a man from the rest of the creation. If he does not do so then there is no difference between him and an animal because the body of both a man and an animal carry out the rest of the functions more or less in the same way.

Even the Gods are denied this privilege as they are dependent upon humans for their sustenance as proved by the fact that offerings made to the sacred fire during fire sacrifices are meant to feed the Gods. The Gods do not read the scriptures and nowhere is it mentioned that the Gods have obtained 'Mukti' or spiritual liberation and deliverance. They are perpetually in the state of being in the form of an ethereal Holy Spirit. These Gods have attributes, they have designated duties, they have specific areas of authority and powers, whereas the pure consciousness is not at all subjected to any limitations and boundaries. They are called 'Gods' only because the man has decided to honour them and fear them. Should one day the man decide that he no longer need the support of the Gods, they would lose their relevance.

The edifice of creation revolves around the fact that the soul must have a body to function, and this is proved by the fact that even the almighty and omnipotent Brahm also had to assume a 'body' known as the Viraat Purush, which is the cosmic gross body of Brahm from which the rest of the creation, including the creator Brahma and all other Gods, came into being. This body of the Viraat reflected the grand and majestic stature of Brahm in being all-pervading, all-encompassing, invisible and macrocosmic in form befitting Brahm's supreme transcendental stature, but it was a 'body' nevertheless. Disembodied Brahm cannot do anything. That is why the Atma, the microcosmic soul of the creature which is, in its pure elementary form as the 'pure conscious spirit' representing Brahm, 'does not do anything'—this is a constant

refrain of the Upanishads. It is when it is associated with the body, when it begins to get involved with the activities of the body that it is deemed to be ‘doing anything’.

Hence, the ‘body’ is a necessary requirement for Brahm in its cosmic form as the supreme transcendental Being, or in its microcosmic form as the individual Atma of the creature to ‘do’ anything at all in this creation. In the former case, the body of Brahm is the ‘Viraat Purush’, and in the latter case it is the gross body of the individual ‘creature’.

²As has been observed above, the Atma which is Brahm personified is actually a non-doer of anything. It is the body that actually carries out the instructions of this Atma and fulfils its wishes. So it is to be expected that the body would always act and behave righteously and auspiciously because the instructor Atma embodies these noble virtues. But more often than not the reverse happens—the body does inauspicious deeds and then the Atma is blamed for them. This is because of the interference of the corrupted mind and biased intellect along with the baggage of past deeds and their accumulated affects that form basic Vasanas and Virttis (passions, desires and yearnings, as well as natural tendencies and temperaments) that are an integral component of the individual creature’s character, mental setup and personality. The behaviour and responses of an ordinary creature’s Atma is a combined effect of all these components.

But in the case of a ‘wise, enlightened and self-realised’ creature the situation drastically changes. He would not be under any delusions of who is in actual command—he knows all his past mistakes and the pitfalls that he faces in the present life in the current body. He knows that the same body can prove to be the ladder which can take him to the top of the spiritual pyramid, or down the dark pit of the dry well of ignorance. So ‘he’, i.e. his ‘true self as his Atma’ uses the body prudently, most carefully and wisely, by not allowing himself to get involved in the worldly deeds done by the body but maintain a safe distance from this quagmire. This is metaphorically implied in the observation ‘the Atma is a mere witness of what the body does and what is happening around it’.]

34. The word ‘Brahm’ is used to indicate the supreme transcendental Being who is self-established, self-sustained, self-inspired, self-evident, independent, without a cause and reason of coming into being, requiring no props or basis to occupy and remain present in the grand and exalted position of being the only Absolute Authority in creation, and requiring no proof to establish its truthfulness and veracity (i.e. it is ‘Swataha’).

Brahm is the complete and wholesome Divinity that is immutable and indivisible, being non-dual and the only one of its kind in this creation (i.e. it is ‘Purna’).

Brahm is the supreme Atma or soul of creation which is pure consciousness personified, and nothing else (i.e. it is ‘Parmatma’).

The word ‘Asmi’ refers to the ‘self’ of the aspirant, because it means ‘it is me’. Hence, the complete Maha Vakya ‘Aham Brahmasmi’ means—‘the supreme entity known as Brahm is me’. In other words, Brahm is I and no body else; Brahm and I (me) are inseparable and indistinguishable from one another (34).

[Note—This statement is coming out from the heart of a self-realised person who is convinced of and has firm faith in the existence of the Supreme Being as personified in the form of his pure consciousness called the Atma, which is his pure ‘self’. Since he is a wise and enlightened person, there is not the remotest chance of his showing vanity, haughtiness, arrogance or a sense of false self pride when he makes this statement. He is expected to be most humble and pious, for otherwise he is not only cheating others but has no right to make false claims and assertions of being ‘Brahm

personified' which would smack of deceit and falsehood, for by doing so he is only cheating himself.]

35. [Verse nos. 35-36 describe the significance and import of the third Maha Vakya, i.e. 'Tattwamasi'—'that fundamental essence and principal is indeed you (the spiritual seeker)'.]

Brahm was present even before this creation came into being as a single, immutable, indivisible, and uniform non-dual entity that was one complete universal whole. This Brahm is present even now with identical characteristics.

Brahm is without any specific name and form having as many names and forms as there are creatures and types of creation simply because everything that exists is a manifestation of Brahm, and there is nothing which is not Brahm.

Brahm is the only truthful entity in creation, being the only one of its kind.

It is this Brahm that is being referred by the word 'Tat'—meaning 'that'. [This word is the first half of the Maha Vakya 'Tattwamasi'. When 'Tat' is conjoined with the next part of the Maha Vakya 'Twa', it becomes 'Tattwa' meaning 'the essence, the fundamental aspect of anything, the element, the Principal Absolute'. Hence, the Maha Vakya refers to the Principal Absolute of creation, the essential Truth of creation that is known as Brahm. And this Brahm has been revealed in the form of the spiritual seeker's true 'self' that is being referred to as 'Twam'.] (35).

36. The truthful essence and absolute reality which forms the 'true self' known as the pure conscious Atma or soul of the spiritual aspirant, who studies the great Maha Vakyas as well as the scriptures and endeavours to learn their fundamental principles and unravel their mysterious secrets, is represented by the word 'Twam'—meaning 'you'. [The pronoun 'it' is indicative of the supreme Brahm which has been described earlier and indicated by the word 'Tat'—'that'. The word 'you' refers not to the gross physical body but to the soul or Atma that is deemed to be the 'true self' of all living beings. This Atma is pure consciousness at the micro level of creation just like Brahm is at the macro level of creation.] In other words, the aspirant is taught to realise that his true identity is 'that' Brahm which is the subject of all metaphysical and spiritual research that he is doing, and that Brahm is to found inside his own bosom as his pure conscious Atma or 'self' instead of outside of his own self. [Refer to verse no. 40 in this context.]

This astoundingly enigmatic, most sublime and subtle, and extremely mystical indescribable supreme entity (i.e. Brahm) is beyond the scope and limitations of a physical gross body and its organs.

The word 'Asi'—meaning 'is' or 'is indeed' or 'is certainly'—is a statement of affirmation and firmly asserts that the Brahm (referred to by 'Tat') 'is' indeed the Atma residing as the self of the aspirant (referred to by 'Twam') in his body. Thus, 'Asi' is a bridge that links the Brahm with the Atma which is the true self of the aspirant. [Refer verse no. 26 above.] (36).

37. [Verse nos. 37-38 describe the significance and import of the fourth Maha Vakya 'Ayamaatma Brahm'—'this Atma is Brahm'.]

The word 'Ayam'—meaning 'this'—refers to the self-illuminated and self-enlightened, invisible and imperceptible Atma as the pure consciousness that prevails uniformly in this world in a sublime and subtle cosmic form that is beyond the limits of the visible gross body with physical organs.

This Atma pervades in the entire creation as pure and undiluted consciousness which extends from the subtle notions of 'Ahankar' (literally the sense of pride, arrogance, haughtiness and ego that comes with awareness of the importance of one's 'self' in relation with the rest of the creation, and the achievements of this 'self') to the visible gross body in which this Atma lives¹ (37).

[Note--¹That is, the same 'Atma' resides in the bosom of a haughty and egoistic man with a sense of false pride about himself and his body, as well as in the bosom of a righteous man who is noble, humble and pious. The Atma is untouched by these negative traits, these degrading emotions and demeaning sentiments that occur in the physical body of the creature as a result of the way he has led his past life and how it has affected and moulded his thought processes. A wise aspirant is one who realises that the Atma, being separate from the body and uninvolved in its activities, is not at all affected by any of these negative notions, such as 'Ahankar' cited here, that keep on heaving and subsiding on the mental horizon of an ordinary creature much like the transient waves in the ocean which disturb the calmness of the surface but cannot affect the vast depth of this ocean.]

38. The essential, eclectic and divine entity that pervades uniformly and universally in the entire creation as its integral part, and which gives the latter its inherent value, significance and importance is known as 'Brahm'.

It is the same Brahm that makes its presence felt in all the creatures in this creation as the self-illuminated and glorious pure consciousness known as the Atma of the creature (38).

39. [This verse describes how fulfilled and exhilarated sage Shukdeo felt when he was taught the four Maha Vakyas by Lord Shiva, his teacher and initiator who has shown him the auspicious and spiritual path leading to the ultimate 'truth' and attain self-realisation.]

'I was under a deluding spell of ignorance till now which made me think that those things in this perishable and transient world of material sense objects which are inherently and primarily gross, lifeless and inane, are true and real. I was literally wandering hypnotically and aimlessly in a false and imaginary world of make-belief like a man living in his dreams. That is why I had been having notions of 'me' and 'mine' vis-à-vis this world and its material objects. In other words, I had been hooked to this artificial world thinking it to be for real, and had thought that the material objects of this world actually existed, that they can provide me with permanent joy, happiness, comfort and pleasures, and that they were of worth and essence. I also had erroneously thought, under the influence of delusions and ignorance, that I am a separate entity vis-à-vis other living creatures in this existence, being superior to them in some or the other way, whereas the factual position is that the same Atma or pure consciousness which is present inside me is also present in all other living beings in creation.

When wisdom, erudition and enlightenment dawns upon me and I become aware of the non-dual, eternal and subtle nature of the Atma, which is pure consciousness and my true identity on the one hand, and the transient, perishable and gross nature of the sense objects of this artificial material world on the other hand as a result of understanding the meaning and the truth of the great 'Maha Vakyas' taught to me by a wise, learned and self-realised teacher (Guru), the splendorous and brilliant Sun of self-realisation shines radiantly in the sky of my existence, making me see the 'Truth' in its bright light.

In other words, when I (i.e. the spiritual aspirant) am able to grasp the depth of the meaning of the four great sayings of the scriptures, I become truly enlightened and wise, I realise who I actually am, and this realisation removes all darkness of ignorance and its attendant delusions and hallucinations which had been overwhelming me till now like a dark shadow. Consequentially, I bask in the brilliant light of wisdom and enlightenment that shines like a glorious Sun in the sky of my conscious being. This sunlight of self-realisation makes me see my 'true' nature as pure consciousness known as the Atma. It also makes me aware of the fact that besides the Atma, the rest of the creation has no pith and substance, and therefore it has no spiritual value, importance and significance for me'. [This is the profound impact the teaching of the four great Maha Vakyas had on sage Shukdeo.] (39).

40. In order to understand the real meaning of the Maha Vakyas, one must contemplate on its two aspects—the 'Vachya' or the apparent entity that is being referred to by those words, or is being described or expressed in those words, and 'Laxshya' or the actual target or object of that description that is not apparent in the words used but is the real intent of these words.

For instance, the word 'Twam' means 'you'. In physical gross terms, it refers to the physical gross body of the person to whom this word is addressed. But in a subtler plane and in essence it refers to the living consciousness present inside the body of that person as his truthful identity and his 'real self' that is intended to be addressed by the word 'you', and not the physical gross body or its visible organs of perceptions and action because they would have no value bereft of this consciousness, called the 'true self' or the Atma of that person. [That is why, when a person dies, i.e. when his consciousness has left his gross body, we do not address the corpse with the term 'you'. We say that the man has 'passed' away. Had the gross body been the 'real person' for whom the word 'you' is intended, we would have addressed the corpse also with the word 'you', and would not say that the person has gone away.]

Similarly, the word 'Tat', meaning 'that', apparently refers to the almighty and supreme Lord God who rules over the entire creation, and is its creator, sustainer, protector and concluder. But the real object of this word 'Tat', the actual intended Supreme Being for whom it is meant, is the supreme transcendental entity which is pure cosmic Consciousness, is Truth personified, and is an embodiment of eternal Anand (beatitude and felicity, happiness and bliss). This entity is 'Brahm' which is much superior to the creator, sustainer, protector and concluder forms of Divinity apparently referred to by the word 'Tat'.

The word 'Asi', meaning 'it is', establishes a bridge between these two facets of the above words of the Maha Vakya 'Tattwamasi'. In other words, it establishes a union between the real intended object of the word 'Twam' which is the soul or pure consciousness of the individual creature, called his Atma, and 'Tat' which is the cosmic Consciousness, eternal Truth and Anand personified as the supreme transcendental Brahm (40).

41. The two words 'Twam' and 'Tat' create a sense of duality, a notion of dichotomy, or a separation between two entities because of the 'Kaarya-Kaaran' effect. [The word 'Kaarya' refers to any act or deed, any task or work, any proceeding, any undertaking, any function, any result, any step, any engagement etc., and the word 'Kaaran' refers to the cause, the origin, the purpose, the root, the principal factor or agency, or motive for that particular Kaarya. Sometimes this cause is evident and at other times it is

implied or purported. This concept has been explained in detail in verse no. 42 below.]

When the sense of duality is removed, when it is realised that the same consciousness is the individual creature's Atma as well as the cosmic Consciousness in this creation, the very basis of this dichotomy, the basic cause of duality, is removed. This establishes uniformity between the Atma of the individual creature which is the microcosmic form of the universal consciousness, and the supreme Brahm which is the macrocosmic form of the same consciousness. Both become 'one, non-dual' entity which is eternally blissful and pure consciousness personified. [In other words, the Atma of the individual creature and the supreme Brahm become one, indistinguishable and inseparable.]

Even in this mortal physical world, these two words 'this' and 'that' are used to indicate two separate planes of existence in any given time and place. [For example, we say 'this time' to indicate the present tense, and 'that time' to indicate the past time or the future time.] If one hypothetically removes this notion of 'this' and 'that' vis-à-vis any given two planes of existence, the distinction between these two planes cease to have any meaning and relevance. In other words, what is at present was also in the past and would be in the future. A seamless uniformity is established between the present referred to by the word 'this', and both the past as well as the future referred to by the word 'that'.

Similarly, when the sense of duality of 'this' and 'that' is removed between the individual creature and his Atma, and the cosmic creator and the cosmic Atma known as Brahm, an overwhelming universal sense of seamless and uniform 'oneness' prevails. Only Brahm remains when everything else is removed. For example, in the two statements 'that is Devdutta' and 'this is Devdutta', the entity that is common is 'Devdutta'. When the two words creating a sense of duality, i.e. 'that' and 'this' are eliminated, the main object or target of the two statements, which is 'Devdutta', remains. [When the sense of duality is removed from the sphere of metaphysics and spiritualism, the creature and the supreme Brahm become one and the same, because both are essentially 'pure consciousness personified', and not in their dual form as one with a gross perishable body living on the planet earth and known as the individual creature, and the other as some immortal God who has no body and lives in the heaven.] (41).

42. The Jiva, the living being with a gross body who lives in this physical world of material sense objects and the one who gets involved in doing numerous deeds and taking actions in this world with his physical body, symbolises the 'Kaarya' aspect of this creation—that is, the creature is the one who physically implements all the wishes of the supreme Brahm; the creature reveals the stupendous ability of the cosmic forces of Nature to actually 'do' something in physical and visible terms.

On the other hand, the other aspect of creation is 'Karaan' or the cause of this world and its inhabitant creature coming into being and behaving in the way they do. Without the cause, nothing would ever happen in Nature. This 'cause' is the progenitor of all activities in this creation, although the 'cause' is usually hidden in the form of the subtle motivating factor for any action to be initiated. On the other hand, the 'activity' shown by the creature, or the 'action' that he takes or the 'deed' that he does becomes visible and obvious in apparent and clear terms. Naturally therefore, this cause is superior to everything else in this world and is the basis upon which all actions and deeds are undertaken. Without a 'cause' there will be no 'effect'²; without some divine entity taking the initiative, there would have been no

unfolding of this vast canvas known as creation. Even the world itself has its existence because of this ‘cause’, without which there would have been an eternal void. This ‘Kaaran’ or cause of the entire creation and all that is happening in it is known as Ishwar—the primary Lord, the primary and undisputed cause, the chief motivator and the principal progenitor of this world and the creature that acts in tune with the instructions of this Lord. Neither the world in which the creature lives nor the creature himself can do anything without the express will and in violation of the scheme of things planned by this supreme Lord who is the Authority which decides what is to be done and what is not to be done².

When these two aspects of the physical creation are eliminated, when one delves into the ‘primary root’ which is at the base of all sorts of causes sprouting in this creation and revealing themselves as colourful branches in myriad shapes and sizes symbolised by the contours of this magnificent world of diverse activities and variable norms, the only entity that is left is pure and undiluted Consciousness. The latter is at the very foundation of the entire creation, both at the microcosmic level of the humble creature as well as the macrocosmic plane of the fathomless cosmos. The ‘consciousness’ is the cause of this world coming into being, and at the same time it is this ‘consciousness’ that enables the world to do what it does, for a world devoid of consciousness would be dead and dead entities do not do anything at all.

This knowledge is the highest form of ‘spiritual achievement’ because it entails the realisation that the only ‘truth’ in this world is the supreme transcendental Consciousness known as Brahm which is both the ‘Kaaran’ as well as the ‘Kaarya’ in this creation. [The concept of Kaarya-Kaaran has been explained in Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 48 which is Chapter 14 of this volume.]

When this erudition and wisdom dawns upon the mental horizon of the spiritual aspirant, he is said to be completely enlightened (42).

[Note—¹A simple example would explain this phenomenon. When a leaf shakes on the branch of the tree, there must be some breeze blowing or some animal such as a monkey shaking the branch though one might not be able to see either of them. The leaf would not shake on its own. Therefore, the fact that the leaf has shook implies that there is some cause to make it happen.

²For example, when we feel the desire to eat something out of hunger, the ‘cause’ is the desire to eat which is a subtle expression of hunger. Now, this causes us to ‘make efforts’—or ‘take action’ and ‘do something’ so that we can arrange for food, cook it and eat it. This process of ‘searching for food, cooking it and eating it’ is visible to all and is a very obvious activity which cannot be hidden. But the underlying ‘cause’ for all this ‘activity’ is not food but the subtle desire to eat out of hunger. In this triumvirate of ‘hunger, desire to eat, and actually implementing it’, the ‘fundamental cause’ is hunger, for had there been no ‘hunger’, there would have been no desire to eat in the first place, and therefore no need to search for food, cook it and then eat it. The ‘hunger’ in this example is ‘the unadulterated primary cause of everything, i.e. ‘Brahm’, the ‘desire to eat’ is the subtle manifestation of this cause, i.e. ‘Ishwar’ which now acts as the chief motivator and the driving force for all that unfolds henceforth, and finally the ‘process of procuring food and actually eating it’ is the ‘action or deed’ that manifests this cause, i.e. it is symbolic of the ‘creature’ who actually implements this desire of Brahm to acquire and eat food.

The concept of Karya and Kaaran have been explained in Tejobindu Upanishad also in its Canto 1, verse no. 48 which is Chapter 14 of this volume.]

43. A spiritual aspirant can have a holistic knowledge of the grand eternal Truth and understand the profound import of the great Maha Vakyas only when he attentively hears about them from his learned Guru (moral preceptor and spiritual teacher),

imbibes their eclectic meaning, contemplates and deeply ponders upon them and the profound importance and spiritual significance that they have, and finally personally experience and witness this Truth so as to be firmly convinced of its veracity and irrefutability (43).

44. All forms of knowledge that do not teach about the ultimate 'Truth' are irrelevant, immaterial and inconsequential knowledge (because 'truth' is the only imperishable entity in creation, and anything that brings the creature closer to this imperishable entity would obviously imply his being pulled away from all other situations that are perishable). Therefore, the knowledge which enlightens the creature about the ultimate 'Truth' in creation which is known as the supreme transcendental Brahm—the Brahm which is the primary cause of the coming into being of the entire creation and is the cosmic Consciousness that uniformly pervades this creation as its integral and inseparable part, as its vital life and inherent natural energy—is the knowledge that can provide him with eternity and immortality because this knowledge brings him closer to this Brahm (44).

45. Brahma, the cosmic creator, has said (i.e. laid down as a principle) that the wise and learned Guru should preach the great scriptural sayings called the 'Maha Vakyas' to the disciple in a holistic and comprehensive manner, complete with their Shadanga Nyas (see verse no. 12-16), and not only the literal text without explaining the profound meaning of these Maha Vakyas (because then the very spirit of teaching the great sayings would be killed and they would be rendered handicapped in serving their purpose of providing enlightenment and self-realisation to the disciple about his own 'self' and the 'consciousness' present universally in the rest of the creation). If this edict is not followed then the teaching becomes merely a formality and serves no enduring spiritual purpose for the aspirant.' (45).

46. The Lord (Shiva) said to sage Shukdeo—'Oh the exalted sage! Your father sage Veda Vyas is well versed in the knowledge that pertains to the supreme Brahm. It is to please him and also because I am very pleased with his erudition and wisdom that I had accepted to teach you about this great Upanishad and unravel its esoteric and mystical secrets (46).

47. This Upanishad preaches about the eclectic knowledge pertaining to the exalted cosmic Divinity, knowledge which pertains to the essential nature and primary form of the supreme transcendental Brahm who is an embodiment of eternal, uniform and universal 'cosmic truth, pure consciousness and bliss'. If you (sage Shukdeo) constantly meditate and contemplate upon this truthful divine entity to the exclusion of all other deluding entities which are hollow and false, it is certain that you would obtain eternal freedom from the cycle of birth and death, the spiritual liberation and deliverance which is called 'Mukti' (47).

48. He who is addressed by and is the object of worship when the divine monosyllabic Mantra is pronounced at the beginning of all the Vedas (here referring to the monosyllable ethereal word-Mantra OM which is used as a prefix at the start of any auspicious enterprise as well as a suffix at the end of it in order to invoke the supreme Lord's blessings and his intercession on behalf of the worshipper), he whose existence and supernatural divinity is explicitly asserted and unequivocally affirmed by Vedanta (the Upanishads), he who uniformly pervades throughout Nature as its integral and

inseparable part, being an universally all-pervading, all-encompassing and omnipresent entity, but at the same time remaining independent of it and beyond its limitations and scope, surrounding the entire Nature from the outside and being much superior to and grander than all the parameters that define Nature—such an exalted and supreme Being is the Lord of the entire creation. As such, he is called ‘Maheshwar’, or the ‘Great Lord’ (48).

49. Hearing this divinely holy preaching of Lord Shiva, the most enlightened sage Shukdeo became overwhelmed with the radiant splendour and glory of spiritual realisation. He became exceedingly ecstatic, being submerged and getting lost in the sublime thoughts of the supreme Parmeshwar, the Lord of the entire creation whose image this world is and who personifies the latter so much so that Shukdeo got up, bowed most reverentially to Lord Shiva who was now his moral and spiritual teacher and guide, forsook all worldly relations and their incumbent attachments and entanglements, and then went on his way (to do severe ‘Tapa’—penances and austerities, as well as ‘Yoga’—deep meditation and contemplation, in some remote and far away forest or other place conducive to spiritual pursuits without any worldly disturbances) (49).

50. When sage Krishna Dwepaayan (i.e. sage Veda Vyas) saw his son going away in such a state of profound renunciation—showing no remorse at snapping all his filial and other family ties of this world, having forsaken all worldly connections and becoming immune to all its charms and attractions, and being in a state of complete blissful trance of self-realisation and Brahm-realisation so much so that Shukdeo did not even take permission from his father, who was even present on the occasion, to go to the forest to do Tapa and Yoga—he (Veda Vyas) naturally felt deeply saddened as a father would be when he has lost his only son. But sage Shukdeo was unmoved and unconcerned at his father’s predicament and extreme mental agony of having had to abandon his only son who was very dear to him, because Shukdeo was completely overwhelmed with renunciation and detachment; he was swept off by the surging ocean of extreme blissfulness that comes with self and Brahma realisation (50).

51. Overwhelmed by the surging emotional waves of sorrow at having lost his only loving son, sage Veda Vyas could not control himself, and he followed his son from behind, lamenting, crying and calling out woefully to him to return.

At that agonizing and heart-wrenching moment, Veda Vyas’ woeful wailing was answered in complete silence by all the inanimate as well as the animate things in the world. In other words, he met complete silence as a response; there was no reply from any quarter, and there was no one to console him either. Sage Shukdeo did not respond or look back even for a fleeting moment. The world full of living as well as non-living things, the world which was just a moment ago full of colourful things having meaning and substance, suddenly became dead for Veda Vyas and meaningless for him. They lost all their charms and attractions for the father much like they had for his son Shukdeo (51).

52. Hearing that ‘answer’—i.e. being greeted by complete silence as a symbolic answer to his pleadings to his son to come back to indicate that this world is a complete void and he ought to ‘see’ his son as the universal Spirit that pervades uniformly in the entire creation, having manifested itself as the world consisting of the inanimate as well as the animate things and not merely as a particular individual

creature he has been calling as his son, for he might have lost the latter but the ‘real son’ in the form as the universal Spirit is still present all around him to answer his calls ‘silently’, sage Veda Vyas, the son of Satyawati, was overcome with Brahm-realisation himself¹.

This profound realisation made him attain the exalted state of being one with the supreme transcendental Brahm who is eternal, infinite, all-encompassing and all-pervading Supreme Being and the Absolute Truth in this creation (52).

[Note—¹In other words, he now realised the ‘truth’ that inspite of all his scriptural knowledge he had not realised that the universal Spirit is present everywhere and in every form. It is not restricted to any particular body, such as the one he called his son in this case. So though he might have lost the worldly son known as Shukdeo, he still had the entire world to treat as his son if he was foolish enough to regard the physical gross body as the true identity of the Atma, because this Atma lives throughout the length and breadth of the creation in equal measure. On the other hand, if he is wise and enlightened enough to realise the falsehood and transient nature of worldly attachments that revolve around the physical body that is undoubtedly perishable, he would have realised that the real essence of existence is not the perishable gross body of all hues and shapes, but the Atma which is universal and eternally pure consciousness that pervades in this creation. This Atma is the same in Shukdeo as much as it is in the other entities in the visible and living world. So, Veda Vyas should see his son as being present as the universal Spirit that pervades throughout the creation consisting of both the animate as well as the inanimate objects.

Besides this, the answer in the form of utter silence wisened Veda Vyas about the true nature of this world—that no one is no one’s father and son. It is such an paradoxical situation that Veda Vyas who was so wise and erudite as to have classified all the Vedas and written the Purans was not aware of the fundamental truth of creation. It was his son who excelled him in this. Refer Katho-panishad, Canto 2, Valli 2, verse no. 7 which is Chapter 1 of this volume. It precisely describes what Mukti or liberation and deliverance is while the creature is still alive. It is to gain knowledge of the ‘self’ and Brahm—i.e. to become self-realised and Brahm-realised because once this happens the worldly fetters are automatically snapped. This type of Mukti is regarded as the best form of Mukti because it helps the person to break the chain of deeds and having had to suffer their consequences as he no longer gets involved in any deeds and therefore automatically gets rid of the compulsion of having to take a new birth in order to undergo the punishment for evil deeds or enjoy the rewards of any good deed done in the past life.]

53. A spiritual aspirant who comes to be acquainted with the divine knowledge pertaining to the eternal and universal truth concerning the supreme transcendental Brahm as envisioned in and preached by this most esoteric and mystical of Upanishads called ‘Rahasyo-panishad’ is able to break free from the ill consequences of all sins. As a result, he is able to obtain the most divine form of emancipation and salvation for his soul, the one known as ‘Kaivalya Mukti’, or the only form of emancipation in which the soul finds salvation by becoming free from all sorts of delusions and ignorance related to this world and the physical body, and consequentially becoming one with and inseparable from the supreme Soul of the creation from which it had emerged in the beginning and in which it has finally merged to lose its independent existence. [Refer Katho-panishad, 2/3/4 which is Chapter 1 of this volume.] This sublime and holistic knowledge about the divine entity is only available by the grace of one’s Guru (spiritual teacher and guide). This indeed is the comprehensive teaching of this great Upanishad; this is its divine proclamation. Amen! (53).

-----Shanti Paath-----

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Chapter 14

Tejobindu Upanishad

This magnificent Upanishad is virtually like a citadel, a strong fort of the philosophy of 'Advaita Vedanta' which extols the eclectic philosophy of non-duality and uniformity in creation. It is the pivotal Upanishad of this philosophy, and can easily be likened to the crown jewel in the realm of Advaita Vedanta.

Like the Ishavasya and Keno Upanishads, this Upanishad also derives its name from the opening verses of Canto 1 which describe the source of all cosmic Tej, the magnificent divine powers and the stupendous dynamic energy of creation that springs forth from and is centered around one hypothetical point in creation known as the supreme transcendental Brahm. This 'point source' of all divinity and holiness is represented by the 'dot' placed on the symbol of Brahm which is represented by the word OM and its graphical depiction as the sign ॐ. It describes the supreme transcendental Divinity known as Brahm in a very holistic manner.

The name of this Upanishad has two components—viz. 'Tej' meaning 'dynamic energy and radiance', and 'Bindu' referring to literally to the 'dot' or 'a point source of this energy and radiance'. The Tej is the cosmic energy and vitality that not only set the ball of creation rolling but also kept it rolling once it was set in motion, while the Bindu is the point source from where this energy has emanated and which is the central controlling Authority that overlooks the working of this creation. While the creation is the wheel, the Bindu is its hub and the Tej is the kinetic energy that keeps the wheel rotating.

There are six elaborate Cantos in this Upanishad. From the practical standpoint, this Upanishad has a profound positive value in today's world of depression and darkness. Its Cantos 2-4 are great tools that can be used for meditation purposes in order to remove one's mental depression and a sense of inferiority complex, a sense of hopelessness, haplessness and helplessness that are so prevalent and marked in this competitive world today by kindling the positive energy latent in every individual by using the psychological power of 'auto-suggestion' in which a practitioner suggests to himself that he is good and surrounded by goodness, and all negativity are being removed from him and his surroundings.

For this purpose, the aspirant should first understand the meaning of the verses and then sit down calmly in a comfortable meditative posture, hum or mentally repeat the verses of Canto 2 and 3 one by one in order to first imbibe positive thoughts and draw in fresh constructive ideas about himself, to be followed by a holistic cleansing of the inner-self by purging of all negative thoughts by pondering upon the verses of Canto 4.

It is essentially a psychological process whereby one first tells himself 'I am good and auspicious, and I welcome these virtues in me with an open arm', and then

following it up with ‘I am not bad, and all badness in me are hereby eliminated, purged or expelled for good’. As is obvious, such exercises begin to show positive results very soon and are very helpful in a world ridden with negativity, overcome with depressing thoughts that hover over like darkened clouds that effectively obstruct sunlight, and a world where a creature lives in an environment full of artificiality, hopelessness, haplessness and helplessness.

In fact, meditation using this Upanishad is easier and has a greater practical value for a person than using the Mantra OM because he is able to relate himself more closely with the eclectic ideas expressed in the verses of this Upanishad to derive practical benefits from them in his day to day living by eliminating depressing thoughts and improving his outlooks not only about his own self but also about his surroundings, thereby making his life worth it. In the case of OM as a tool of meditation, and on the other hand it presents a rather difficult proposition for him as it is too abstract a concept and an ordinary person finds it hard to relate with its abstract philosophy in practical terms.

Canto 1 describes the symbolic location of the point where the supreme Brahm resides, and this pin-point of Divinity is called ‘Tejobindu’—literally the spot endowed with miraculous ‘Tej’ or a dynamic fount of cosmic energy and light of knowledge and wisdom representing the stupendous powers and astounding potentials of the enigmatic supreme Authority of creation known as Brahm. It describes the qualities necessary in an aspirant to access this Tej and goes on to elaborately discuss in an excellent way the various principles of Yoga—such as Yam, Niyam, Aasan, Pratyahar, Mulbandh, Pranayam, Dhaarna, Dhyana, Samadhi etc. in a very practical way with the perspective of spiritual enlightenment in its truest and purest form.

Cantos 2-3 are an exposition upon the grand virtues of Brahm as realised holistically by a self-realised spiritual aspirant. It is revealed in the form of an enquiry in this regard by Lord Kartikeya and answered by none other than Lord Shiva who is regarded the wisest God amongst the Trinity of Gods. It should be noted here that it was also Lord Shiva who had preached the profundity of the great maxims and axioms of the Vedas to sage Shukdeo in Shuk-Rahasya Upanishad which is Chapter 13 of this volume.

These Cantos expound upon one of the great sayings of the Vedas—i.e. ‘I am Brahm personified’, and go on to enumerate the numerous glorious and divine virtues of this Brahm. They basically present the holistic view of the Upanishads that everything in existence, from the minutest to the most colossus, from the subtlest to the grossest, from the invisible to the visible—all have the same universal, constant, immutable, indivisible and truthful entity known as their ‘soul’ present in them as a common unifying and binding force that unites them into one single whole known as ‘the creation’.

This unifying element is called ‘Chinmaya Brahm’ in Canto 2, the common denominator which is all-intelligence and the almighty Consciousness personified. This entity is like the sub-atomic particles, such as the electron, the proton and the neutron, without which the atom—which is at the core and the basic identity of all material things in this world—cannot exist. And this Chinmaya is qualified as ‘Anand’, the eternal fountainhead of beatitude and felicity. In other words, the realisation that everything in existence are fundamentally the same, the spiritual aspirant is filled with an overwhelming sense of fulfillment as his research for the ultimate ‘truth of life’ has been completed. He discovers that he himself is that ‘truth’ as much as his neighbour next door!

Cantos 3 repeatedly stresses the point that when the spiritual aspirant realises the fact that his true 'self' and truthful identity is not an ordinary humble being with a gross body but the most exalted and supreme cosmic Consciousness itself personified in this form that he achieves the highest post of spiritual endeavours, and this realisation, if it is honest and heart-felt, is the climax of his enlightenment and Brahm-realisation. This Canto enumerates the glorious virtues, the divine attributes and eclectic qualities that characterize this true 'self'.

Canto 4 describes the two types of 'Muktis' called 'Videha Mukti' and the 'Jivan Mukti'. The word 'Mukti' refers to the liberation and deliverance of the soul of the creature from ignorance and delusions, and its ultimate emancipation and salvation so that it does not have to come back and enter the cycle of birth and death in this mortal world. This is once again elaborately explained by Lord Shiva to his son Kartikeya (Shadaanan).

Canto 5 is a revelation of the divine and eclectic virtues of the Atma, the pure consciousness, along with the factors which distinguishes it from anything that is regarded as 'non-Atma'. This subject is comprehensibly described by the learned sage Ribhu when asked to elaborate upon it by his disciple Nidagh.

Canto 6 finally sums up the divine and glorious virtues of the supreme transcendental Divinity known as Brahm, as well as its representative the pure conscious Atma, as told by the great sage Ribhu to his disciple Nidagh. This Canto employs the unique methodology of establishing the falsehood of this world by citing countless instances of highly incredulous things and saying that if such highly absurd things can be true then the world could also be true. Refer verse nos. 73-99 of this Canto.

The high point of this Upanishad is the employment of the typical pattern of the Vedas to describe the supreme truth about Brahm, i.e. the process of negation known as Neti-Neti. This is very clear in Canto 4, 5 and in verse nos. 1-29 of Canto 6. Lest this negation process create any doubts about the authenticity of the omnipotent and omnipresent existence as well as the supreme transcendental and authoritative nature of Brahm, verse nos. 30 onwards of Canto 6 goes on to assertively declare what *is* Brahm in positive terminology as opposed to the negation pattern of the earlier verses which emphasise what is *not* Brahm.

The Kaivalya, Dhyan Bindu, Brahm Bindu, Brahm Vidya, Shwetashwatar, Sarwasaar and Shuk Rahasya Upanishads of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition complement and supplement the doctrines expounded and enunciated in this present Upanishad and ought to be read along with it to fully grasp the profundity of its teachings. All these grand Upanishads are included in this present volume as separate chapters. Besides these, there are numerous other Upanishads which deal with the identical subject as done in the present Tejobindu Upanishad, such as for instance the Mahopanishad of the Sam Veda, the Atma Prabadh Upanishad of the Rig Veda, the Adhyatma and Tarsaar Upanishads of the Shukla Yajur Veda, and the Atmopanishad of the Atharva Veda to mention a few.

The universality of the Atma has been also the subject affirmed in the Holy Bible in its 1 Corinthians, 12/3-26.

-----Shanti Paath-----

ॐ_सह_नाववतु_।_सह_नौ_भुनक्तु_।_सह_वीर्य_करवावहै_।_तेजस्वि_नावधीतमस्तु_।_मा_विद्विषावहै_।

-----ॐ शान्तिः ! शान्तिः !! शान्तिः !!!-----

The meaning of this Shanti Paath is given in appendix no. 1.

Canto 1

[Canto 1 describes the symbolic location of the point where the supreme Brahm resides, and this pin-point of Divinity is called 'Tejobindu'—literally the spot endowed with miraculous 'Tej' or a dynamic fount of cosmic energy and light of knowledge and wisdom representing the stupendous powers and astounding potentials of the enigmatic supreme Authority of creation known as Brahm. It describes the qualities necessary in an aspirant to access this Tej and goes on to elaborately discuss in an excellent way the various principles of Yoga from the perspective of metaphysics—such as Yam, Niyam, Aasan, Pratyahar, Mulbandh, Pranayam, Dhaarna, Dhyan, Samadhi etc. in a very practical way with the perspective of spiritual enlightenment in its truest and purest form. It describes what is true Mukti, enumerates the characteristics of a Brahm-realised person, and outlines the obstacles encountered by a spiritual aspirant in his path.]

OM salutations! The 'Bindu' or dot, known as the Anuswar (ँ) in the Sanskrit language¹, placed on the top of the symbol for OM (ॐ --which is a synonym of Pranav, and which in turn is synonymous with the supreme transcendental cosmic Divinity known as Brahm) is a sign or symbol of cosmic 'Tej' (dynamic energy, light, heat as well as splendour, radiance, glory, magnificence) emanating from the supreme transcendental Divinity known as Brahm².

To meditate upon this 'dot' is the best form of Dhyan (contemplation and focusing of the mind on some object that is to be diligently pursued and obtained). This Bindu (dot) is equivalent to the micro-fine, sublime and subtle Atma of this world (much like the invisible atom which is at the core of all molecular structures that determine the shape of everything that exists in this physical world, or a lighted wick of a candle placed in the center of a dark room).

It (i.e. the Atma represented by the Bindu) resides in the subtle heart of all the living beings in this world. It is like an invisible atom whose presence cannot be denied; it is most auspicious and a bestower of auspiciousness; it is inherently peaceful, calm and serene.

It has manifested itself in the three basic forms in which this creation exists—viz. in the gross, the subtle and the subtlest form as the cause of everything in existence³.

That is why it is regarded as the most enigmatic, incomprehensible and mysterious entity in this creation (1).

[Note—¹The Anuswar (ँ) Is a dot placed on the top of an alphabet in Sanskrit language to give a nasal sound as in 'sung or sum'. Suppose it is placed above the consonant 'Ra', then the resultant letter becomes a 'Beej Mantra' or seed or root Mantra for certain deity, in this case it is Lord Ram, the incarnation of Lord Vishnu. This Beej Mantra is used in occult and ritualistic forms of worship such as invocations during fire sacrifices. The concept of a dot has been explained in note to verse no. 5 in the context of the 'Chandra Bindu' of this Canto below.

²This metaphysical phenomenon will be easily understood by way of a simple example. Suppose a lighted candle is placed in the center of a huge dark room or hall. When looked from a distance, the flame would appear to be like a dot of energy and light which spreads its radiance and light that cuts through the all-engulfing darkness

of the room. In the context of metaphysics and spiritualism, this 'dot' is Brahm, and the creation is made visible due to the light of wisdom and knowledge that emanates from this central point, while the light itself represents consciousness that makes it all possible.

³This is because the entire world owes its existence to the Atma, and the world consists of three basic forms—the gross external body consisting of the various organs that are visible, the subtle body which is not visible but is the hidden operator of this body, and it is made up of the mind and intellect complex, and the subtlest form known as the causal body consisting of the subtle heart inside which the Atma or pure consciousness of the creature resides. This Atma is the very 'cause' of the entire setup emerging and working in the manner it does, and therefore the micro-fine and subtlest body that harbours this 'causative' Atma in the gross physical body of the creature is called the 'causal body'—i.e. the body which harbours the 'cause' of everything coming into being or coming into effect is called the 'causal body'.]

2. It is not easy to meditate upon this Bindu (the dot symbolising the atomic form of Divinity) as it is a most difficult and abstract proposition. To worship it, to honour it, to fully appreciate its spiritual importance and metaphysical significance, to contemplate and meditate upon it, to gain access to its stupendous powers and potentials, and to be able to find its refuge and shelter (i.e. seek its blessings and empowerment) is a Herculean task for even the wise, contemplative and skilled ascetics and sages. It is hard to have access to its enigmatic secrets, and even harder to retain their benefits if they are at all accessed after strenuous exercise and diligence (2).

3-4. [The following narration describes the virtuous qualities necessary in an aspirant to make him eligible to have practical understanding of the profound metaphysical secrets of this Bindu and have access to its esoteric knowledge.]

Those who have a balanced diet (i.e. those who are not indulgent in food and held captive by their taste buds), who have vanquished anger, vengefulness and malice, who remain without any company, preferring to lead a solitary life in peace and seclusion, who have successfully exercised control over their sense organs, who treat 'Sukh and Dukh', i.e. the opposite emotions of pleasures and happiness as well as sorrows, miseries and pains with equal equanimity and fortitude, remaining unmoved, unfaltering, steadfast and tranquil in mental and emotional turmoil caused by both types of opposing and contradictory circumstances, who do not have any kind of Ahankar (pride, ego, arrogance and haughtiness), who have no desires, expectations and hopes of any kind, who do not accept anything from anyone more than the bare necessities for sustenance of life (3), who are determined to find that eclectic knowledge and the source of Divinity that is inaccessible to other people and pursue it with whole hearted diligence and steadfastness—only such illustrious persons who have these divine and eclectic virtues in them, those who possess these eclectic qualities in them can ever hope to have access to the great knowledge pertaining to the three facets or aspects (the so-called three 'Mukha' or mouths)¹ of OM along with its three abodes or manifestations². That is why such persons are regarded as being equivalent to the bird Swan or 'Hans', the bird used as a metaphor for purity, immaculacy, wisdom and divinity³ (4). [3-4].

[Note—¹The Dhyānbindu Upanishad, which is Chapter 15 of this volume, also refers to these *three aspects* of OM as its three eyes in its verse nos. 9-13. They are called the 'Triad' of creation and consists of, inter alia, the following-- symbolically refer to so-called 'Triad' of creation—(a) such as the Trinity Gods named Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer and protector, and Shiva the concluder; (b) the three states of

mortal creation at the micro level—the gross body of the individual creature called the waker or Vishwa, the subtle body of the individual creature called the dreamer or Taijas, and the causal body of the individual creature called the deep sleeper or Praagya; (c) the three states of immortal creation at the macro level—the sum total of all the gross bodies in creation called the cosmic waker or Viraat Purush, the sum total of all the subtle bodies in creation called the cosmic dreamer or Hiranyagarbha, and the sum total of all the causal bodies in creation called the cosmic deep sleeper or Ishwar; (d) the three Gunas called Sata (the noblest quality in the creation), Raja (the medium quality) and Tama (the meanest quality that a creature can possess); (e) the three Shaktis or powers and potentials that drive the world on—such as Gyan Shakti or the power of knowledge, Ichha Shakti or the driving power of desires and ambitions, and Kriya Shakti or the ability and strength to carry out actions and do desired deeds; (f) the three planes of time—such as the past, the present and the future.

²The three abodes of OM are the three divine Gods of the Trinity, viz. Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer and protector, and Shiva the concluder.

³The bird Swan or *Hansa* is considered the most pure, clean, wise, erudite and clever among the birds. It is believed that it eat pearls and picks them up from amongst an assortment of gems, which symbolically means it picks up and accepts only the best amid the variety of things available to it in the form of an assortment of various qualities and virtues that define the character of all individual creatures in this world. It is also reputed to drink the purest form of milk, leaving aside the water content of an adulterated form of this nourishing liquid. It is also the vehicle of Goddess Saraswati, the patron Goddess of knowledge, wisdom, intelligence, speech and learning. Hence, the reference to a swan while describing a creature conscious of the vital wind or Pran passing through him means the basic, inherent and intrinsic tendency of that wisened and intelligent creature is to be the best, most pure and divine, wise, awakened and enlightened, adroit, clever and sagacious like the swan, and pick all the goodness and forsake all that is bad in this world. Saraswati rides on a swan, symbolising the creature's inborn enlightenment and excellence of his mental caliber. Symbolically, Saraswati resides in his Pran because it rides on the swan, i.e. in his heart, throat and mind—that is, his heart has purity of emotions, he speaks well of all, and his words are sought after by all as priceless gems of wisdom, and his mind is intelligent, discerning and noble.

The alphabet 'Ha' of the word 'Hansa' is sounded by the vibration of the exhaled wind passing through the vocal cords present in the throat or the wind pipe which connects to the nose, while the alphabet 'Sa' is sounded by the root of the tongue which opens into the mouth when the breath is inhaled. Both the nose and the mouth open in the same cavity called the throat. Hence, the inter relationship between 'Ha' and 'Sa' is evident. During the twenty-four hour period covering a single day and night, a person inhales and exhales, or breathes, roughly twenty-one thousand times because each cycle of inhalation and exhalation is equivalent to saying one Mantra 'Hans' consisting of the two syllables 'Ha and Sa' (refer Dhyānbindu Upanishad, verse no. 63).

The *Dhyān Bindu Upanishad*, verse no. 24 and 62-63, of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition which primarily deals with meditation and contemplation on Brahm in order to obtain emancipation and salvation of the soul of the creature says that the supreme transcendental Brahm, known also as Pranav, resides in the heart of all the living beings in the form of a Hansa. The main objective of this Upanishad is to make the Yogi (a person who follows its tenets of meditation) aware that he is like the divine swan, but he was unaware of his divinity and sublimity, his exalted stature, till that was pointed out to him in this verse. So he must become one like a 'swan', remind himself constantly that he is like a swan, and he must do not do anything or act in anyway which is not befitting his exalted and superior status which is equivalent to a wise swan.

The *Yogchudamani Upanishad*, verse no. 82-83 of Sam Veda tradition describes this Swan in the context of Yoga. Refer also to *Brahm Vidya Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, verse nos. 20-28, 61-64, 78-79.]

5. Those who are free from being victims of lethargy and indolence, and who do not seek support from people with worldly tendencies are the ones who can understand the enigmatic secrets of Bindu (the 'dot' symbolising the atomic source of Divinity called Brahm) because this single source of Divinity itself is a vibrant point source of cosmic illumination and independent of any support. This 'Bindu' is the one which gives support to everything in existence.

On the lower side of this Bindu is the crescent shape of the moon (resembling the hollow of a parabolic dish), and this is the symbolic abode of Lord Vishnu, the sustainer and protector of the creation¹ (5).

[Note--¹The combined structure of the dot + dish is called the 'Chandra Bindu'--(◐◑).

Lord Vishnu is the sustainer of creation and is said to be a manifestation of the Viraat Purush, the vast, invisible and all-inclusive macrocosmic form of Brahm. Viraat is the subtler form of Vishnu and the first gross manifestation of Brahm. The bowl-like dish at the lower end of the Bindu represents the cosmic crucible where the creation was first conceived, and the dot represents that cosmic source of energy and empowerment that infused first signs of life in the cosmic ether present in this bowl. This is akin to the celestial sun shining in the sky upon the vast bowl of the earth harbouring the first signs of life under water in the form of aquatic flora and fauna before they migrated over the surface when the conditions became conducive to life on the open stretches of the earth above the surface of the water of the oceans and rivers.

The concave reflecting surface of a mirror or the inner surface of a dish has a focal point where all the rays that fall on it converge. This is a basic theory of light in physics which is employed in concentrating rays emanating from the farthest corners of the cosmos in scientific Radars, telecommunication equipments, in household dish antennas that feed signals to the television sets etc. This same principle is applied in metaphysics—when the spiritual aspirant focuses his attention on this hypothetical Bindu or dot, he is literally capturing the cosmic sound waves that are represented by the ethereal word OM and harnessing the cosmic dynamic energy of creation which is known as Brahm or Consciousness.

There is another way of visualizing this phenomenon. The Sun is the focal point of the solar system and the earth revolves around it in a symbolic gesture to harness the Sun's energy and light from all sides. The earth virtually circumambulates or circumnavigates the Sun and pays its obeisance to it just like a person goes around the sacred fire during the religious sacrifice to pay his respect to it. It is a metaphoric way of saying that the earth ensures that none of the Sun's energy, light, heat, splendour and radiance is allowed to escape from benefiting it by going round it and 'capturing' them from all the sides. This Sun is the focal point or Bindu of the solar system. Similarly, Brahm is the focal point or Bindu of all spiritual endeavours.

From the perspective of creation, this Bindu or dot is the point source that provides heat and energy to the cosmic incubator from which the entire creation emerged.]

6. The three subtle letters of OM (i.e. A, U and M) are like the three mouths of the Vedas (i.e. they represent the three primary Vedas, the Rig, Sam and Yajur, embodying holistic knowledge about all aspects of creation). These three components of OM represent all the three Gunas in creation (i.e. the Sata Guna, the Raja Guna, and Tama Guna which determine the basic character and nature of all living beings in creation).

OM, being ethereal, invisible, sublime and subtle in nature, has no definitive forms, no specific definitions, and no distinctive attributes and characteristics that can ever define or characterize it.

It is steady and uniform; it is without any faults, shortcomings and taints of any kind related to this worldly existence; and it has no support for itself because it is self-supporting and self-sustaining (6).

[Note—As it would be observed here, the ethereal word OM representing the entity that is supreme transcendental and cosmic Divinity personified, and which is known by the other synonym of Brahm or Pranav, has such virtues that appear to be contradictory to each other, making OM and its principal subject, the Brahm, so very abstract, enigmatic and esoteric that it becomes a subject beyond the comprehension by logic and rationality of the intelligence-based thinking process of the mind, making it virtually impossible to be grasped and understood. So the only way to witness the truthfulness of its existence and supernatural powers is to personally experience its all-pervasive presence, and this is achieved by meditation and contemplation, and not by indulging in endless debates and trying to arrive at the truth by too literal an interpretation of the various scriptures which is devoid of their practical implications, because they would only add to confusions rather than removing them. This irrefutable fact has been asserted in Shwetashwatar Upanishad, Canto 4, verse no. 8. The mysterious nature of Brahm has been expounded in this Upanishad in its four Cantos, 3-6. The Brahm Vidya Upanishad, in its verse nos. 3-9, 71-74 very brilliantly describes the components of OM.]

7. The supreme transcendental Brahm represented by the ethereal divine word OM is such an esoteric and enigmatic entity having no attributes and qualifications, and occupying such an exalted and supreme stature that any kind of suitable epithet, title or honour cannot be found for it, making it impossible for it being precisely and conclusively described in words, physically perceived by any of the sense organs of the body, as well as being completely comprehended by the mind.

In fact, it can be subtly perceived only by one's personal experience of its exalted existence as witnessed during meditation and deliberation on the true form of the pure 'self' (because the 'true and pure self' is Brahm personified as the conscious Atma).

It cannot be described and comprehended in the form of independent subtle and microcosmic components of this vast creation, and neither in the composite form in which they visibly reveal themselves as the physical world (7).

8. It is a personification of eternal beatitude and felicity that is beyond any comparison with anything of its kind in this world. It is very difficult to experience and witness it. It is without any birth or beginning, being eternal and imperishable. It is free from the clutches of various natural tendencies of the mind. It is stable and steady in its own state of existence. It is eternal, uniform and universal. And it is ever exalted and steady in its sublime form, being immune to all demotions and degradations that afflict all other entities in this creation (8).

9. This object of all spiritual pursuits is known as Brahm. It is the object of worship when one worships Lord Vishnu (as it is Vishnu personified). It is the incomprehensible pure conscious Atma residing in the subtle sky or space (of the creature's heart, much like Lord Vishnu who resides in the celestial heavens up in the deep recesses of the sky) (9).

10. It (i.e. Brahm represented by OM) is wholesome, all-pervasive, all-encompassing, all-incorporating and all-inclusive, covering in its ambit the entire creation in all its finest and minutest forms, but at the same time it is none of them and is beyond the purview of all entities in existence.

It is established in the subtle space of the sky (as the pure conscious Atma).

It is neither the one who meditates and contemplates, nor the object of such endeavours, or the process of meditation and contemplation. In spite of this, it is the object of all spiritual pursuits, the aim of all forms of meditation and contemplation. In fact, it is a personification of these auspicious and spiritual virtues of meditation, contemplation, focusing of attention on the truth, and diligently pursuing it (10).

11. It is manifested in the form of everything in existence, pervading in all of them universally and uniformly, but at the same time it is beyond them, enclosing the entire creation from the outside like an all-encompassing sheath or shell. It is like the vast void of the endless space of the cosmos, being fathomless and measureless. In fact, there is nothing beyond it in existence.

It is not only most great and exalted but supreme and transcendental, being beyond the purview of comprehension and imagination. It is such a difficult-to-understand entity that the words 'truth' and 'most enlightened or self-illuminated' are not apt descriptions of it. In fact, no one knows what, which or who it is (11).

12. It is the object of worship, adoration and reverence for great sages and seers (who worship it with firm conviction, faith and devotion without arguing and debating endlessly about its authenticity, relying only on the great truths enunciated in the tenets of the Vedas and other scriptures). The irony is that neither the Gods nor those who call themselves experts in metaphysics and theology (i.e. who are scholars in the reading of scriptures etc.) can ever hope to know it.

Such negative traits as Lobha (greed, rapacity and yearnings), Moha (worldly attachments, attractions, infatuations, delusions and their accompanying traps), Bhaya (fears of all kinds), Garva (pride, ego, haughtiness, arrogance and hypocrisy), Kaam (worldly desires, lust, passions, yearnings), Krodh (anger, indignation, wrathfulness, spitefulness) etc. are like hurdles in the path leading to witnessing and experiencing this eclectic divine entity known as Brahm (12).

13. Other hurdles in getting access to this divine and eclectic entity known as Brahm represented by OM are the following—to be unduly perturbed by such extraneous factors as heat and cold, hunger and thirst¹; making of various vows and having numerous aspirations and determinations, as well as having doubts and confusions (which cause endless perplexities and confoundedness for the spirit, resulting in its getting mired in uncertainties and making it restless); being proud of having a birth as a Brahmin (without having any quality behoving this high birth, of which 'being proud' is not one); getting entangled in the web created by allowing oneself to be surrounded by and keeping oneself engrossed in reading the huge tomes of scriptures in an attempt to find Mukti (liberation and deliverance; emancipation and salvation) by reading them because they would bog down the person by their sheer volume and endless interpretations which would act like millstones around his neck to drown him instead of liberating and delivering him² (13).

[Note—¹This is because such people are more concerned with providing comfort to the physical body and therefore are not eligible candidates for spiritual pursuit requiring a lot of equanimity, tolerance, sufferance, sacrifice, austerity, enduring

hardships, and observance of strict codes of conduct and control over the thought processes of the mind—as it is an uphill journey. The true path of spirituality is marked by enlightenment about what constitutes the ‘real self’ and what is the eternal true goal of life as opposed to the ‘pseudo self’ and transient nature of false goals, which in turn means that the aspirant is well aware that his body is not his ‘real self’ and it is the Atma which is not at all affected by the physical discomfort of the body, such as it suffering from heat or cold, or feeling hungry and thirsty, and that the pursuit of the world can never lead to permanent peace and tranquility.

²The scriptures can show the path but would not actually provide Mukti. If only their literal interpretation is done without understanding their intentions, then it becomes a perfunctory exercise from the spiritual perspective. Merely acquiring literal scholarship and expertise in them instead of actually understanding their subtle meaning and putting their tenets into practice is useless. This fact has been asserted by the Yam God while preaching Nachiketa in Katho-panishad, Canto 1, Valli 1, verse nos. 5, 8-9.

The Book of Ecclesiastes, 12/12-14, the *Holy Bible*, Old Testament says almost an identical thing as follows—

12: ‘And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh.

13: Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.

14: For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.]

14. This divine entity is not obtained by those who are under constant fear from the mental and emotional turmoil and restlessness caused by Sukh and Dukh, i.e. by being buffeted by opposing mental emotions as experienced when one is subjected to the buoyant feeling one gets out of various worldly pleasures, joys and happiness on the one hand, and getting immersed and drowned in waves of sorrows, pains, distresses, agonies and torments of all kinds on the other hand. Similarly, it is not accessible by those who are too touchy by nature, feeling insulted, humiliated on the one hand or feeling praised and honoured on the other hand at the slightest hint.

Only those persons who are free from such corrupted thought processes and have been able to exercise control over an unsteady and fickle mind that creates an entangling web of emotional upheavals are eligible and qualified to have access to the supreme transcendental Divinity known as Brahm (14).

[Note--¹This is because such emotions keep the mind perpetually distracted and violently agitated, which is not conducive to any endeavour requiring great peace and stability of mind, because this is a necessity for fixing attention and concentrating the energies of the mind towards higher pursuits. Only a calm and focused mind can do some original thinking and research, whether in the realm of the material world or the metaphysical field of spiritualism.]

15. The supreme transcendental Brahm can be witnessed and experienced by a spiritual aspirant by diligently following the eclectic tenets pertaining to the principles of Yam, Niyam¹, Tyag², Maun³, Desh and Kaal⁴.

Other paths are doing Yoga in accordance with its profound philosophy of practicing various Aasans⁵, other exercises such as Moolbandh⁶, uniform restraint of the various organs of the body and keeping them restrained, calm and restful, and focusing the sight on one’s objective and aims in life without getting distracted by so many different perceptions and confusing ideas and views that occur in this world of myriad notions (i.e. being of a steady mind and intellect as well as unwavering in one’s spiritual pursuits). (15)

[Note--¹The virtues of *Yam* and *Niyam* have been described in Skanda Puran in these words:-

सत्यं क्षमाऽऽर्जवं ध्यानमातृशंस्यमहिंसनम् ॥ दमः प्रसादो माधुर्यं मृदुतेति यमा दश ।
शौचं स्नानं तपो दानं मौने ज्याध्ययनं व्रतम् ॥ उपोषणो पस्थदण्डौ दशौ ते नियमाः स्मृताः ॥
(स्कन्दपु०, ब्रा० ध० मा० ५/१९-२१) _

The ten 'Yams' are—truthfulness, forgiveness, simplicity, Dhyan (meditation, concentration of the mind), lack of cruelty (or presence of compassion and mercy), forsaking violence, restraint of mind and sense organs, pleasant demeanors and sweet towards all).

The ten 'Niyams' are—cleanliness/ablution, bath (purification of body), Tapa (austerities, penances, sufferings), alms and charities, keeping silence, Yagya (sacrifices, religious rituals), self study, observance of vows, keeping fasts, celibacy. (Skanda Puran, Bra. Dha. Ma. 5/19-21)

The Varaaha Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its canto 5, verse nos. 12 ½ --14 also describes these Yams and Niyams.

²*Tyag* can be broadly defined as renunciation, detachment, non-involvement, disinterest and dispassion as well as abandonment of all things that are not conducive to one's spiritual well being, which bog down the creature in the swamp of delusions and false charms of this world based on ignorance of reality, and which cause hurdles in one's long term spiritual goal, enlightenment, emancipation and salvation.

³*Maun* is to keep silent and not speaking anything not true; to abhor talking unnecessarily, and even of things about which no certainty can be ascertained. For example, no one can precisely define Brahm, so it is better to keep quiet about it than to boast of knowing who or what Brahm is by unnecessarily attempting to describe it to prove one's knowledge and expertise in the scriptures.

⁴*Desh and Kaal* refer to a certain period of time, era, location and circumstance to which a reference is being made when something is said so as to properly understand its context and decipher the correct meaning in that context.

⁵*Aasans* are the various sitting postures adopted during Yoga, or while doing meditation and contemplating upon some serious topic. These have been elaborately described in all Upanishads dealing with the subject of Yoga. One of the Aasans dealt with here is Siddhasan in verse no. 26 below.

⁶*Moolbandh* is a form of Yoga exercise fully described in Chapter 15, Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 73-74^{1/2} as well as verse no. 27 below.]

16. The spiritual aspirant should practice the six paths of Yoga which are conducive to providing success to him in his spiritual pursuit. These are Pranayam, Pratyahar, Dharna, Dhyan, Aasan and Samadhi. These paths help in witnessing and experiencing the supreme Divinity by the aspirant (16).

[Note--According to Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 41 belonging to the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, the *six limbs of Yoga* are the following—Aasan (sitting posture), Pranayam (breath control), Pratyahar (withdrawal of the mind and its control), Dharna (having a firm conviction, faith and belief on the sanctity and truthfulness of the chosen path), Dhyan (contemplation and concentration of the faculties of the mind and intellect), and Samadhi (a perpetual trance-like state in which the aspirant loses all awareness of the external world and even himself, and remains perpetually in meditation). Also refer Amrit Naad Upanishad, verse nos. 5-8, 16-17.]

17. 'Everything is Brahm'—realising the profundity of this great maxim of the scriptures, one should practice restraint over all the organs of the body, the gross organs (such as the organs of perception—eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin, and the organs of action—legs, hands, mouth, genitals and excretory) as well as the subtle

organs (mind and intellect). This is called 'Yam', and it should be constantly and diligently practiced (17).

18. 'Niyam' has been defined as the acceptance and implementation of knowledge that is eclectic, truthful, holy and spiritual in nature as well as conducive to acquisition of true wisdom, enlightenment, self-realisation and Brahm-realisation, and rejection of that knowledge which has an opposite effect¹.

Wise, erudite and sagacious spiritual aspirants find supreme happiness and bliss if they diligently follow this tenet about what constitutes true 'Niyam' (18).

[Note--That is, all forms of knowledge, skills and learning that pull the creature away from the truth and put a spanner in his endeavours to reach higher goals in life, and instead entangle him in the web of falsehoods and delusions represented by this material world of sense objects characterised by uncountable forms of mental turmoil and physical discomfort, a world which is nevertheless hollow, perishable and transient, should best be avoided and abandoned altogether because such knowledge does not give eternal happiness and peace, because this knowledge is misleading, because this knowledge keeps the creature bogged down in this world of artificiality and illusionary charms that keeps him far away from spiritual enlightenment and salvation, and because such knowledge keeps the creature tossing and churning in the midst of this world much like a piece of helpless wood caught in a choppy ocean during a storm.]

On the other hand, that knowledge which bestows eternal peace and blissfulness upon the creature and helps him to realise his true goal in life, aiding him in his search of finding his roots originating in the divine fount of this eternal peace and blissfulness—the fount of supreme transcendental Divinity represented by the mystical 'Tej Bindu' which is a metaphor for the mystical point from which everything eclectic, sublime, holy and divine has sprung forth in this creation like an eternal cosmic fountain of effervescent cosmic energy along with pulsating spiritual vibrancy and vitality, and which is given the name of 'Brahm'—so that his soul gets final rest and peace by realising its high birth, its noble pedigree, its divine heritage, its eternal and exalted nature as pure consciousness which is completely different from the delusions that are hallmarks of this world. This knowledge provides the soul with emancipation and deliverance from the endless cycle of birth and death as well as from being tossed and kicked around by delusions and ignorance, and therefore it is to be welcomed and grasped with both the hands.]

19. 'Tyag' (renunciation, abandonment, retraction, forsaking, detachment, dispassion, indifference and non-involvement) of all things worldly, non-truthful and non-spiritual is regarded as the best form of spiritual observances. Tyag leads the path to obtaining liberation and deliverance quickly (19).

[Note—It is only when a spiritual aspirant gets totally detached from this material world and renounces all its pleasures and comforts that he can whole-heartedly pursue his spiritual goals without any kind of mental distraction or emotional shackles. He would have nothing to worry about, no assets to protect, no material objects and goals to acquire and achieve, no one to please, no bias towards anything, and no obligations to keep. It is just like a student who is free to concentrate on his studies is expected to do much better than one who has to look after his family if the bread earner father has passed away, for in the latter case this poor lad would find it difficult to devote his entire time and energy on his studies.]

20. The supreme transcendental Brahm is not the subject that can be accessed and learnt by the mind like it does with other material things of this world, or an object that can be visualised and obtained by it by making efforts. Similarly, Brahm cannot

be the subject which can be known and described by the means of words, and neither can be the words proficient enough to do so if even they wish. In other words, Brahm is beyond the scope of both the mind and words. Brahm cannot be imagined and fathomed by the mind, and it cannot be described in words.

Hence, wise ascetics realise Brahm by the path of ‘silence’ or ‘Maun’. They turn inwards to witness and experience this profound fount of supreme Divinity in their own self, and once witnessed and experienced it cannot be described (much like it is impossible to describe just how ‘sweet’ the sweetmeat was after one has tasted it and asked to describe its taste afterwards). A wise, erudite, sagacious and enlightened one is he who meditates and contemplates upon Brahm silently and serenely (and not by showing off his mystical potentials as something to be showcased in a shop window so as to earn name, fame and respect!) (20).

[Note—That is why it is said that ‘silence is divine’ and the best prayer offered to the Lord is the ‘prayer of silence’. Words have their own limitations and it is just not possible to describe the ocean by taking a sample of its water and saying that ‘this is the ocean’. At best, it is a representative of the ocean, giving an idea as to what kind of water one can expect in an ocean, but ocean is just not water but an entire ecosystem and a marine world as fascinating as the one on the outside of its surface, having its own unique rich culture of flora and fauna]

21. When the faculty of speech called the ‘Vaani’ is inept and insufficient to describe it or say anything coherent or intelligible about it in a comprehensive manner, surrendering in its attempt to do so and preferring to keep quiet instead (to save its face and further embarrassment), say then how can it (Brahm) be described by anyone else?

That faculty of speech which is so efficient in vividly describing this deluding myriad world of charming artificiality and fascinatingly enticing colours of numerous shades and hues that keep the creature enchanted and enthralled as if spellbound by a magical wand, fails miserably when it comes to describing the supreme transcendental Truth known as Brahm (21).

22. ‘Silence’ (Maun) is the only and best medium to realise, know and learn, as well as to describe anything about that supreme Divinity.

Since ‘observance of the vows of silence’ is an impossibility for those who are childish and restless by nature (i.e. those who are unwise, those who are inclined towards the world instead of matters spiritual, those who are talkative and fickle-minded, allured easily by the charms of this world and remaining engrossed in them just like chattering children in a school playground or a child surrounded by toys in a toy shop and let loose in it), this eclectic knowledge pertaining to the supreme Truth and Divinity is accessible only to the fortunate few who are deeply conscious of their true ‘self’ and sufficiently mature to pursue the path of Brahm realisation (22).

[Note—Brahm realisation and Self realisation is not a child’s play just like doing original research in any field of science or arts is not everybody’s pie. It requires special aptitude and bearing of the mind besides willingness to follow stern rules and self control, and ‘observance of silence’ is one such golden rule. Silence helps to preserve and concentrate one’s energy and vitality on the task at hand; it prevents the mind from being unnecessarily disturbed by futile chatter and literally gobbling up more than it can cope with. People have sacrificed their entire lives in seclusion while making great inventions and discoveries. Has anyone ever heard cheap market place banter and cacophony of the bar or pop folk theatres in a scientific laboratory where great research is being done? Surely such verbosity is not conducive to serious

scientific research as much as a talkative and fidgety aspirant is totally ineligible and unsuited for spiritual pursuits.]

23. That which has no beginning, no middle or an end, but that which is omnipresent, all-pervading and all-encompassing being uniformly and universally present in the entire creation as its subtle Atma (core or soul)—it is said that such an eclectic mysterious entity has this entire creation as its abode and domain, called its ‘Desh’ (literally, its country or native place where it permanently dwells) (23).

[Note—That is, the supreme transcendental Brahm is not limited to this or that particular entity in creation, but present in every pore and minutest aspect or facet of it. Therefore, the entire manifested creation is its domain and abode.]

24. The truthful awareness of what constitutes ‘Kaal’ (literally an era, the concept of time and phase in individual life of a creature or creation as a whole, any circumstance, the cycle of birth and death) is this—to visualise the entire creation, from the minutest to the grandest, from the smallest individual creature to the cosmic creator known as Brahma, as being part of one big cycle of birth and death is true awareness of the profundity, extensive extent and astounding import of the term ‘Kaal’.

This Kaal is all-inclusive; nothing is beyond its reach and influence. It is indivisible and immutable—the visualization of various phases of time such as minute, hour, month, year, season etc. are simply imaginations of the mind to felicitate understanding of the phenomenon of life. Actually, Kaal is one single non-dual, indivisible whole, just like a fount of eternal blissfulness (known as Brahm)¹ (24).

[Note—¹One day of Brahma is equivalent to the period of time in which the four Yugs—i.e. the four divisions in which one cycle of birth and death are divided into, such as the Sata Yug when the Vedas are said to have been revealed and Upanishads composed, the Treta Yug when Lord Ram manifested, the Dwapar Yug when Lord Krishna came, and the current Kali Yug—pass over one thousand times. And the life of Brahma is one hundred years. By this reckoning, just imagine the measurement of time in the cosmic scale when numerous Brahmas are born and expire.

To draw a parallel from the contemporary world, we measure the distance of far away stars in ‘light years’, i.e. the distance that light covers in so many years. The light covers a distance of approx. 9,500,000,000,000 Km. in one year. So when it said that a particular star is one million light years away, we can well imagine its distance if we try to compare it with the term ‘kilometer’ or ‘meter’ we are accustomed with.

Likewise, the cycle of birth and death of an individual creature is almost like a tiny speck of sand particle on the vast beach of creation, or like a drop of water in an ocean.]

25. ‘Aasan’ is defined as that sitting posture of meditation in which one can sit reasonably comfortably and contemplate and fix his mind upon the thoughts of the supreme Brahm without any kind of discomfort which might cause distraction in meditation, thereby hindering its successful progress.

The thoughts of Brahm is so fulfilling and blissful that when one sits in a comfortable Aasan and meditates upon this eternal fount of beatitude and felicity, all other charms fade away and lose their attractions (just like the case when one finds a spring of fresh and pure mineral water he would forget drinking water drawn from a polluted lake or river, no matter how holy it might be). All his desires to obtain comforts and pleasures from other source of happiness in this deluding world subside once he has discovered this sparkling eternal fount of blissfulness (25).

26. All the Aasans¹ are equally important and are able to help the spiritual aspirant achieve his goal of Brahm-realisation and self-realisation, as well as acquire mystical powers. The various designated Aasans are the best postures that should be adopted if one wishes to achieve success in his meditative practice (without discomfort and distractions). That Aasan by which ascetics obtain mystical powers is called 'Siddha Aasan' (26).

[Note—¹Proper sitting postures are very important in meditation just like they are in every field of life. For example, one should sit in a particular fashion while working at the computer for long hours if one wishes to maintain concentration without damaging the eyes and harming the body over long periods of time. Similarly, there are proper ways in which the body should be borne while one sleeps, walks, runs, and does so many other routine things in life to stay healthy and prevent chronic diseases of the skeleton and muscles and keep the body properly tuned. These Aasans have been described in Upanishads dealing with Yoga philosophy, such as Yogchudamani and Jabal Darshan (Canto 3) of the Sam Veda tradition, and Mandal Brahmin of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, as well as the Dhyana Bindu Upanishad and the Amritnaad Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.

²The *Siddha Aasan*-- To sit in this posture, the two legs are first stretched out. The left leg is then bent at the knee and folded in so that the heel touches the genitals and the sole lies flat against the inner thighs of the right leg. Then the right leg is folded in and the heel is placed in front of the pubic bone and the sole touches the inner thigh of the previously folded left leg. The two hands are stretched out and the outer side of the wrist of each hand is placed on the bent knee-joint of the respective side. The palm is opened and the thumb is touched by the bent first finger to form a virtual ring, with the remaining three fingers held straight out. The practitioner sits perfectly in a ram-rod straight position, with the spine, the neck and the head in a straight line. The mental sight is fixed on a spot in front of the nose, and this state of intense concentration is maintained as long as is feasible for the practitioner. Then the legs are gradually unfolded and after some period of relaxation, the process is repeated with the opposite leg being folded in first and placed below the other leg. It is believed that this posture is one of the best postures to be adopted for Yoga amongst the eighty four lakh (84×10^5) postures of meditation. The fact that there are as many numbers of Aasans as there are species of living beings is endorsed by Dhyana Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 42 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition. This Siddha Aasan is capable of cleansing all the seventy two thousand Naadis (ducts in the body), and is so-called because it is possible to access the divine source of cosmic energy trapped inside the body as well as experience the cosmic power of the kindled Spirit by employing this Aasan. The word 'Siddha' implies one who has acquired stupendous mystical and supernatural powers that are beyond the parameters of the physical and mundane world.]

27. The 'Moolbandh' is closing of that spot in the body which is like the base or foundation for all living beings. It is possible to control the mind and its attention by controlling this Mool or root, which can be done by closing it or doing the Moolbandh. Those who are well versed in the philosophy pertaining to meditation as a tool of Brahm-realisation should be very particular about it (as it helps them to control their mind and its faculties) (27).

[Note--The word 'Mool' means the origin or basis of anything, and 'bandh' means to stop or close. The Moolbandh is done by pressing the genitals with the heels and constricting the muscles of the anus to close this opening. Meanwhile, the Apaana Vayu (the wind present in the rectum and anus region) is pulled upwards forcefully. It is described in Dhyana Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 73-74^{1/2} and Yog-Kundalini

Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 42 of Krishna Yajur Veda which are part of this volume, as well as in Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 46 of Sam Veda tradition.]

28. Just like one treats all the organs of his body equally and takes care of all of them with equal concern, he should also treat all the parts of the society (i.e. all the living beings belonging to different categories of life, such as those belonging to the plant kingdom as well as those belonging to the animal kingdom, including people belonging to different races, classes, religions, geographical areas and colours) equally and take equal care of them.

He should see the same Brahm as pervading uniformly and universally throughout the entire creation, right from the dried stem of a large tree to the tree that is vibrant with life. If one distinguishes between the two, it implies that he does not have equality in vision (28).

29. The truthful eye of wisdom, erudition and enlightenment which is possessed by a Brahm-realised person is one through which a person sees the entire world as a personification of one, single, non-dual Brahm. He looks at the world with eyes of equality; he treats everyone and everything in the same manner, having no sense of distinction between any two entities.

Merely fixing the eye at the tip of the nose as done during various Yoga exercises of fixing attention is not the best form of sight (29).

[Note—This is like taking a potshot at those who blindly follow the methods prescribed in the scriptures without understanding their practical aspect and their subtle meaning. It is like a student learning a text book by rote but failing to apply what he has learnt into practice. This fixing of the sight at the tip of the nose is part of some of the famous Mudras or meditative postures such as Khechari Mudra. It is believed that it bestows astounding mystical powers upon the practitioner if done successfully so much so that he is able to see the three planes of time, i.e. the past, the present and the future. But if he does not have equanimity of vision, if he has no compassion and mercy towards all, if he is still clamped down in notions of mine and yours, me and you, then it is futile to exert one's self and make the body suffer by adopting some grotesque postures.]

30. The real 'sight' in metaphysical terms is that in which the distinction between the viewer, the object viewed, and the process of viewing is removed. In other words, truthful spiritual sight is that in which Brahm is perceived as the one who views, the object viewed, and even the medium of viewing. One should strive to have this holistic vision of this creation which is seamless uniformity; it is Brahm or Consciousness everywhere without exception.

To pretend to be fixing one's sight at the tip of the nostrils while one meditates upon one non-dual Brahm is not the holistic way of looking at this Brahm (30).

[Note--This is like trying to deceive ones self because on the one hand one's objective is noble and one is trying to make the most divine entity in creation as one's ideal idol for worship, trying to emulate its grand virtues and become enlightened about it in a holistic way, and on the other hand one has not understood what that icon stands for in real terms, one has not inculcated the ideals that this idol stands for. So the entire exercise goes to waste.]

31. True form of Pranayam (exercising restraint of the vital winds) is when one is able to restrain all his mental 'Vrittis'¹, and have a firmness of mind and conviction with regard to the fact that this entire creation is Brahm personified, that there is nothing in existence that is not Brahm (31).

[Note—¹The term *Vritti* refers to the natural inclinations and habits of the mind and its wayward tendencies. Since the mind controls one's attention, thoughts and intelligence as well as the organs of perception and action in the gross body, the extended form of this term includes the natural tendency of the creature to veer towards things which give it instant gratification and pleasure even at the cost of its long term harm. Even as Pranayam is considered as the bulwark in the field of meditation exercises as it helps to cleanse the body of all toxins and prepare the practitioner to progress further in his spiritual practice, control of *Vrittis* is equally important and effective tool to help him to control his mind which is at the root of all activities.]

32. To remove the mind from the entire array of delusions and magical charms spread all around it in this material world is tantamount to the 'Rechak' phase of Pranayam¹.

Similarly, to have a firmness of conviction and steadiness in belief in the truthfulness of the maxim and the universal axiom of the Vedas that 'I am Brahm personified' ('Aham Brahmasmi') is tantamount to the Puruk phase of Pranayam². (32).

[Note--¹The *Rechak* phase means exhaling breath after holding it for a while inside the body so that all accumulated waste gases and toxins are eliminated along with it. This is like the washing off or the cleansing phase of Pranayam. Here the word 'Rechak' implies the spiritual aspirant has cleansed his inner self of all spiritual impurities and tainting affects of the delusory world that has cast a dark shadow on the aspirant's immaculate Atma which is 'true self'.

²The *Purak* phase refers to inhaling fresh breath after stale one has been let out during the Rechak phase. Here the implication is that after all the corrupting thoughts have been eliminated from the mind, and after the mind is cleansed of all their ill influences, the aspirant is now prepared to receive fresh noble thoughts and fill his innards with refined views of the creation that are invigorating for his spirit much like oxygen rich inhaled air is invigorating for his body.

This statement 'I am Brahm' is one of the so-called 'Maha Vakyas' and they have been explained in great detail in 'Shuk-Rahasya Upanishad which is Chapter 13 of this volume. They are also the subject matter of many great Upanishads, such as Kaivalyo-panishad, verse no. 16; Sarwasaar Upanishad, verse nos. 12-14 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Atmo-panishad and Mahavakya Upanishad of Atharva Veda tradition; Atma Bodh Upanishad of Rig Veda tradition; Paingalo-panishad, 3-2 and Mandal Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition.]

33. To control the various 'Vrittis' of the mind and intellect (as described in note to verse no. 31) is tantamount to doing Khumbhak phase of Pranayam for wise and enlightened ascetics¹. Stupid and ignorant people think that merely pressing the nose and preventing the winds from escaping from the nose is doing Kumbhak (33).

[Note—¹*Kumbhak* is the phase of Pranayam when inhaled air is withheld inside the body for a fixed time before it is expelled. The idea of 'holding of the breath' is extended here to incorporate the controlling of the wayward tendencies of the mind, as reining in of the mind is of utmost importance for success in any endeavour, be it spiritual or otherwise. This holding of the *Vrittis* is like bridling the horse, putting a harness to it and yoking it to the chariot while it is strictly reined in by an expert charioteer. Otherwise the chariot would have a good chance of tumbling over the roadside if the horse is not put under tight leash.

There is another way of looking at 'Kumbhak' phase of Pranayam from the perspective of metaphysics. When the aspirant has imbibed noble virtues as implied by the 'Purak' phase as indicated in verse no. 32 above, he is asked here to retain them inside his inner being during the Kumbhak phase so as to benefit from them instead of frittering them away by quickly doing 'Rechak' phase or symbolically

eliminating them along with the exhalation of breath. Even as oxygen-rich inhaled breath taken in during the Purak phase benefits the body when it is allowed to remain inside the body for certain period of time so that it can sufficiently oxidize the tissues and reinvigorate the body before it is exhaled, these imbibed good and auspicious virtues should be given time to mould the inherent character and personality of the aspirant for his overall good; they should be allowed to percolate down his inner self to bring about an effective positive change in the overall nature, attitude and outlook of the aspirant. This change would be reflected in his behaviour and thinking processes.

See verse no. 34 below which compliments this verse.]

34. The firm conviction and a holistic view that the same universal cosmic entity known as the Atma is uniformly present in all the objects in this world that are the subject of various perceptions such as sight, smell, hearing, tasting and feeling, to be able to see that single non-dual universal Atma everywhere, is called the true form of Pratyahar¹. This all-inclusive and universal view of the presence of Divinity everywhere and in everything helps the spiritual aspirant in cleansing his mind and intellect of all forms of impurities.

Hence, a wise aspirant should practice it with due diligence and sincerity to become an expert in this view of thinking² (34).

[Note—¹*Pratayahar* is withdrawal of the mind and its control. This verse compliments verse no. 33.

²When one becomes steady in his beliefs then no matter how much he has to suffer or how strong are the forces of delusions sweeping over him like a strong gale, he would stand his ground and not waver from his chosen path even for a fleeting moment no matter what compulsions he has to face.]

35. ‘Dharna’ is to have the vision of the supreme transcendental Brahm in all the places where the mind goes, and to have firmness of conviction and faith in this vision. This is the best form of having the virtue of Dharna as a tool to realise Brahm (35).

[Note—*Dharna* is one of the six limbs of Yoga. It briefly means to have a firm conviction, faith and belief in connection with something. When the spiritual aspirant begins to see Brahm everywhere wherever the mind goes, he would be having a non-dual vision of Brahm, and this view would compliment what has already been said earlier in previous verses.]

36. ‘Dhyan’ is to be steady in the thought of ‘I am Brahm personified’ (see verse no. 32), to be constantly engrossed in meditating and focusing the mind upon the ‘truthful self’ as a personified Brahm to the extent that no other props or supports are needed to reinforce this conviction. This realisation, this firm conviction, this enlightened view about Brahm and the ‘self’ provides immense happiness and bliss (36).

[Note—*Dhyan* is defined as contemplation and deep concentration of the faculties of the mind and intellect. It is also regarded as one of the six limbs of Yoga. Obviously, no great achievement is possible without a focused and concentrated mind. So if the spiritual aspirant is firm in his conviction that his Atma is Brahm personified, it would aid him in his spiritual upliftment as compared to the situation when he is full of doubts about the authenticity of this statement and keeps on jumping ships in the hope of reaching his spiritual destination, in which case he would be left neither here nor there.]

37. The last step in spiritual endeavour is the eclectic and transcendental state of 'Samadhi'. It is the apex of the pyramidal structure of all types of spiritual pursuits because it represents that perpetual state of supreme blissfulness obtained by complete enlightenment that comes with self-realisation and Brahm-realisation that transcends all other forms of mystical achievements.

When all the misconceptions, taints, deformations and defects of the mind and heart that have their origin in delusions and ignorance about the reality are eliminated, when they are thoroughly cleansed of all impure thoughts and made immune to all sorts of distractions and corrupting influences that ordinarily taint the creature's immaculate 'self', and when this makes him steady, sincere and diligent in his spiritual pursuit, it is only then that the excellent notion of 'I am Brahm personified' dawns on the spiritual horizon of any spiritual aspirant. [In all other cases, if a person makes this statement, he is, in all probability, being deceitful and untruthful.]

Samadhi is that state of existence when all other thoughts are sincerely banished from the mind for good except the eclectic and sublime thought of 'I am Brahm personified'¹. This eclectic thought takes firm hold and sweeps away all other thoughts from the spiritual aspirant's mind and heart for good (resulting in the state of utter blissfulness described in verse no. 38 below) (37).

[Note--¹Here, the word 'I' refers to the pure conscious Atma residing in the subtle heart of the spiritually enlightened person. This individual Atma of the creature is a microcosmic counterpart of the all-pervading, supreme, transcendental cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm. This Brahm has manifested itself in the form of the visible world consisting of animate creatures as well as inanimate things, and therefore all that exists is nothing but Brahm, including the person who makes this solemn statement 'I am Brahm personified'. Of course, as it is obvious here, if this statement comes from a convinced heart in a convincing manner, it is indeed a realisation of the great truth by such a man, and therefore he is indeed enlightened. Otherwise, such a statement is unwarranted and uncalled for, and it is full of deceit and like cheating one's own self as well as all the others around.]

Since the aim of all spiritual pursuit is to realise this supreme transcendental Divinity known as Brahm, the ultimate Truth and Reality in creation, so when a person has sincerely made this statement without any trace of deceit and doubt that 'I am Brahm personified', it is deemed that he has realised that final goal of all spiritual endeavours, i.e. he has come to terms with the great doctrine of the Vedas that the Supreme Being known as Brahm is not somewhere high up in the sky but immediately here and even so close to the person that the person and Brahm are indistinguishable from one another. In other words, the enlightened person becomes as holy and divine as the cosmic Divinity itself.

Samadhi is the stage in spiritual efforts when the aspirant has transcended other stages in the spiritual hierarchy and reached a trance like state of existence marked by perpetual blissfulness obtained when one has tasted the nectar of eternity, beatitude and felicity springing forth from the pure conscious Atma, the true 'self' of the spiritual aspirant, which in turn is a personification of the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm. When this realisation dawns upon the spiritual horizon of the aspirant, no other experiences matter.]

38. The eclectic sense of blissfulness, the perpetual state of beatitude and felicity obtained during Samadhi is eternal, natural, genuine, of a high profile and quality, effusive and effervescent in nature, while all other types of happiness and joys are false, artificial and transient.

Constant practice of Samadhi and other spiritual methods (as enumerated in this Upanishad) makes an ascetic perfect in his spiritual achievements, and he

ultimately attains his goal of Brahm and 'self' realisation. He effectively becomes a personification of the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm in the true sense of the word. This divine enlightenment makes him spiritually liberated and delivered; he attains emancipation and salvation for his soul even while he is still alive in this world and has a physical body. This is called 'Jivan Mukti'—to be liberated and delivered even while living in this world with a gross body and going about one's normal duties vis-à-vis the world¹ (38).

[Note—¹In other words, when he has become enlightened and self-realised, it does not matter to him whether or not 'he' (i.e. his 'true self', the pure conscious Atma, the soul, the divine Spirit present in his body) has a physical body or not, for he had totally disassociated himself from the latter and remains in a complete detached state of mind. It does not matter to him whether or not his body suffers from any disease for instance, whether or not the body is comfortable or in discomfort, and so on and so forth.]

39. When he has reached this exalted state of existence as obtained during Samadhi, he does not need the help of any other means in his spiritual progress any further. He has become the 'attained one', the 'realised one', 'the enlightened one'. Such a person is deemed to be a king amongst ascetics and spiritual aspirants. He has obtained mystical powers and potentials which are supernatural.

He becomes totally submerged and soaked in the thoughts of Brahm. All his sense perceptions, his mind and heart, as well as his faculty of speech become devoted to Brahm; they are centered around Brahm; Brahm becomes the pivot around which his entire being, his whole existence revolves.

This unique state of existence in which nothing exists and nothing else matters for him but Brahm makes such a devoted ascetic firmly established in the truthful form of Brahm realisation, i.e. he becomes a living embodiment of the glories and divinity of Brahm (39).

40-41. As soon as the ascetic reaches the state of Samadhi, numerous problems and hurdles suddenly present themselves before him, trying to deviate him from his path and demote him from his spiritual achievements. He is often enmeshed in their web and falls from his chosen path.

Some of these spiritual obstacles are the following—to deviate and waver from the chosen path to research the truth of Brahm, i.e. the path of Brahm-realisation, to be overcome with lethargy, indolence and inertia, to have a desire and longing to gratify the sense organs and enjoy the objects of these sense organs and their attendant pleasures and comforts, to have worldly passions, lust and yearnings, and be infatuated with the objects that arouse such emotions (40), to be engulfed in the darkness of ignorance and delusions causing bewilderment and confusions in the absence of light of truthful knowledge and erudition about the reality and its accompanying enlightenment and wisdom, to be deterred by efforts made during meditation which cause so much exertion that one begins to sweat, to be so much mentally distracted that it is difficult to fix attention on the chosen goal, etc.

A wise and erudite aspirant of spiritualism should exercise special caution and guard against these pitfalls and remain wary of them. He should painstakingly keep them at bay (41) [40-41.]

42. 'One becomes what one thinks about constantly'—this is an established adage. So when one begins to remain indifferent to and immune from all emotions and thoughts other than that of Brahm, when one inculcates the habit of remaining in a state of

perpetual indifference and non-involvement in anything pertaining to this existence other than the thoughts of Brahm, it is natural that gradually the mind and its natural tendencies withdraw from everything else and become concentrated on this one single point, the thoughts of Brahm.

Hence, the true state of Samadhi, its true accomplishment and its real consummation is when the ascetic begins to think that Brahm is present as his own self as affirmed and asserted by the great saying of the Vedas, i.e. 'I am Brahm'. When this happens, the ascetic has come full circle. This is the holistic and all-inclusive view and philosophy pertaining to Brahm. The ascetic must practice this state of fulsome realisation of Brahm during his Samadhi (42).

43. The wise and enlightened ascetic should inculcate this holy and eclectic view point that everyone and everything in existence, including him, is Brahm. This is the holistic, best and most auspicious view of creation. This is the noblest form of thought that distinguishes an enlightened one from others, and any other notion of creation other than this would make a man no different from an animal. Such a man's life is lived in futility (43).

44. Those who have this eclectic, auspicious, holy and holistic view of the divine supreme cosmic Consciousness known as the venerable Brahm, who constantly contemplate and meditate upon this Brahm, are the ones who can be truly called self-realised, Brahm-realised, holy and auspicious. They are indeed the privileged and fortunate ones. They are certainly the wise, erudite, sagacious and enlightened ones. They are worthy of honour in the three worlds—the terrestrial, the celestial and the nether worlds (44).

45. Those who are truly wise, enlightened and Brahm-realised are endowed with this eclectic vision of creation and begin to see all in equal terms; they develop high degree of equanimity and fortitude that makes them exemplarily calm, tranquil and serene. Gradually and by diligent practice this thought process matures and becomes their natural habit and normal way of thinking. [In other words, such ascetics and enlightened persons do not have to make special efforts and exert their mind into thinking that this world in all its varied manifestations is nothing but the truthful Brahm personified, so all should be treated equally. This vision of creation is normal for them; it is part of their natural view and perception of the world.] Indeed, such people have truly realised Brahm; they have truly understood who or what Brahm is.

By simply saying 'I am Brahm personified' without being convinced of its profound truthfulness, its magnificent and wholesome spiritual value, and its far reaching and all-inclusive import, one does not qualify to be called Brahm-realised or wise and enlightened. Such persons have not understood the true and honest form of the supreme transcendental reverend Being known as Brahm (45).

46. Those who make big talks about Brahm (i.e. preach about Brahm, boast about their knowledge of Brahm, pretend to be Brahm-realised) without actually inculcating any of the glorious virtues of Brahm or depicting any sign of a truly Brahm-realised wise and enlightened soul—such persons are totally ignorant of Brahm and do not have anything to do with Brahm. [They are imposters and cheats.] Such people repeatedly die and take birth; they are not freed from this endless cycle. [In other words, such people can never hope to get emancipation and salvation for their self.] (46).

47. On the other hand, those who have actually tasted the ambrosia of Brahm-realisation, those who have imbibed and inculcated the glorious and auspicious virtues of Brahm in themselves, cannot abstain from the thoughts of Brahm even for a moment (because this thought of Brahm gives them so much ecstasy and bliss that they wish to constantly drink this nectar for eternity).

Some of the great sages and seers who come under this category and can be cited as examples here are Shukdeo¹ and Sanakadi², as well as the creator Brahma himself who remain eternally engrossed in the thoughts of the venerable Brahm. Like them, those who are true seekers of this supreme Brahm also remain submerged in the thoughts of the venerable Brahm (47).

[Note—¹*Shukdeo* was the son of the legendary seer and renowned sage Veda Vyas. He was highly respected and was born of the celestial maiden named Ghri-taachi when she had taken the form of a parrot, called Shuka in Sanskrit, to produce Shukdeo. He had his education under the expert guidance of his father Veda Vyas as well as from the legendary king Janak, the father of Sita of the Ramayan fame and the most self-realised and enlightened king of his time. His self restraint was so profound that the celestial Apsara, the dancing damsel of the court of Indra, the king of Gods, failed to trap in her honey trap. Shukdeo learnt the epic Bhagvata Mahapurana from his father and then narrated it to Parikshit at the culmination of the Dwapar Yug (the third era of the four-era celestial cycle of mythology) and the beginning of the present era called Kali Yug.

In Maho-panishad of Sam Veda tradition there is an incident where the sage Shukdeo had to wait for twenty-one days before king Janak granted him an audience to test his sincerity and steadfastness. Shukdeo had been sent by his father Veda Vyas to king Janak to learn certain secrets of metaphysics (Maho-panishad, 2/21-28).

There are two Upanishads that owe their revelation to sage Shukdeo—on in part and the other in full. The first one is Maho-panishad of Sam Veda whose Canto 2 is especially dedicated to the discourse given by Veda Vyas and later on by king Janak to satisfy the metaphysical queries of Shukdeo. The second is Shuk Rahasya Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda which was preached by Lord Shiva to Shukdeo.

²*Sankaadi*—Sage Sanatkumar is considered as one of the four Manas Putras or the mental-born sons of the creator Brahma. The other three are Sanak, Sanatsujaat and Sanandan. They are regarded in a perpetual state of boyhood. Together they are called ‘Sanakaadi Rishis’.

According to Kalagni Rudra Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Sanatkumar was taught how to wear the Tripund, the three lines marked on the forehead of all Hindus, by Lord Kalagni Rudra, a form of Shiva, himself. Sanatkumar had taught the greatness of Vishnu to demon Vrittaasur, the enemy of Indra, the king of Gods. He also taught spiritual wisdom to sage Narad, the celestial sage.

Sanatsujaat taught spiritual wisdom to Dhritrashtra who was the blind father of the Kauravas of the epic Mahabharat fame. Sanak is said to an eternal companion of Lord Vishnu. Sanandan is regarded as the ancient preacher of the Sankhya Shastra, even more ancient than Kapil.]

48. As long as there is a ‘Kaaran’ (cause), there will be a relevant ‘Kaarya’ (effect). This relationship between them is eternal and infinite in creation¹.

This is why the thoughts of charming sense objects of the material world and the pleasures and comforts provided by them (the Kaaran or cause) create a desire for them, the yearning and longing for them (the Kaarya or effect). If one wishes to eliminate the effect, one should first get rid of the cause².

This observation can be extended to mean the reverse order also. That is, if the ‘effect’ is not there, then surely there is no existence of ‘cause’ at all.

So, when one becomes wise and enlightened enough to realise the entrapping, deluding and transient nature of the comforts and pleasures of the material sense objects of this artificial world as well as the long term negative consequences that these would have on the person's spiritual well being and happiness, then one would apply one's intelligent mind to get rid of such things that would cause pain to him. He would have no desire for them. In other words, the 'cause' or 'Kaaaran' is eliminated.

Thus, he would shun the illusive comforts and pleasures of this world altogether as if they did not exist at all. When this erudition takes hold, then naturally the 'effect' or 'Kaarya' is automatically eliminated—i.e. there will be no entrapments of any kind.

The wise person not only loses all interests in this world and its material objects along with the comforts and pleasures provided by them; both these things cease to exist at all for him for all practical purposes³ (48).

[Note—The relationship between Kaaran or cause and its Kaarya or effect can be understood by a simple example. For instance, if clay is the Kaaran, then the earthen pot is the Kaarya. This is because the pot is the effect of the presence of clay; had there been no clay there would have been no cause for the clay pot to come into being. Similarly, fire is the cause and the smoke is the effect. Therefore, if there is smoke then surely there must be some fire somewhere. If there is clay pot then surely there must be clay around. In other words, they are intricately woven into one another; they are inseparably related to one another; they are like the two poles of a magnet. The Kaarya-Kaaran effect has been explained in Shuk Rahasya Upanishad, verse no. 42 of the Krishna Yajur Veda also.

²In other words, if one wishes to remain free from being trapped by the desire for obtaining material comforts and deriving pleasures from the perishable sense objects of this deluding and transient world then one would have to first get rid of the awareness of their presence and wipe off their memory from the mind. It is only then that the desires would automatically cease to exist. As long as the cause persists, the effect cannot be wished away.

³The 'effect' here refers to the charms of this deluding world along with its material comforts and sensual pleasures. No matter how alluring they might seem on the surface, they are actually thorns that would cause long term miseries and torments for the creature and rob him of his peace of mind and become hurdles in his path to spiritual liberation and deliverance. A wise and enlightened man realises that if he allows himself to be devoured by these sense objects then he would get sucked in their vortex, and salvation would elude him forever.

Similarly, the 'cause' here refers to the mind which has erroneously thought that the world really exists and its charms would provide real happiness to the person. So as soon as this erroneous perception is removed, as soon as the man realises the fact that real happiness and peace is not to be found in the sense objects but in spiritual upliftment and accessing the eternal fount of beatitude and felicity that is obtainable by Brahm-realisation, then obviously and naturally he would desist from falling prey to such enticements of the artificial world and strive to remove the very cause that has been at the root of all his delusions and miseries for him in the past. That is why the necessity of controlling of the mind has been constantly emphasised by the Upanishads.]

49. When this happens, the mind and intellect become cleansed and purified of all extraneous corrupting influences. With this Brahm oriented mind-intellect, the light of Brahm-realisation dawns. [For example, only when the sky is clear in the morning can one witness the glorious sun rise in the eastern sky, and not when the sky is overcast with dark clouds. Here the dark clouds resemble ignorance and delusions that prevent the view of Brahm from manifesting itself on the intellectual horizon of the person.]

This state is the exalted, eclectic, sublime and divine state of self-realisation which cannot be defined and delineated by words. Here the aspirant would have witnessed his own pure truthful conscious ‘self’ in the form of Brahm (49).

50. When the spiritual aspirant has been diligently practicing the different tenets of Yoga philosophy as enumerated in this Upanishad, he reaches a certain stage in his spiritual endeavours when he can actually experience and witness the presence of the supreme transcendental universal Truth, the cosmic Consciousness known as the venerable Brahm, the only truth and reality in this creation in his own self, in his own Atma, as well as everywhere around him. Brahm is an entity that can be attained or approached or accessed only by personally experiencing and witnessing its divine presence (because it is subtle and sublime consciousness and not any gross perception that can be accessed by the mind or body).

‘The entire visible world is one or the other form of one non-dual Brahm, and there is nothing in it that is not Brahm; or, in other words, there is Brahm everywhere’—a wise and enlightened ascetic should cultivate this holistic and divine view of this world. He should see uniformity in existence and become blind towards artificial distinctions and illusive variations in it (because such distorted and surreal views of the world would not fit in well with the actual fact of its truthful form and real essence—which is the existence of one single cosmic entity known as Brahm which has uniformly manifested its self in all these myriad, varied and multifarious forms in which the visible world exists). This results in the elimination of all that is not the reality and truth.

Such auspicious views of Brahm and the world give immense sense of contentedness and bliss to the spiritual aspirant; it helps to stabilise his mind and its thought processes. A wise, erudite, sagacious, enlightened and Brahm-realised person is one who is firm in this conviction and established in this universal spiritual truth which keeps him eternally happy, contented and blissful. [Refer verse no. 43 in this context.] (50).

Canto 2

[Canto 2 is a magnificent exposition on the eclectic philosophy of ‘non-duality’ that is the hallmark of Advaita Vedanta. It essentially stresses the fact that whatever exists in this creation is one or the other manifestation or revelation of one single indivisible entity known as the divine Brahm which in turn is the cosmic Consciousness personified and the only Absolute Truth in creation. The entire creation is simply a variation of this one Truth or its extension. What is not this is false, and hence anything that is not Brahm is non-truth and non-consciousness. This entire Canto is basically intended to establish the universality of the conscious Spirit or Soul as the only truthful entity in existence. It is intended to spread the message of universal brotherhood and the eclectic view of treating all alike with equanimity and love, and remove artificial distinctions and distortions in society that are at the root cause of so much strife, disparities and dichotomy.]

1. Kumar¹ (i.e. Lord Karikeya who is also known as Shadaanan) once again asked Lord Shiva—‘Oh Lord! Please preach me about that form of Divinity (i.e. Brahm)

which is steady, immutable, indivisible, uniform, and non-dual pure cosmic Consciousness personified.’

Lord Shiva replied—‘The entire visible world with all its myriad forms and varied manifestations are fundamentally the same thing, the same non-dual, indivisible and immutable supreme entity (known as the cosmic Consciousness or Brahm) revealed in as many forms as there are variations in the existing world. In other words, the same consciousness prevails uniformly through the length and breadth of the entire world. This is the basic principle behind all spiritual philosophies pertaining to the uniformity of creation (1).

[Note—¹*Kumar* also has other names—viz. Kaartikeya, Shadaan, Subrahmanya, and Skanda. He is the son of Lord Shiva or of Agni (the Fire God). Being the beloved son of Lord Shiva and his divine consort Parvati, he is also called ‘Kumar’ which literally means a son, a prince. He is called Subrahmanya because of his fair radiant complexion which is like pure gold. He is also known as ‘Skand’ which refers to someone who attacks; one who jumps, leaps or hops swiftly and with agility as an active soldier in the heat of battle. One reason for this name is that it is believed that he was born in a forest of dense grass which was shaped like arrows.

He was reared by six divine celestial mothers who personified the constellation called Krittikaa (or Pleiades), hence the name ‘Kartikeya’. He assumed six faces to suckle milk from all these six mothers, hence called ‘Shadaan’—one with six heads or mouths. He was appointed as the commander of the army of Gods, hence got the name ‘Deva-Senapati’. He is called the God of War as a leader of Shiva’s ghosts against the enemies of the Gods.

His weapon is ‘Shakti’ (a lance or a spear). It shines brilliantly like the fire. His mount is a peacock. His flag or banner has the sign of the fowl marked on it. He was born to kill the demon Taarkaasur.

The *Ekakchar Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse no. 3-4 says that the supreme Brahm had revealed himself as ‘Kumar’ or Kartikeya to protect the creation from evil forces.]

2-10. In fact, everything in existence is basically one single entity if we look at the fundamental ingredient in them either individually or collectively. All the Mantras (mystical words or letters having supernatural powers), all activities and deeds, all forms of knowledge and information, all the three primary Vedas (Rig, Sam and Yajur), all the primary elements of creation such as earth, water, sky etc. (the other two being fire and air), all the scriptures and knowledge contained in them, all the traditional religious sacraments, observances and vows, all the three Gods of the Trinity, i.e. Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer and protector, and Shiva the concluder, all the living creatures in this world including the individual person and his Guru (moral preceptor, teacher, preacher and guide), all the objectives in life and the uncountable methods to reach these objectives, all the individual units that form an individual living being such as his gross body, subtle mind and subtler intellect etc., all forms of happiness and joys, and all types of perceptions pertaining to life in this creation—verily, all of them are nothing but various and myriad manifestations of the same immutable and indivisible supreme transcendental divine cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm that uniformly and universally pervades in each of these entities in existence, forming their basic and only identity.

Oh Shadaan (Kartikeya)! There is nothing other than this. Even I am that indivisible and immutable Supreme Being personified. Verily, there is nothing except this Truth (2-10).

11-23. Whatever that exists, the gross as well as the subtle, is this one, non-dual, indivisible and immutable Divinity revealed in that form. Indeed, even your true form is this; you are also a personification of this eclectic Divinity.

That which is not known as well as which is known by evidence or inference are all that non-dual universal entity. Even the father or mother, the brother or husband, the minutest and microscopic or the vast, colossus and macroscopic, the grossest and lowest part of the body such as the feet and the anus as well as the most exalted part of it such as the head, the inside of this body as well as the outside of it—all are completely drenched and soaked by this ambrosia-like Divinity known as cosmic Consciousness or Brahm.

Small and big mountains, the moon and the sun, all the corners of the realm, the entire earth, the stars—all of them are inseparable and indistinguishable from that immutable and indivisible ambrosia of Divinity that is eternally calm and serene, that is ever forgiving and tolerant, that is without any specific attributes and qualifications which can distinguish its one form from the other.

Verily, a witness, a friend, a companion, a king, his kingdom and subjects, the divine Mantras headed by OM, the different pathways to spiritual liberation and deliverance such as doing Japa (repetition of Mantras), Dhyan (meditation, deep concentration and contemplation) etc. in order to reach the supreme state of emancipation and salvation called Param Pad, all shades of meaning of enlightenment and wisdom, all sorts of wealth (such as material wealth of this world and spiritual wealth such as self-realisation and other divine qualities and attributes), all things that can be offered to the sacred fire, to the Gods and the holy Spirits, all types of fire sacrifices themselves, all the heavens—every one of them are nothing but various revelations or different manifestations of the one single immutable and indivisible Divinity known as cosmic Consciousness or Brahm that uniformly and universally pervades in each of these entities in existence, forming their basic and only identity (11-23).

24-30. All the entities enumerated above have one uniqueness in them, one common denominator—viz. they are all manifestations of a single, wholesome, non-dual, uniform and universal entity which is indivisible and immutable. This unique, eclectic and divine entity is called ‘Chinmaya’—i.e. it is the almighty universal Holy Spirit that is pure cosmic enlightened and omniscient Consciousness personified that is all intelligence and all-knowing. This is synonymous with the eternal Truth of creation which is the supreme transcendental Brahm [In other words, the all-pervading, all-incorporating and all-encompassing unique entity that is the universal Truth and pure cosmic Consciousness personified is defined as ‘Chinmaya’ and it is also known as Brahm.]

A truly wise, sagacious, erudite and enlightened person is one who is of a firm conviction and steady belief that there is nothing in this world except one ‘Chinmaya Truth’, i.e. one non-dual Absolute Brahm. There is no such separate entity as ‘the world’, for whatever that exists is the pure consciousness personified and known as Chinmaya. This world is also Chinmaya.

The true self of the aspirant known as his Atma or soul is Chinmaya; all the creatures are Chinmaya. You and I, and all others are Chinmaya.

The sky, the earth, the water, the wind, the fire—all the elements are Chinmaya. The Trinity Gods—i.e. Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer and protector, and Shiva the concluder—all are Chinmaya. Even those Gods who are not included in this triad of creation are Chinmaya.

That which has gone away or has become past, that which would happen in the future, and that which is happening in the present—all are Chinmaya.

All objects, all things, all planes of time and era, all forms of Gyan (knowledge), all objects and things which are worth knowing, and all those who know anything—all of them are Chinmaya.

All talk, all things talked about, and all forms of speech are Chinmaya.

All that which is false as well as all that which is true is Chinmaya. All beginnings and all ends—all are Chinmaya (24-30).

[Note—In brief, these verses emphasise the point that a truly enlightened spiritual person is one who has only Brahm in his thoughts and vision. Such a visionary person sees only one universal Spirit as pervading and permeating uniformly in this entire creation. He does not allow himself to be bogged down in numerous doctrines and philosophies which are meant for worldly fame and scholarship but not for spiritual achievements. Once he has realised this single fact about the universal Spirit, there is nothing more to be searched. This gives him his much sought after eternal rest and peace.]

31-43. Everything from the very beginning to the final end is Chinmaya. Everything from the Guru (moral preceptor, teacher, guide and preacher) to the disciple is Chinmaya. [That is, everything from the fountainhead of knowledge represented by the Guru to the hollow bowl represented by the ignorant disciple is nothing but one or the other manifestation of the universal Spirit known as Brahm.]

Similarly, everything from the eye (the organ which sees and the faculty of sight present in it) to the object seen and observed is Chinmaya. [That is, right from the object seen or observed which might be an illusion to the intelligent mind that is endowed with the unique ability to make sense of what is seen and determine its truthfulness or falsehood is one or the other manifestation of the universal Spirit called Brahm.]

Indeed, this Chinmaya is a very mysterious, esoteric and enigmatic entity which has numerous paradoxical characters and contradictory attributes. That is why it is so unique and one of its kind.

The gross body, the subtle body and the causal body—all of them are nothing but pure consciousness personified—i.e. they are Chinmaya¹.

I, you, we, and the rest of the entire visible as well as the invisible world consisting of uncountable varieties of creatures—all are Chinmaya.

All auspicious and noble deeds and virtuous actions as well as those that are inauspicious and unrighteous—all are Chinmaya².

All the different determinations and firm vows that a creature makes and the aspirations that he has; all the numerous and varied experiences that a creature has in his life—all of them are Chinmaya.

All the Mantras, all their patron Gods (i.e. all the Gods to whom these Mantras are dedicated), all the Dikpals³, and all the rest of exalted forms of creation right up to the Supreme Being—all of them are Chinmaya.

Maya (delusions) and Pooja (worship and devotion), all that is truthful and worth accepting and believing in—all of them are Chinmaya.

All forms of wealth and treasures (worldly and spiritual), all that is unspoken and all that is spoken about (i.e. things about which one speaks as well as those things about which no one speaks or which are not within the ambit of being spoken about), all that is near and all that is far away (i.e. all that is approachable as well as all that is beyond reach), all the grand virtues of renunciation and dispassion that the spiritual aspirant has (which are regarded as the best attribute in him), the whole of the past,

the present and the future (i.e. all that which experienced and witnessed in the past, is being done now, and would be done in the distant future)—verily, all of them are Chinmaya.

The Upanishads and their teachings all point to this one universal truth about Consciousness vis-à-vis this world. The cycle of birth and death as well as liberation and deliverance—both are the same for an enlightened soul because both of them are Chinmaya⁴. Indeed for him, everything is Brahm personified; everything is Consciousness; everything is Chinmaya—it does not matter whether he lives or dies.

‘Oh! I have realised the presence of that one single Consciousness in everything, including my own self, in you, in the Gods, in the tenets of the scriptures. This profound realisation has made me my own teacher and guide (Guru). I have obtained the ultimate ‘Mukti’, i.e. I have reached the pinnacle of enlightenment that has made me liberated and delivered (from the fetters of ignorance and delusions); I have achieved emancipation and salvation. Indeed, real Mukti is obtained with this eclectic and divine form of Gyan (knowledge of the reality and truth) (31-43).

[Note--¹Though it is said in the Upanishads that the *body* is not the Atma but only a habitat of the latter, this verse appears to contradict it, but the intention is not that. The fundamental idea being propounded here is that since everything in existence has its origin in Brahm, since the latter has manifested itself as each individual unit of this vast creation, and that nothing in existence exists devoid of the presence of Brahm, from the sub-atomic particle to the colossus sky, it naturally follows that the ‘body’, which is part of this creation and not outside of it, is Brahm personified, or pure consciousness personified. That is, the body is also virtually ‘Chinmaya’ because it harbours the consciousness in it and exhibits all the physical signs and characteristics that would distinguish anything conscious from another thing that is not conscious. In other words, the body shows all signs of life and consciousness in it—it sees, it hears, it feels, it tastes and it speaks, it moves and accepts things, it thinks, it is able to discriminate, it learns and it disseminates information for others to learn, it reproduces its own kind, etc. All these are functions of the living entity known as the ‘Chinmaya Atma’. Therefore, the body is also one of the numerous forms of Chinmaya Brahm. The central idea is that this Brahm is universal and uniform in this creation.

²That is, when one has developed a holistic and all-inclusive view of creation and begins to visualise the supreme Divinity in each and every action and in each and every deed, all distinctions of something being good and the other being bad are removed. This of course is the citadel of enlightenment, and it should not be construed as a license given to imposters for reckless wickedness and wayward behaviour in the name of everything being Chinmaya and therefore arguing that every action and deed is allowed and is pardonable. No, it is never the intention of this verse. This entire Canto is basically intended to establish the universality of the conscious Spirit or Soul as the only truthful entity in existence. It is intended to spread the message of universal brotherhood and the eclectic view of treating all alike with equanimity and love, and remove artificial distinctions and distortions in society that are at the root cause of so much strife, disparities and dichotomy.

³According to the Purans and Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad, canto 4, verse no. 38-39, there are ten *Dikpals* who are the Gods who act as the guardians or custodians of the ten directions of the world and support the latter from every corner. They are the following—(1) Indra (the king of Gods; he has a thousand eyes on his body and is therefore called ‘the one with a thousand eyes’), (2) Fire God, (3) Yam (the God who protects Dharma by killing the evil ones; he also judges a creature for his deeds at the time of death), (4) Nirriti, (5) Varun (the Water God), (6) Anil (the Wind God), (7) Kuber (the treasurer of the Gods), (8) Ish (Lord Shiva), (9) Brahma (the creator), and (10) Anant (Lord Seshnath, the legendary serpent who holds the earth on its hoods,

and upon whom the supreme Lord Vishnu reclines in the celestial ocean; the word also refers to Vishnu himself).

The following are the various direction in which these ten Gods should be worshipped— (i) Indra in the east, (ii) Fire in the south east, (iii) Yam in the south, (iv) Nirriti in the south west, (v) Varun in the west, (vi) Anil in the north west, (vii) Kuber in the north (represented by the Moon in the sky because the latter stores the Amrit/ambrosia for the Gods), (viii) Shiva in the north east corner, (ix) Brahma in the top or zenith, and (x) Anant (Sheshnath) in the bottom corner or Nadir.

The seed-Mantras of these Gods are respectively lun(g) (लृ), Run(g) (रृ), mun(g) (मृ), ksham (क्ष), vun(g) (वृ), yun(g) (यृ), san(g) (सृ), hun(g) (हृ), aan(g) (आ), and nun(g) (नृ).

The 10 weapons of the 10 Gods are as follows :- Indra's Vajra, Fire-God's energy, Yam's baton, Niruti's sword, Varun's sling/loop/snare/shackle, Wind-God's goad, Kuber's (represented by the Moon) mace, Shiva's trident, Brahma's lotus, Vishnu's (or Anant's) discus.

⁴This particular view-point is called 'Jivan Mukti'—the enlightened view of emancipation and salvation when the enlightened and self-realised spiritual aspirant has attained the citadel of enlightenment when he feels completely emancipated and liberated from the fetters of ignorance and its accompanying delusions even while living in this physical world with a body and going about his normal duties. But internally he is not at all involved in any of the activities of the body and instead remains in a perpetual state of eternal blissfulness, the state of existence called Samadhi. For such a person, it does not matter whether or not the body exists as he is totally detached from it at the mental and spiritual plane. And when finally his body does disintegrate in due course of time, his Atma and Pran simply move out of the limits imposed by this body to merge and become one with the cosmic wind element present in the vast cosmos outside the body.]

Canto 3

[Canto 3 is an extension of what has been expounded upon in Canto 2. Once the spiritual aspirant understands the importance and significance of the meaning of non-duality and universality of the consciousness that is known as the Truth of creation and the individual's Atma, his 'true self', it is a natural corollary that such a self-realised person proclaims 'I am Brahm' and asserts that he possesses such and such glorious virtues as possessed by Brahm and enumerated in this Canto. The spontaneous outburst of ecstasy when one discovers one 'true self' is the main theme in all the following Cantos of this glorious Upanishad. Refer also to Rig Veda's Atma Bodh Upanishad which has been published in volume 1 in this series dealing with the Upanishads of this Veda. Also refer to Brahm Vidya Upanishad which belongs to the Krishna Yajur Veda and is Chapter 16 of the present volume.]

1. Kumar (Shadaanan; Kartikeya) once again asked Lord Shiva questions regarding the Atma (the pure consciousness and the truthful 'self'), and how to experience and witness it.

Lord Shiva explained—I¹ am a personification of the supreme transcendental Brahm. I am an embodiment of supreme beatitude and felicity. I am nothing else but Gyan (truthful knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment) personified. I am the Supreme Being personified (1).

[Note—¹The word ‘I’ refers to the untainted, uncorrupt, immaculate, pure and truthful ‘self’ of an enlightened being. When a self-realised person makes this statement, he is not being haughty and arrogant or egoist, but he is simply affirming a spiritual truth that is universal and irrefutable. Kartikeya has asked Shiva to tell him how to experience and witness what Atma is, and the Lord is teaching him what it is. If one sincerely understands that his Atma has the characteristics mentioned here, he would have realised the real meaning of the term ‘pure consciousness’ as being his true ‘self’.

Canto 5, verse no. 2 unequivocally asserts that the Atma is Shiva personified.

Another point noteworthy here is that Shiva is *not* talking about himself when he uses the pronoun ‘I’ as it appears to be on the face of it. He is answering Kartikeya’s query, so the word ‘I’ means ‘my true form, my true self’ and it refers to Kartikeya or any spiritual aspirant for that matter. Refer also to Sarwasaar Upanishad, verse no. 16-21 which is Chapter 12, and Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse nos. 81-109 which is Chapter 16 of this volume.]

2. I am most peaceful and calm, most tranquil and serene. I am nothing else but ‘Chinmaya’—i.e. I am a personification of the all-pervading, all-incorporating and all-encompassing unique entity that is the universal Truth and pure cosmic Consciousness in creation. I am eternal and perpetual; I am universal and uniform; I am permanent and immortal (2).

3. I am an embodiment of eternal and irrefutable Truth which has these (above) eclectic qualities, and anything that is not this ‘truth’ is not me (or, I have discarded all that is not the ‘truth’). I am like the all-encompassing and all-pervading sky element which encloses everything and is present in the subtlest space in the entire creation, but mysteriously remains uninvolved with it, remaining untainted from and unaffected by any of the influences of things which it covers and in which it is present. [That is, like the sky, I too am unattached and uninvolved in anything in this world though I live in this world and do numerous deeds while I live here. I am totally free from all blemishes and faults associated with this world of delusions and artificiality.] (3)

I live in the fourth state of ‘Turiya’, and even transcend this state to exist in the state beyond it, called the ‘Turiya-teet’¹ state. I am only in the form of pure consciousness, and am a personification of eternal blissfulness and happiness, of eternal beatitude and felicity (4).

I have only a subtle form which has no gross body and physical form. As such, I am immaculate, pure, uncorrupt and unadulterated in any form. I am nothing but Gyan (knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment) personified, and therefore I am the only entity worth loving, worth endearing, and worth caring for, an entity that is the most dear for all spiritual aspirants (5).

[Note--¹The *Turiya* state of consciousness is the fourth in which the spiritual aspirant lives in a state of perpetual Samadhi. That is, he remains in a constant state of blissfulness and meditation though he lives in this physical world and goes about his normal affairs like an ordinary man. The first three states are the waking, the dreaming and the deep sleep state of consciousness. The fifth state of *Turiya-teet* is one step further ahead and the last stage in spiritual upliftment when the person crosses the threshold of awareness of this world and he ceases to participate even in his normal functions in this world. He remains like a log of wood, totally uninterested in and completely oblivious of the world around him.

The concept of Turiya and Turiya-teet have been explained in detail in Dhyānbindu Upanishad, verse nos. 93/14 and 93/15 respectively. This is Chapter no. 15 of this volume.]

6. I am one of my own kind because I have no alternatives and parallels (Nirvikalp). I am totally dispassionate and non-desirous of anything (Niriha).

I am spiritually healthy and without any moral or spiritual ailments or tainting affects that are like a disease that might afflict my true self (Niraamaya).

I am alone and remain without any company, being self-sustained and self-sufficient, and needing no support and help from anyone else (Asanga).

I am inculpable, incorruptible and without any faults, taints, defects and shortcomings of any kind (Nirvikar).

I am eternal, unchanging and imperishable; I do not diminish or get degraded or spent (Avyaya) (6).

7. I stay in one uniform form, remaining steady and unchanging in my divine state of existence. I am an embodiment of pure and supreme cosmic Consciousness that is almighty and all-intelligent, called Chinmaya. I am limitless, undefined, undivided and one single whole (Aparichinna) because by nature I cannot be divided, mutated and broken into parts or divisions or sections; I am that mystical divine Being who is eternal, uniform, universal, everlasting, perpetual and infinite (because by nature I am Akhand) (7).

8. I am an embodiment of Satya (truth) and supreme Anand (beatitude and felicity). I am the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness which is characterised by this Anand. As such (i.e. in the form of the cosmic Consciousness—see Canto 2), I live inside as well as outside of everything in existence, both the visible as well as the invisible, including my own body which has visible (the external organs of perceptions and actions) as well as invisible organs (the internal organs and tissues of the body) (8).

9. I am ever submerged in and surrounded by the supreme state of blissfulness obtained by self-realisation of the pure conscious Atma. I remain ever engrossed in contemplating upon this eternally truthful Atma which gives me true happiness and joy. Indeed, I am an image of that supreme Atma. Indeed, that Atma is ‘me’, and it is the eternal form of auspiciousness, blissfulness, wisdom, enlightenment and well being personified by Lord ‘Sada Shiva’. [The word ‘Sada’ means that which is constant, always, eternal and steady, while ‘Shiva’ stands for auspiciousness, beauty, blissfulness and enlightenment.] (9).

10. I am an embodiment of the light of enlightenment and wisdom, the light of pure consciousness and holiness that is emanating as divine effulgence from the self-illuminated Atma. I represent the brilliant light of the self-radiant and the self-illuminated Atma. I am the essence of this Atma and its glittering light. I have no beginning, no middle and no end, as I am like the eternal, infinite and endless sky (10).

11. I am an embodiment of the eternal, infinite, pure, immaculate, truthful and blissful cosmic Consciousness that is the only almighty and omnipotent Authority having divine powers and potentials in existence. This authoritative Consciousness is

imperishable and non-diminishing. It is eternally and perpetually wise, erudite, sagacious and enlightened; It is eternally and perpetually pure, untainted and uncorrupt; and it is eternally and perpetually blissful and happy. I am 'that' consciousness (11).

12. I am that eternal and infinite entity which remains or survives after everything else comes to an end. I am beyond all that visibly exists and outlast this visible existence. I cannot be defined by any specific norms or forms having any special characteristics, attributes and qualities, and I am established in my own unique form which is both subtle and sublime. I am a personification of the unique virtues possessed by the great sky extending endlessly to infinity (12).

13. I am a personification of the Supreme Being called 'Bhuma', the almighty and omnipotent one, and therefore I have no one as my superior Lord as I am the greatest amongst all. I personify beatitude and felicity. I cannot ever be described in words. I am the foundation of all else in existence, and therefore need no other support for myself. I am an eternal treasury of pure consciousness (13).

14. I do not consider my body as my self and am indifferent towards the body, because I am not the body (but pure conscious Atma). I do not have any worries of any kind whatsoever (because I am not an ordinary creature tormented by so many problems pertaining to this mundane existence). I am also free from being affected by any of the tendencies and temperaments of the mind and its inherent nature to think about everything that affects the creature and which are related to the latter's interaction with the world. Instead, I am filled with bliss and happiness that comes with renunciation and enlightenment (14).

15. I am that unique entity that is beyond the purview of the mundane faculty of sight (because I am the subtle and sublime Atma which is microscopic and atomic in nature so that it cannot be physically seen by the naked eye of the gross body), but at the same time I can also be seen (because I have a physical body in which this Atma lives, and this gross body can be clearly seen by the eye).

I am always fulfilled; I am always contented (15).

16. I am Brahm personified. I am pure cosmic Consciousness. I am that Brahm and Consciousness; I am the greatest and supreme; I am what I am. I am like the vast and infinite sky element (16).

17. I am the great Atma. I am the supreme transcendental Authority. Though I am such an exalted and supreme entity, I appear to have a gross physical body (17).

18. I appear to be so ignorant and humble that I become a disciple or a student (because I have to learn so many things in this world when I take a birth here with a body, though I am inherently all-knowing in my ethereal form as the Spirit). I am that Authority which gives support and succour to the three worlds (i.e. I am the supreme Brahm which supports the three units of creation—the terrestrial world of mortal creatures that live on the surface of the earth above water, the nether world of subterranean and aquatic creatures, and the celestial world of Gods and holy Spirits). I am beyond the limitations created by the three phases of time, such as the past, the present and the future (because I am uniform, universal, eternal, imperishable and

infinite—therefore such factors as past, present and future do not apply to me). I am the Vedas personified (i.e. I am a fount of all knowledge because I am eternally omniscient and all-knowing, though I appear to be a student and disciple as mentioned above) (18).

19. I am that ultimate Absolute Truth which has been finally determined and affirmed by all the scriptures. I am established as the pure consciousness and the target of the mind's faculty of concentration and thinking. I have revealed myself as the earth that harbours this world¹, and anything that is not me has no existence (19).

[Note—¹This is a very significant observation by the ancient sage who envisioned this Upanishad. It shows that he was aware of the fact that earth is the only planet that harbours vibrant and colourful life in all its glorious radiance and splendour. Since consciousness is synonymous with life it is apt to liken it with earth.]

20. Be certain about it that there is nothing besides me, because everything in existence is the non-dual Atma. I am indeed Brahm; I am indeed Siddha (the acclaimed one, the mystical one, the attained one, the one with supernatural powers, the one who has successfully accomplished mastery over certain skills and craftsmanship). I am eternally and infinitely pure and immaculate, uncorrupt and unpolluted (20).

21. I have no specific attributes, no particular characteristics and no qualifying qualities that are definable and limiting in their nature (Nirgun), nor do I have any specific contours, forms, shapes and sizes (Nirakar). This is because I am the ethereal, eternal and infinite 'Atma' which is beyond the purview of such mundane things.

I am the supreme Brahm personified. I am not liable to decay and come to ruin (Ajar) as I am eternal and imperishable and do not die (Amar) (21).

22. I am always in my own original form (for I have no duplicity and no secondary or parallel forms); I am always established in my own self (without seeking any other assistance). I am the wholesome and healthy Atma. I am the ultimate destination of all spiritual pursuits, and I represent the most exalted state of existence called the 'Param Gati' (22).

23. I am the consumer and enjoyer of everything. I am an embodiment and fountainhead of glorious light (representing holiness, auspiciousness, nobility, righteousness, conscientiousness etc.), and all the other virtues that come within the ambit of magnificence and greatness (23).

24. I remain engrossed in my own self and enjoy it myself. I am the seer, and at the same time I see myself everywhere. [This is because 'I' am the Atma residing in my own body as well as everywhere outside the body as the cosmic Consciousness and in the body of the person in front of me.]

I am happily and comfortably ensconced in my own self (as the Atma enthroned in the subtle heart). I am the only entity that remains when everything else is eliminated (i.e. I am the remainder that lasts after all other factors in this deluding world are removed, signifying my truthful, imperishable, everlasting and eternal nature) (24).

25. I happily live as an Emperor in my own kingdom in the form of pure consciousness. I am sitting inside my own Atma which acts as my throne, and I do not think of anything other than my own Atma. [That is, my Atma is what gives me my powers and authority, it is therefore useless for me to look anywhere else in search of this power and authority. If I do so, I would be demeaning and in-subordinating my Atma.] (25).

26. I am nothing but pure consciousness personified. I am a personification of the non-dual Brahm who is eternally blissful and truthful. I am a treasure of beatitude and felicity which are the virtues possessed only by Brahm. And, therefore, I am Brahm (26).

27. I am ever present and perpetual. I am like the void or the numeral zero (because I remain free from any contact, attachment or appendage, because I am non-aligned and detached from all emotions and free from all thoughts, because like the zero I give everything its value but remain neutral myself, and because I am like the vacant sky which appears to be a big void but which harbours everything in creation).

I am the Atma that is present in all living creatures. I am an embodiment of Anand (supreme blissful state of existence).

I am eternally in a blissful state of existence. I am that Atma which not only lives in the subtle sky of the heart but has the virtues of the sky (as being all-encompassing, all-pervading and omnipresent in the cosmos).

I am constant and unwavering, steady and perpetual, always present universally and uniformly everywhere in all planes of time (i.e. I am 'Nitya') (27).

28. I am the glorious consciousness that illuminates the subtle sky of the heart much like the splendorous sun shining brightly in the sky. My form as the Atma is fully contented and fulfilled in its own self. This eclectic form of mine is imperishable, eternal and unchanging; it does not get diminished or degraded or unspent (Avyaya) (28).

29. I cannot be quantified and measured in numbers such as one etc. I am always and eternally liberated and delivered (Mukta). I am subtler than the sky element, and have no beginning and end like it (29).

30. I am an embodiment of divine light and splendour. I am an embodiment of great and immeasurable happiness and joys. I am the only authority in creation. I am a personification of the state which is called the Param Pada which is the final emancipation and salvation of the creature (because I represent the ultimate Truth and cosmic Consciousness which are synonymous with Brahm, and there is nothing beyond me) (30).

31. Satya (immutable and irrefutable truth) and Anand (bliss and happiness) are my true and fundamental forms. [Or, truthful bliss that is real and not artificial is my inherent nature and subtle form.]

Similarly, Gyan (truthful knowledge and erudition, wisdom and enlightenment) and its accompanying Anand (exhilaration, ecstasy and blissfulness that is characteristic of truthful spiritual enlightenment) are my true and real form.

I am an embodiment of pure 'Vigyan'¹ having unique characteristics. I exhibit signs of truthful Anand that is eternal and infinite (31).

[Note—¹*Vigyan*—(a) That empirical body of knowledge which stands the test of proof and verification; scientific and logical form of wisdom and relevant knowledge is called *Vigyan*. When ordinary ‘Gyan’ is put to test and a rational body of knowledge is arrived at, when it is witnessed or experienced in practical terms, it is known as ‘Vigyan’. It is logical derivation, confirmation and affirmation of certain things known in theory and now ratified as the unequivocal truth and the irrefutable fact, reasoned acknowledgement, or actual witness of facts so that there is no doubt or confusion as to their authenticity, veracity and truth. In other words, Vigyan is experimental Gyan, or Gyan put to practice by following the guidelines of Vedant. (See Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 4, verse no.38-39.0

Therefore, Vigyan literally means application of mind, intelligence and rational logic, having in-depth knowledge, intelligent and rational learning or science of anything which can be verified, any knowledge which is empirical, rational, logical, scientific and applicable in practice. Vigyan is analytical and critical intelligence and knowledge obtained as its result. (The concept of Vigyan has been elaborately described in Chandogya Upanishad, canto 7, section 7.)

Besides this, Vigyan is the progenitor, sustainer and concluder of the entire creation. It is obvious deduction because creation is such a complicated process that it requires exceptional intelligence and skills as well as critical ability to use available information to start, sustain and conclude the tremendous explosive potentials of the forces and energy of Nature for constructive purposes, and to keep a strict tab on it so that it does not digress from its mandate and prove counter-productive. Even during the life of a creature, it needs the help from all fields of knowledge in order to meet its daily needs and provide for its material and bodily comforts and well being.

This has been elucidated succinctly in Taittiriyo-panishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Valli 3, Anuvak 5. Briefly, it says “All the creatures are born out of Vigyan (i.e. special knowledge and skills are needed to set in motion the process of creation); they are sustained by Vigyan (i.e. special knowledge and skills are needed to provide for all the material needs of this living world and take care of its general welfare); and they conclude in Vigyan (i.e. special knowledge and skills are needed even to dispose of the body properly by way of performance of elaborate cremation rites and other rituals, or embalm it before burying).

In short, from conception right up to conclusion creation needs Vigyan at each step of its existence. At the time of death, a wise man benefits from his lifetime of experiences and learning, and detaches himself from this delusory and illusionary world of material objects which are non-eternal and the cause of all miseries because they tend to tie and bog the Atma down to this lowly world of transmigration and prevent its final liberation and attainment of salvation”.

‘Vigyan’ is the wisdom and intellect that is inherent in a man. It is the rational mind that decides what is to be remembered, what is to be thought, what needs attention and concentration of mind, and what is worthy of paying any attention and thought at all in the first place. This selective aspect of the discriminatory intellect is called Vigyan.

Any body of knowledge is called Vigyan because it is verifiable and derived at by application of intellect and mind free from any pre-conceived notions and belief. Consciousness is called Vigyan because it is self-sustained, self-enlightened, self-illuminated, radiant and glorious; it is a fount of knowledge and awareness, of wisdom and enlightenment. All other entities in this creation have whatever they have because of the potentials and powers bestowed to them by this consciousness. Their very relevance and importance and significance are there because the consciousness has given them this privilege. These entities are nothing else but a marvelous display of the magnificent majesty and potentials of the consciousness. This realisation is called Vigyan because it is based on intelligent application of knowledge and wisdom. It is Vigyan because it is empirical and thoughtful; it is rational and logical;

it is truthful and real. Vigyan refers to a superior body knowledge that is not based on hearsay or conjectures. It has a solid foundation and steady relevance.

Information and knowledge that stand the test of logic and rationale is called Vigyan; it is this Vigyan that takes a man forward. With knowledge come joy and happiness, satisfaction and a sense of achievement, elation and a sense of fulfillment. In the spiritual realm, this leads to bliss and self-realisation. This realisation pertains to the awareness of the irrefutable and immutable Atma or soul which is consciousness. The macrocosmic counterpart of this individual Atma is known as Brahm. Hence, self-realisation is equivalent to Brahm-realisation.

Consciousness itself refers to the truthful knowledge of anything that is real and true, and not that is hypothetical and imaginary. That is why the Atma or soul is called consciousness and a personification of Vigyan.

(b) *Relationship between 'Gyan' and 'Vigyan'*--The difference between 'Gyan' and 'Vigyan' can be succinctly summed up in the statement—'Brahm is' or 'Lord is'. This awareness and firm conviction of its truth is Gyan, while to say truthfully that 'Brahm is I' or 'Lord is I' is called Vigyan.

'Gyan' and 'Vigyan' are closely related to each other. The realisation or awareness that Atma is, inter alia, different from the body, and is the true identity of a creature, is called 'Gyan'. This Atma is a very unique entity and is called the 'true self' of the creature. Gyan refers to self realisation and attainment of enlightenment about the absolute Truth and Reality in this creation. It encompasses a broad swathe of philosophy which is taught by the Upanishads, called Vedanta. When Gyan is put to test and a rational knowledge is arrived at, when it is witnessed or experienced in practical terms, it is known as 'Vigyan'; it is logical derivation, confirmation and affirmation of certain things known in theory and now ratified as the unequivocal truth and the irrefutable fact, reasoned acknowledgement, or actual witness of facts so that there is no doubt or confusion as to their authenticity, veracity and truth. In other words, Vigyan is experimental Gyan, or Gyan put to practice by following the guidelines of Vedant.

Therefore, 'Vigyan' literally means intelligent application of mind; intelligence and rational logic; having in-depth knowledge; intelligent and rational learning or science of anything which can be verified; any knowledge which is empirical; rational, logical, scientific and applicable in practice. (The concept of Vigyan has been elaborately described in Chandogya Upanishad of the Sam Veda tradition—7/7, and in Brihad Aranyak Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition—3/7/22).]

32. All this around me is Brahm, and nothing but Brahm. Verily, I too am that eternal and universal Sanaatan Brahm (i.e. Brahm who is eternal, perpetual, infinite, everlasting, primary, primeval, most ancient and traditional) who is ever in a blissful state of existence (32).

33. 'You' (i.e. the second person) and 'he' (i.e. the third person)—all the entities indicated by these pronouns are none but Brahm. It is 'me' (i.e. the first person) as Brahm in those forms, because there is nothing but Brahm anywhere in existence. I am Shiva¹ (the auspicious, divine, truthful, wise and enlightened One) who is a manifestation of that supreme consciousness known as Brahm (33).

[Note—¹The word *Shiva* has a dual meaning here—one refers to the preacher of this Upanishad who is Lord Shiva as he is the one who has revealed this fine Upanishad as an answer to queries raised by Kartikeya, and the other is a reference to the spiritually enlightened person's solemn affirmation that he is himself Shiva and that he embodies all the virtues that Shiva stands for.]

34. I have all the eclectic and glorious virtues in me; I am an image of these virtues. I am happy and comfortable. I do not have any of the gross properties of material things in this world, but I am a witness to all the gross things that exist in this world. [That is, inspite of me being in close contact with this materialistic world and witnessing it up close, I am totally detached and disinterested in it and remain unaffected or uninfluenced by any of its tainting virtues.] (34).

35. I have a gross body but am not it; instead of it I am the Sanaatan Brahm (the eternal, universal, supreme transcendental Truth in creation) which is pure conscious Atma manifested in my body.

I am the beginning and the end, as well as the remainder. [This word 'remainder' indicates that I am eternal and that entity that outlasts the end of the body. I am the universal Spirit which outlives the body, and which was present before the body came into being.] (35).

36. I do not have a name or physical form. I am eternally freed from being limited by such definitions and delineated into different categories. I am an embodiment of beatitude and felicity. In spite of this observation, I appear to have a body with sense organs and exhibit all their characteristic features, attributes, functions and qualities (36).

37. I am without any kind of binds and fetters that can ever shackle me. At the same time, there is no such thing as 'obtaining liberation and deliverance' for me (simply because I am not tied with any fetter and shackled to anything, and am an eternally free Spirit).

I am an image of eternal, universal and truthful Anand (ecstasy, exhilaration, bliss, beatitude, felicity, happiness and joys that come with self-realisation). I am the primary and primeval consciousness which is immutable and indivisible (37).

38. The mind and its faculty of speech cannot grasp, understand or know me. [That is, I am beyond the purview of the mind and am so mysterious and enigmatic that I cannot be explained and defined in words.]

I am always in a state of immense blissfulness, joy and happiness.

I am completely wholesome and fulfilled in every way. I am an embodiment of great Anand (blissfulness and ecstasy) (38).

39. I am fully satisfied and contented, and what is known as the essence of Amrit (the divine ambrosia of eternity and blissfulness) is nothing but me.

There is no doubt and confusions about the fact that I am that Brahm who is non-dual and one of his kind (39).

40. I am neutral and devoid of everything like the great void. I cannot be seen or observed visibly¹.

I am already freed from all fetters, and therefore am beyond such situations that would necessitate efforts to obtain freedom. I embody emancipation and salvation; I am an image of happiness and bliss obtained by emancipation and salvation (40).

[Note--¹That is, I exhibit no attributes, no features, no qualities and no characters of any kind as are understandable and grasped by the mind and intellect or perceived by the sense organs. I am much beyond this. I am transcendental and so sublime and

subtle that I go beyond the reach of the mind and intellect as well as the sense organs of perceptions.]

41. I am an embodiment of Satya (truth), Vigyan (empirical knowledge) and truthful and eternal Anand (happiness and blissfulness).

I exist in the transcendental state called Turiyateet (the fifth state of consciousness marked by supreme enlightenment and beatitude which is synonymous with the state of Brahm-realisation).

I have no doubts and confusions in me (as I am beyond the purview of worldly considerations) (41).

42. I am eternal and perpetual. I am without a birth. I do not have any of the diseases (a metaphor for physical and spiritual problems) that afflict ordinary mortals in this world. I am therefore honoured by the epithet of Niranjana—one that is faultless, untainted and without any blemishes or flaws.

I am immaculate and uncorrupt; I am erudite, sagacious, enlightened and wise; I am eternal and perpetual; I am the Lord himself (42).

43. I represent the essential meaning of the ethereal word OM¹, and am without any blemishes, aspersions, shame, slander, spot, slur, ignominy, taint, disgrace and other moral, ethical and spiritual faults of any kind (Nishkalank). I am a personified form of OM.

I am an image of pure consciousness. I am so mysterious, esoteric and enigmatic that I am neither this nor that. I am ‘that’ (i.e. Brahm, the Supreme Being) personified (43).

[Note—¹The word *OM* is a synonym of the supreme transcendental, the cosmic Consciousness from which the entire creation has evolved, and it incorporates the entire spectrum of creation, i.e. its origin, its expansion and its conclusion in its ambit. See also Canto 1 of this Upanishad.]

44. I do not have any specific and tangible form and shape of any kind (as I am the ethereal Spirit and cosmic Consciousness). I have no deeds and actions (i.e. I do not do anything nor do I act in any way, being neutral and detached from this world characterised by deeds and actions).

I have no fractions and divisions in me, and neither is I a fraction or part of anything else (as I am a complete whole, being immutable, indivisible and non-dual Atma). I am beyond perceptions of the mind and sense organs, and neither am I the mind or sense organs (because I am the pure conscious Atma residing in the causal body of the creature, and the subtle body consisting of the mind as well as the gross body consisting of the sense organs are separate from me) (44).

45. I am not the intellect (the subtler and higher form of the mind) either. I have no alternatives or confusing duality in me. I am independent of the three types of bodies of the creature—viz. the gross body, the subtle body and the causal body. [That is, I am the Atma which resides in the body which has been classified into these three hypothetical divisions for the purpose of metaphysical study only. Being a mere ‘resident’, I am not the ‘body’, but an independent entity quite distinct from it.]

I am not any one of the three states in which the consciousness exists in this world—i.e. the Jagrat state (the waking state), the Swapna state (the dreaming state) and the Sushupta state (the deep sleep state) of consciousness (45).

46. I do not suffer from any of the so-called three torments or ‘Taaps’ that afflict all the mortal creatures in this creation¹. And neither do I have any of the three desires².

I am pure consciousness personified as the Atma which does not require any deep thinking and pondering over any subject (to understand its import and fully grasp it) nor does it need to hear anything to learn about it which is not already known to it (because the Atma is all-knowing and omniscient) (46).

[Note—¹The three torments that afflict the creature are the following-- Adhi-bhautik—related to terrestrial creatures such as enemies and animals; Adhi-daivik—related to unfavourable Gods and malignant stars; Adhi-daihiik—related to the body such as diseases and horrors of old age etc.

²The three desires are the following—desire for fame, desire for wealth and desire for comfort/pleasure.]

47. I am so detached from the mundane world that I do not have anyone who can be called my clansman, or my kith and kin, or my peer, compatriot and companion. [This is because I am the pure conscious Atma which is an independent entity not related to anybody whatsoever.] At the same time, there is no one who is not related to me. [This is because the pure consciousness known as the Atma, which happens to be my true identity, is the same in my body as it is in the body of the other person. Therefore, we are all ‘one’, or are like siblings of the same cosmic universal Father known as Brahm.]

Indeed, I am far beyond these debates and classifications of relations. [That is, being the truthful cosmic Consciousness personified as the Atma, I transcend worldly classifications of relations such as one person being my father and the other my brother or friend. For me, all are equal and my own image; there is no fundamental distinction or difference between two or more individuals because all have the same Atma in them.] (47).

48. Mana (mind and emotional heart), Buddhi (intellect) and Ahankar (the notion of pride and ego) are all false and imaginary. I have none of them. [This is because mind and intellect are the subtle components of the creature’s physical body, and I have no physical body which would have these subtle components. Since I am without any form of corruptions and flaws in my immaculate character, there is no question of me having such negative traits as ego and pride that would in any way taint my immaculacy and pristine pure form.]

I am Nitya (always, perpetual and ever present); I am Shaaswat (eternal, perpetual, immortal, infinite and permanent); I am Ajaha (without a birth) (48).

49. The three forms of hypothetical bodies¹ that a creature possesses are imaginary divisions of the essentially indivisible eclectic entity (known as the pure conscious Atma) that has manifested itself with a body.

The three planes into which the time element—which is essentially uniform and indivisible—is segregated and divided into are equally artificial and not a true depiction of its real and truthful nature².

Similarly, the three Gunas³ are also not relevant and applicable to me (as I am, in my primary and eclectic form, without any definable attributes and qualifications).

I am truthful and immaculate, untouched by such perplexing subjects (as to what is the actual meaning and form of the three bodies, the three planes of time and the three Gunas; I am unconcerned with them and not affected by them) (49).

[Note—¹The *three bodies* of the creature are the following—(a) its gross body consisting of the five organs of perceptions—such as eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin

which are related to the sense of sight, hearing, smell, taste and feeling respectively, and the five organs of action—such as leg, hand, mouth, genital and excretory which are related to the five functions of the body such as movement, acceptance, eating and speaking, reproduction and excretion; (b) its subtle body consisting of the mind-intellect complex; and (c) the causal body that harbours the pure conscious Atma which is the causative factor for the other two bodies acquiring their importance and relevance as well as making the creature alive and active. Refer also to Canto 5, verse no. 17.

²The *three frames* of time are the past, the present and the future. It is an artificial division because time always remains uniform, unchanging and indivisible, and this boundary between the past, the present and the future is artificially created in order to understand things that constantly keep on changing. We try to come to grasp with the ever-changing nature and form of things in this world when we compare their present existential form with how or what it was in some hypothetical point of time in the past and what or how would it look like in some equally hypothetical point of time in the future. This situation arises because the object of our research is ever changing. On the other hand, if we consider anything that never changes, time would literally come to a standstill in relation with it; the time would be the same in the past as it is in the present and would be in some abstract point in the future vis-à-vis that thing which is unchanging and uniform over time. This is exactly what is intended here. The 'Truth' is the only unchanging and uniform entity that remains steady over a period of time, and for it the time is always the same. On the other hand, all things that are false and illusionary keep on changing every moment depending upon the time and circumstance as well as the perceptive abilities and aptitude of the mind and intellect of the individual.

For example, we say that with each passing moment 'we' are coming so much closer to death and go away from birth. This observation is basically faulty because what changes with time is the body and not the 'soul' which is the true 'self' of ourselves. In order to understand the transient, mortal and ever-changing things in this world as they stand today we imagine what they looked like in some time in the past and what they would look like in the future. This helps us to have a three dimensional view and a perspective of things in this mortal world. But we forget in the process that the basic definition of anything being 'true' is that it would remain unchanging, constant, steady and uniform in every plane of time; it would be in the future as it is in the present and was in the past. Everything that is not constant and everlasting is transient and perishable, and as such it cannot be the 'ultimate truth'. In that case, it has to be false and illusionary, something that is not the 'ultimate, irrefutable, unequivocal and immutable truth' but only 'apparent and conditional truth depending upon how we perceive the world and ourselves'.

The supreme transcendental Consciousness is unchanging in every frame of time, and since the thrust and quest of the Upanishads is to search out that entity which is the 'real truth' that remains uniform and untouched with the shifting sands of time, the 'truth' that is always the same and not an 'imaginary truth' that constantly changes in an artificial division of time that our mind has created in order to justify something that is inherently false as being the truth, it treats the Atma as that 'truth' and the 'indivisible aspect of time' as representative of this 'truth'. All the rest is artificial, transient, perishable and deluding.

³The *three Gunas* are the following-- The three characteristic qualities inherently present in the creature, in different ratios, are the three thought textures which bombard the mind. These three thought textures are manifestations of the 'Vrittis and Vasanas' (inherent tendencies or desires) of the creature which mire its pure conscious Atma or soul as a covering or veil. These three basic qualities or *Gunas* which are inherent in all the living beings determine their nature, habits, temperaments and inclinations which in turn decide the behaviour, personality and outlook of each individual in this world.

(a) *Sata Guna* or quality is the best quality present in a creature and it is marked by a predominance of auspiciousness, righteousness, virtuousness and noble qualities. It is marked by such high standards of ethical existence that have, as their characteristic features, such qualities as coolness of head, peace, contentedness, humility, devotion, wisdom, mercy, compassion, creativity, selflessness, service, righteousness, virtuousness, holiness and nobility of thought and action etc. As is evident, these qualities are the best qualities that one can have in him; they have a spiritual dimension to them; they are spiritually uplifting and give a divine halo to those who practice them. This quality creates an inherent affinity in a creature towards things in life which are of high moral value and uplifting for the soul rather than things which are demoting and denigrating for the spirit.

The *Sata Guna* or quality is the veil covering the soul like a smoke covering the fire. A slight breeze will remove this smoke. Similarly a little bit of prayer and meditation will remove the *Satwic* desires; its removal requires the least effort. It is the foremost and the best amongst the three characteristics of a creature such as good and positive virtuous such as righteousness, creativity, noble deeds and thoughts, the positive qualities of service, benevolence, mercy, devotion, wisdom, holiness, piety etc.

(b) *Raja Guna* is the medium quality marked by a greater percentage of worldly passions, desires and attachments and their natural offshoots in a creature. It covers such qualities as worldly yearnings, passions, a stormy nature, agitated behaviour, ambitions, desires, selfishness, expansionist tendencies, desire to sustain etc. All these pertain to this materialistic world, and they create an inherent affinity in a creature towards the material world of sense objects and their enjoyments rather than the world of spiritualism. In other words, those creatures who have this quality as a dominant trait are more inclined towards the world as compared to those creatures who have the *Sata* quality in a greater density. Such qualities give worldly fame and prosperity. If these qualities are judiciously mixed with the *Satwic* qualities, then they provide the person the better of the two worlds, both in terms of worldly fame as well as spiritual well being.

The *Rajasic* quality or *Guna* can be compared to dust on a mirror. In this case some dusting and rubbing is needed to clean the mirror; a greater effort is needed as compared to the case with *Satwic* quality. *Rajasic* tendencies are the second best quality which produces worldly desires, ambitions, passions, selfishness, various obsessions, desire to sustain and expand etc.

(c) *Tama Guna* is the third quality which is the meanest and basest of the three types of qualities in a creature. It is marked by evilness, perversions and sinfulness. It is the most degrading, denigrating and contemptible of the three characteristics in a person, leading him to such negative traits as sins, vices, perversions, greed, avarice, haughtiness, pride, lust, attachments, yearnings, intoxication, wild behaviour, promiscuity, evils, utter disregard for anything which is righteous, ethical and noble etc. This quality creates an inherent affinity in a creature towards things which are very mean and lowly, which are totally sensual and pertain to the immediate gratification of the sense urges without any thought to what would be their consequences in the long run. In brief, behaviour which is utterly immoral, denigrating and depraving for the creature, marked by grossness, crassness and recklessness of demeanors. It is the lowest and meanest of the three qualities leading to a person's downfall, ignominy and ruin.

The *Tamsic* quality or *Guna* covering the soul is like a foetus in the womb covered by the embryonic membrane—they cannot be removed easily and require diligence, effort, dedicated and careful handling requiring time and patience. It is the basest and the lowliest of the three characteristics, the worst type to possess, and is marked by such negative traits as sin, evil, perversions, immorality, vices, misdemeanors, anger, inertia, delusions, deception, gloom, ignorance et al.

Since each individual is like an independent piece of mosaic that completes the entire picture in conjunction with other such pieces, this individual creature's nature and character helps to determine the overall shape of the creation. These Gunas keep the creation in a state of constant change, because numerous creatures die every moment and new ones are born. The Supreme Being has to be constantly on the alert because of this flux.

The various permutations and combinations of these three qualities create a particular 'nature' of an individual giving him his individuality and his special characters which are unique to him; they determine his temperament, behaviour, thought process et al. Two individuals having the same external form of the gross body—e.g. two men—might look very much alike but they vary immensely in their nature, habit, behaviour, thinking, outlook, action and deeds, wisdom and way of living. This is what is meant when it said that a creature has to roam in 84 Lakh wombs or forms of life; it is only a metaphor—it does not mean an actual, countable specific number that there are actually and physically 84 Lakh types of bodies of living beings; it only symbolically refers to the huge possibilities that are possible with these three 'Gunas' and their different combinations that can imaginably produce a myriad variety of creation that can be created with these three basic qualities and their various sub classes of qualities.

Upanishads symbolically refer to the *three primary colours* when they describe these *three basic qualities* in the creature. They are white for the Sata Guna, red for the Raja Guna, and black for the Tama Guna. Refer—Shwetashatar Upanishad, 4/5.

The Chandogya Upanishad, 3/5/4-3/9 and 6/3-4 uses these three colours to describe the different types of characters called Sata, Raja and Tama defining the three basic types of creatures and their individual personality traits and temperaments that exist in this creation.

The Paingal Upanishad, 1/3-9 of the Shukla Yajur Veda clearly states that these three colours were the ones with which Nature representing creation was born and how the supreme creator had subtly entered the entire creation to be uniformly present in its very minutest of corner.

The concept of *Gunas affecting the Atma* has been elaborately dealt with in various Upanishads, for example the Maitrayanyu Upanishad, 1/11, 2/5, 3/5, etc. of the Sam Veda tradition.]

50. When I have realised my true form as the pure transcendental consciousness that is a wholesome Truth, all the different bodies of knowledge such as the Vedas etc. become redundant. [That is, knowledge contained in them is relevant only till the point that their objective is not achieved, and that is to awaken self-realisation in a person and enlighten him about the ultimate Truth in creation so that he stops falling prey to falsehood, and instead rise higher from this lowly plane of mundane existence and obtain freedom for himself. Once this noble purpose or spiritual objective is accomplished, there is no further need to study the scriptures.] (50).

51. I—the supreme, transcendental, eclectic and the greatest form of eternal divinity known as 'Bhuma* Sada Shiva'—am the only auspicious Truth in creation which is absolute, eternal, perpetual, immutable and imperishable, while the rest of this creation, including the Trinity Gods (Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer and protector, and Shiva the concluder), the living creatures, all the primary elements etc., are not the real 'truth' (51).

[Note—There should be no confusion here. The phrase *Bhuma Sada Shiva* has three components—*Bhuma** meaning someone who is the greatest and grandest, the almighty and supreme Authority in creation, the word 'Sada' means always, everlasting, eternal and perpetual, and 'Shiva' refers to that entity that is divine,

truthful, auspicious, holy, enlightened and self-realised. Hence, the phrase 'Bhuma Sada Shiva' refers to the Supreme Being known as Brahm who has manifested as the pure and truthful consciousness or Atma or soul of the entire creation. This Atma is most enlightened and wise; it is not only a fountainhead of all knowledge but knowledge itself personified. This Atma is the ultimate 'truth' which has no particular form or attribute; it is universal, immutable and uniform in nature. All the rest of the units of creation have some or the other unique features and virtues characteristic to them. So they might be very powerful and mighty like the three Gods of the Trinity, or they might be the basic units of creation such as the elements, or they might be the visible form of those powers and elements—but they cannot be the supreme Authority from where all of them have got their individual powers and potentials and glory. In fact all of them are merely fractional parts of the vast cosmic scene of which the Supreme Being is the artist and composer, doing specific deeds and carrying assigned duties fixed for them by the ultimate deciding Authority. The units of this cosmic scene or the players of the cosmic drama cannot supersede the master who has conceived the very idea itself, and once the master decides to wind up the game none of them can stop him from doing so, whether it is Brahma, Vishnu or Shiva.

*Let's have a closer look at the word *Bhuma*. It refers to that which is most and very great, magnificent, glorious, exalted, multifaceted, abundant, vast, ample, ultimate, supreme and immense in every way. 'Bhuma' literally means the One who is vast and colossus as the visible world of which he is the undisputed Lord. It refers to the Viraat Purush who is the cosmic gross body of the Supreme Being known as Brahm, and from whom the rest of the visible creation has evolved. The word is often employed to address the supreme Brahm himself because there is only a subtle difference between the Viraat Purush and the Supreme Being known as Brahm. The word implies someone who is the greatest and grandest, the almighty and supreme Authority in creation. The concept has been elaborately described in Chandogya Upanishad, canto 7, section 23 of the Sam Veda tradition.]

52. The Guru (moral preceptor and teacher) and the disciple¹ as well as the Mantras which the former gives the latter at the time of initiating him as his disciple², are all imaginations of the mind as is the visible world outside in which the Guru and the disciple live. [Refer verse no. 31-43 of this Canto.]

Do not treat me at par with them; do not think that 'I' (i.e. Lord Shiva who is the divine Brahm revealed, the supremely realised One, as well as the pure conscious Soul, the 'true self' of this self-realised One) am like these false entities. [That is, do not think that since I, Shiva, am teaching you, Kartikeya, as my disciple, that either of us come under this category. Don't be misguided and misconstrue my statement, and don't get bogged down and entangled in unnecessary doubts and confusions. I am just trying to drive home the point that all relationships in this world are transient and false because this world itself is false. The only entity that is stable and like a 'common denominator' in mathematics is the truthful Atma.] (52).

[Note--¹That is, this relationship of someone being a teacher and the other being his disciple presumes that the *Guru* is more learned and wise than the *disciple*, and therefore information and knowledge need to be transferred from the former to the latter. This is fundamentally a fallacious conception because the Atma, which is the true identity of both the Guru as well as the disciple, is the same entity, and this Atma is eternally all-knowing and omniscient. Where is the need of someone being another's teacher? This relationship of 'teacher and disciple' is limited to the physical body and do not apply to the conscious Atma. The body is perishable and therefore it cannot be true because 'truth' does not decay and perish. Hence, the body, along with the mortal world in which it lives, is 'false'.

The need of the Guru is only felt till the time the light of wisdom and enlightenment do not shine on the mental horizon of the spiritual aspirant, but after that this need does not arise. For instance, the matchstick is needed only to light the candle, but once it is lighted, the matchstick is no longer needed. If fact, the light of another candle might be needed to locate the matchbox in a dark room.

²The *Mantras* are simply tools for realisation of the supreme transcendental Brahm, and when this eclectic knowledge sprouts all of its own in the heart of an enlightened creature there is no need for him being initiated or repeating any Mantras given by someone else.]

53. [The basic idea expressed in verse no. 52 has been elaborated further.]

In this world, whatever is regarded as worthy of thoughts and contemplation, all that is regarded as logical and rational, as well as everything that is regarded as advantageous, beneficial, profitable and salutary in this world—none of them are essentially true (simply because the world itself is not true, being ever changing and perishable, characteristics that ‘truth’ does not possess as the latter is eternal, everlasting, steady and uniform).

But ‘I’ am not this falsehood or non-truth. [That is, I am beyond this mundane world and therefore beyond the purview of its definitions and criterions. And therefore I am the only entity that ought to be searched and researched. Refer also to verse no. 52.] (53).

54. All the various forms of Pran (the vital life-sustaining winds having different names and functions), all the different types of sufferings as well as enjoyments, all the things heard of or physically seen in this mundane world—everything that fills this world are false and non-truths (54).

[Note--This is because of the basic premise that the physical world is itself false and an illusionary conception of the mind. The world along with all its constituent parts is mortal, perishable and transient, and anything that is temporary and not sustainable cannot be the ‘truth’. Truth is eternal, permanent and imperishable.]

55. All that is worth doing in this gross physical world as well as that which is not worth doing, all that which has decayed and perished as well as all that which has been received or obtained and is still present now, all forms of sorrows and miseries as well as joys and happiness—verily, all of them are false and non-truths (because they all relate to this transient and untrue world) (55).

56. The concept of something being full and complete or it being incomplete, the notion of Dharma and Adharma (i.e. something being righteous, auspicious, noble and lawful, or the reverse of it), the idea of something being beneficial, profitable and favourable, or being the opposite of it, and the perception of victory and defeat—all of them are illusionary and non-truths (because such considerations arise in the mind of a person who has regarded this material world and its objects as the ‘real world’ that matters to him without realising that what he considers as ‘real and truthful’ is actually transient and perishable, and therefore non-truth) (56).

57. In a similar vein, all forms of perceptions such as those related with hearing of words, the sense of touch and its relevant feelings, the perception of sight and its relevant objects, the perception of taste and the sense of different flavours—all are non-truths (because they all relate to the mortal and perishable body and the world which is equally mortal and perishable) (57).

58. The perception of smell and various fragrances that are perceived—all are illusionary in nature, all are due to ignorance of what constitute the real ‘truth’.

‘Illusion and ignorance of the fact’ is at the base of creation of this colourful world of myriad diversities and variations. In fact, the world itself is an illusion and has come into being out of misconception about the reality (58).

[Note—The Upanishads say that the world and its charms are like the mirage seen in the hot desert. It is there because the hallucinating mind thinks that it is there. If one applies his wisdom and peeps behind the curtain he would see the truth behind all the colourful props on the stage. If the world is true and real, then why does it decay and die, why does it not give permanent peace and happiness to the creature that has spent his entire life faithfully serving this world? Anything that is not permanent cannot be the ‘truth’ as truth is characterised by being eternal and infinite, uniform and universal; truth is not subject to decay, extinction and degradation like its arch rival ‘falsehood’.]

59. All the different Gunas (the three basic qualities of Sata, Raja and Tama that are present in all the creatures and determine their character in this physical world) are also illusive and non-truths (because these Gunas are present in varying quantum in different creatures and are not a constant factor in all of them, they can be enhanced or diminished by practice, whereas the pure conscious Atma is a constant factor that remains uniform and in equal measure in all the living beings in creation).

Therefore we conclude that the ‘pure self’ known as the Atma, a representative of the supreme transcendental Truth known as Brahm, is the only truth in creation.

Hence, ‘I am the Atma’ is the best Mantra (i.e. a formula for realisation of the ultimate ‘truth’ in creation) and its knowledge is the best spiritual achievement (59).

60. [Verse nos. 60-74 marks the culmination of Gyan when the spiritual seeker has found the ‘truth’ he was searching. He has become truly ‘self-realised’ by understanding that he is Brahm personified. Refer Canto 6, verse no. 31-45.]

‘I am Brahm’—this is the most eclectic of all the Mantras¹. It is potent enough to eliminate all the evil effects of all kinds of misconceptions and misdeeds (called ‘sin’ because they mislead and inspire the creature to violate the sanctity of truthful way of life by pursuing falsehood in the misplaced belief that what the creature is doing is the truthful way of life, thereby causing the creature to commit so many sins and errors in its wake that breach the sacrosanct codes of moral and righteous conduct, inviting punishment). It is potent enough to eclipse all other Mantras as it is the culmination of the spiritual aspirant’s endeavour towards realising the ultimate ‘truth’ and find eternal and infinite fountain of beatitude and felicity (60).

[Note—¹The statement ‘I am Brahm’ or ‘Aham Brahmasmi’ is not contradictory to the other statement ‘I am the Atma’ because Atma is the microcosmic counterpart of the macrocosmic Brahm. It is cosmic transcendental Consciousness known as Brahm that has revealed itself as the pure consciousness known as the individual Atma of the individual creature to live inside the latter’s body. Refer Shuk Rahasya Upanishad, verse no. 22 in this connection. This Upanishad is Chapter 13 of this volume.]

61. ‘I am Brahm’—this is the eclectic Mantra that can eliminate all the faults that arise due to the presence of the gross body. [That is, as soon as the spiritual aspirant realises the truthfulness of this statement, he becomes enlightened of the fact that his

true self is a much higher and senior authority which is far more sublime and subtle and very different from the grossness that marks this body.]

‘I am Brahm’—this eclectic Mantra eliminates all the sins committed over different births. [This is because the aspirant has become enlightened enough to realise that sins are committed by the body and not the soul, and since his ‘true self’ is the soul or Atma and not the physical gross body, the very cause that commits sins is removed.] (61).

62. ‘I am Brahm’—this eclectic Mantra eliminates all the fetters that are represented by the fear of death. [This is because the aspirant realises that he would not die like ordinary mortals. ‘Death’ occurs to the body and not to the Atma which is eternal, imperishable and infinite.]

‘I am Brahm’—this eclectic Mantra eliminates the cause of all the mental and spiritual perplexities and their attendant sorrows and miseries arising out of the sense of duality in this creation¹ (62).

[Note--¹It is only when the aspirant thinks that the other person is different from his own self does he begins to have some kind of emotions towards him, for example he might either hate him or love him as his rival and enemy or his friend and companion. But when he removes this sense of duality and sees the other man as another form of the Supreme Being, all sense of dichotomy are removed and this helps to spread the culture of universal brotherhood. Similarly, such a Brahm-realised man would remain satisfied with whatever is available to him for he would treat everything and every circumstance with equanimity and in the same manner. This removes all cause of ill-will and animosity as well as of all sorrows and vexations that arise due to unresolved desires and unfilled aspirations. Duality causes doubts and confusions as to what is the truth and what is not, and removal of this notion creates a sense of uniformity and universality which gives peace and calmness of demeanors.]

63. ‘I am Brahm’—this eclectic Mantra eliminates the cause of all dichotomy created by the sense of existence of differences between any two given entities which are fundamentally the same (because the same Brahm prevails uniformly in the entire creation, and therefore these two apparently different entities are factually two views of the same Brahm revealed in their forms). [This marks the high watermark, the high citadel of Advaita Vedanta.]

‘I am Brahm’—this eclectic Mantra eliminates the cause of all worries and sorrows that accompany these dichotomies¹ (63).

[Note--¹For example, when a man begins to treat all people alike, there would be no one from whom he has to fear. Similarly, when he begins to treat two opposing circumstances alike, there would be no cause for him to get uneasy or flummoxed or rattled in one set of situation, or feel eclectic, elated or exhilarated in another. He would remain calm, placid, unruffled and steady under both the circumstances. This would give a steady evenness to his mind and profound calmness to his demeanors, removing the major irritating cause for all miseries and torments that generally afflict the creature.]

64. ‘I am Brahm’—this eclectic Mantra eliminates the cause of all problems arising out of a faulty, defective and deluded intellect.

‘I am Brahm’—this eclectic Mantra destroys all the fetters created for a creature by a deluded ‘Chitta’, i.e. a misguided and hallucinating mind-intellect complex and its sub-conscious that leads to flawed reasoning and inability to pay proper attention and fix concentration, which in their wake create an imperfect memory, faulty recollection and misplaced interpretation of truth and reality (64).

65. In fact, the eclectic Mantra ‘I am Brahm’ is potent enough to destroy all ailments and torments that might afflict the spiritual aspirant in this world.

‘I am Brahm’—this eclectic Mantra eliminates the cause of all sorrows, grief, distresses and miseries of the creature¹ (65).

[Note--¹This is because a creature feels sorrow or grief and experiences distress and miseries only till the time he relates himself with the body and the world outside. Once he is able to understand the basic spiritual truth that his ‘true self’ is not the body but his pure conscious Atma, and this Atma is eternally free from all fetters caused by worldly delusions and ignorance as well as is perpetually in a blissful state of existence, then all causes of sorrows and miseries are dispelled automatically because they are related to the mortal body and the mortal world. The Atma is immortal, imperishable and eternally blissful unlike the body and the world.]

66. ‘I am Brahm’—this eclectic Mantra eliminates the cause of different distresses, such as Kaam (worldly desires, passions, lust and yearnings) etc. in an instant. [This is because for an enlightened man the world does not have any meaning, and he has no interest in its illusive charms. Thus, there is no basis on which Kaam can breed and entangle him in its deluding and entrapping web.]

‘I am Brahm’—this eclectic Mantra vanquishes Krodh (anger, indignation and wrathfulness)¹ (66).

[Note--¹This Mantra enlightens the creature about his true self as being the Atma which exists in an eternal state of calmness and tranquility. It has no enemy and no desires unfulfilled. It is full of equanimity and benevolence, being compassionate and gracious to the hilt. Anger and frustration come from unrequited desires and unfilled wishes, as well as from inability to successfully accomplish one’s objectives, complete one’s desired tasks, obtain one’s goals in life, and reach one’s chosen destination because of real or imaginary competition, rivalry or hurdles created by the other person, or even by adverse circumstances. This causes ill-will, jealousy, hatred, animosity and a tendency for vengeance, which in their wake breed wrath and anger.]

67. ‘I am Brahm’—this eclectic Mantra eliminates all the various ‘Chitta Vrittis¹’ that form road-blocks in the spiritual liberation of the creature.

‘I am Brahm’—this eclectic Mantra helps to eliminate all the different ‘Sankalps²’ etc. that the creature makes along with their perpetual attendant problems (67).

[Note-¹The numerous *Chitta Vrittis* are the different states of existence or conditions of the mind-intellect complex of any given living being along with the various tendencies and natural inclinations that it possesses and exhibits. These Chitta Vrittis determine how the individual thinks, how he reacts to a given circumstance, and how his mind-intellect interprets a given set of inputs. If the mind-intellect has a basic propensity for being attracted to the charms and pleasures of the world, unmindful of their truthfulness and permanence, it would have a natural affinity to the material objects of this artificial world so much so that it would sweep aside any hint of doubt about their pitfalls and warning about the dangers that they portend. On the other hand, if the mind-intellect has a higher degree of wisdom and enlightenment ingrained in it then it would see the trap that these false worldly charms pose for the Spirit and would endeavour to avoid them.

The word ‘Chitta’ refers also to the sub-conscious mind. A person gathers so many varied experiences during the course of his day to day worldly intercourse and they are all stored in his sub-conscious mind and forms its data bank. These in turn affect his thinking process and overall personality. If the sub-conscious mind is corrupted and tainted, then it is obvious that the entire personality and thinking of an

individual would be commensurately affected; his actions, outlook and behavioral patterns are proportionately affected. The entire blame falls upon the Atma because the latter is the sovereign of the entire setup. So the eclectic view-point that 'I am immaculate, untainted, uncorrupt and holy like Brahm' has a positive affect on the psychology of the aspirant. It is an instrument of positive thinking and generated positive energy around him. It is 'auto-suggesting' oneself that one is good and noble instead of being bad and evil which create negative energy. It is like advising a man under depression and seemingly lost to think high and constructively about himself; to think that he can do everything, that failures are a part of the game, that there is nothing that he cannot do, that he must get up and try again and do it confidently as he is bound to succeed. This helps him to overcome his darkness and depression at failures, and he goes about the unfinished task with renewed vigour and life.

So we observe how different shades of the various inherent tendencies and natural propensities of the mind-intellect complex, its level of enlightenment, wisdom, sagacity and erudition, along with the way it is able to absorb and adapt its self to newer information and circumstances depending on its willingness to learn and rectify that would determine the creature's overall personality and behaviour, how he reacts to a given set of circumstances and how he interprets a set of inputs or stimuli originating in this world. Refer Canto 4, verse no. 53 also.

²*Sankalp* literally refers to the resolve, a solemn promise, a firm vow, a will and determination that a creature makes. The word also incorporates in its ambit all the ambitions, aspirations and volitions that he has, leading him to make necessary efforts to fulfill his dreams and accomplish success in his efforts. But in the process he forgets that he is pursuing an imaginary dream in an equally imaginary world. The material world is impermanent, transient, mortal and perishable, so how can anyone expect eternal peace, bliss and happiness in this setup? The entire arrangement is a creation of his deluded mind, described as the misguided Chitta Vritti, which impels him towards pursuing a mirage which can never give him eternal peace and happiness. This is because even if he successfully manages to accomplish one dream, another more charming than the first would crop up suddenly from nowhere creating new desire to pursue it while efforts have to be made continuously to retain and protect the gains of the first dream. 'Sankalps' are like a misguided creature running determinedly behind the sun moving towards the western horizon with an ambition to catch it! What more stupidity can he show? Refer also to Canto 5, verse nos. 2, 5, 16, 63, 97.]

68. 'I am Brahm'—this eclectic Mantra helps to destroy countless faults and shortcomings in the creature that create as many hurdles in his spiritual elevation and enlightenment.

'I am Brahm'—this eclectic Mantra helps to eliminate all dependency upon others¹ (68).

[Note--¹This is because when the creature realises that his true self, his Atma, is as powerful and authoritative as the supreme transcendental Brahm, the almighty and omnipotent Lord of the entire creation, he feels that he is like an Emperor who does not depend upon others for anything. The Atma is sublime and subtle unlike the gross body which needs so many props and support to physically survive in this world. The creature in his gross form as the body is dependent upon all others in this world, because the latter is an interactive society where all individuals are interdependent not only amongst themselves but also upon the numerous things and objects that exist around them. But this does not apply to the pure conscious Atma as it is ethereal and without forms like the air and sky elements which do not need any base or support for their own survival.]

69. 'I am Brahm'—this eclectic Mantra helps to abolish all ignorance and delusions, thereby kindling the light of wisdom and enlightenment marked by certitude about the real Truth and absolute Reality in creation.

'I am Brahm'—this eclectic Mantra helps to bestow the Atma with the honour of being a conqueror of the entire world² (69).

[Note--¹This is because as soon ignorance and delusions pertaining to unreality and imaginary truth are vanquished, the spiritual aspirant is able to stand upon a high moral and spiritual ground from where he can intelligently and wisely look upon this world and survey its truthfulness and worthiness vis-à-vis its falsehoods and vanity. He becomes independent of all delusions and their accompanying sycophantic worldly charms, material comforts and sensual pleasures. This is tantamount to his conquering this world because these worldly attractions are such baits that are almost impossible to resist, they present such temptations that defy being overcome easily by an ordinary mortal creature.]

70. 'I am Brahm'—this eclectic Mantra is a provider of eternal and truthful happiness and joy to the spiritual aspirant. It bestows eternal beatitude and felicity to him.

'I am Brahm'—this eclectic Mantra helps to eliminate all forms of grossness, indolence, lethargy and inertia (because it makes the aspirant realise that he is not something gross like this body and the world, but something as exalted and sublime as the ethereal Spirit) (70).

71. 'I am Brahm'—this eclectic Mantra helps to subdue and conquer this demon-like world¹.

'I am Brahm'—this eclectic Mantra helps to reduce to rubble the great mountain representing all that is non-truth and characterised by falsehoods and delusions (71).

[Note—¹The world is likened to a *demon* because it is betraying, merciless, selfish to the core, uncompassionate and cruel. It would bite the hands that feed it. It sucks the blood out of the creature and then relegates it to a small space in a page of some obscure history book.]

72. 'I am Brahm'—this eclectic Mantra helps to abduct and imprison all 'demonic and evil forces' in this creation.

'I am Brahm'—this eclectic Mantra is the provider of supreme emancipation and salvation to the creature's Atma, called attainment of 'Moksha'. This achievement gives immense and immortal beatitude and felicity to the aspirant as it marks the culmination of his spiritual pursuit. [This 'Moksha' is attainment of Truth which is synonymous with self-realisation and Brahm-realisation. It helps the aspirant to break free from the seemingly endless cycle of birth and death.] (72).

73. 'I am Brahm'—this eclectic Mantra blesses the spiritual aspirant with a sublime happiness along with a sense of fulfillment and contentedness obtained when one has obtained the best form of knowledge and wisdom which he had been pursuing for so long and which had eluded him till now.

There are seven 'Koti' (1 Koti = 10 million) other great Mantras¹, but all of them keep the creature trapped in an endless cycle of countless birth and deaths as none of them show him the path of self-realisation that enlightens him about the eternal truth of the pure conscious Atma which is his truthful 'self' and point out to him its parity with the supreme transcendental Brahm, the Supreme Being who is the Lord Master of this entire creation (73).

[Note—¹This observation should not be taken too literally but its true spirit must be grasped. The numeral 7 times ten millions is just a figure of speech to emphasise that they are countless paths which promise liberation and deliverance to the spiritual searcher, but only the true understanding of what is meant by the Mantra ‘I am Brahm’ can actually lead to eternal peace and bliss obtained by reaching one’s true destination and discovering one’s roots. It fills one with a sense of immense ecstasy and profound elation at having found the ‘truth’ he has been searching painstakingly for so long. This feeling of jubilation cannot be described in words. Once one reaches one’s destination, there is no need of the chariot, and similarly when one has realised the ultimate ‘truth’ there is no more need of Mantras and performance of elaborate rituals with these Mantras.]

74. Therefore a wise seeker should discard all other Mantra and concentrate only upon this single Mantra ‘I am Brahm’. This concentration on one Mantra speeds up the process of reaching one’s spiritual goal and obtain ‘Moksha’, i.e. liberation and deliverance from ignorance and delusions about the ‘factual and real ‘truth’ as opposed to ‘imaginary or perceived truth’, which in turn opens the gate for the Spirit’s or Atma’s emancipation and salvation.

There is not even a fraction of doubt in it (74).

Thus ends Canto 3

Canto 4

[Canto 4 describes the two types of ‘Muktis’ called ‘Videha Mukti’ and the ‘Jivan Mukti’. The word ‘Mukti’ refers to the liberation and deliverance of the soul of the creature from ignorance and delusions, and its ultimate emancipation and salvation so that it does not have to come back and enter the cycle of birth and death in this mortal world. This is once again elaborately explained by Lord Shiva to his son Kartikeya. This Canto is an extension of the observations made in Canto 3. It would be observed that a combined reading of these two Cantos fills the spiritual aspirant’s mental horizon with positive thoughts of a high degree of refinement and kindles self-respect and self-dignity in him. It does away with negativity and depression that have become the norm in modern world. When the person constantly tells himself that he is noble, good and auspicious, his sub-conscious mind become conditioned and trained to think in positive and constructive terms, and consequentially there is no scope of his committing evil and demeaning things—because it is the mind that decides what a man does.]

1. [Verse nos. 1-32 describe the concept of Jivan Mukti.]

Kumar (Kartikeya or Shadaan—refer verse no. 80) asked the great God Lord Shiva—‘Oh Lord! What is the condition of a person who has obtained either ‘Jivan Mukti’ (liberation and deliverance, or emancipation and salvation of the soul while the person is still alive in this world) or ‘Videha Mukti’ (liberation and deliverance, or emancipation and salvation of the soul after the person has left the world, i.e. after he has died)? What are the characteristic features of these two types of Muktis?’

The great Shiva replied—‘A person who bears life, i.e. who lives in this world with a holistic spiritual view of his own self as being a sublime and divine entity that

is the truthful, eternal, enlightened and pure conscious Atma called the 'self' which is a manifestation of the supreme Atma which is the cosmic Consciousness in this creation, the Atma which has no qualifications and attributes that can conclusively define it, and which is a personification of the supreme transcendental Brahm, the Supreme Being himself—such a person is said to be 'Jivan Mukta', or a person who is deemed to be spiritually liberated and delivered from the fetters of ignorance and delusions while he leads a normal life in this world and has a gross body in which his Atma—his 'true self'—lives. His condition is quite the opposite of a person who thinks that his 'self' is the gross body and not the Atma, thereby shackling him to the fetters of ignorance and its attending delusions (1).

[Note—The term *Jivan Mukta*—has two components—viz. the word *Jivan* which means 'life', and *Mukti* which means 'freedom and liberation'. A person who has the grand, noble, righteous and virtuous characteristics as well as is enlightened and self-realised about the ultimate truth of this creation becomes totally detached from this artificial, mundane and illusionary world even while he physically lives in it, has a body, and goes about his routine duties and chores and does his assigned jobs in this world. But with erudition and truthful knowledge he has realised the futility of this world, and therefore he remains completely dispassionate and detached from it just like a dew drop lying on the petal of a lotus flower. He does not get the least agitated or affected or passionate by any set of circumstances, whether adverse or favourable. He remains aloof and unruffled. That is being equivalent to becoming free from all the mental, emotional and physical uneasiness created by the turmoils of this world. It is deemed that such a person has obtained virtual deliverance from the shackles of this entrapping world, a condition called 'being emancipated and delivered while still alive'; this phrase explains what constitutes Jivan Mukti.

The Jivan Mukti state refers to freedom from being mentally engrossed in this delusory and artificial world and becoming free from the shackles that tie a person to the cycle of transmigration in this world while he still physically lives in it and carries out his assigned and designated duties and works with dispassion and detachment. This enables the creature to be free from any mental bondage that tie it to the ensnaring world; it is tantamount to be liberated from the shackles of this world while still living in the world with a body and going about one's daily chores in a routine manner. After all, the very existence of the world is due to the mind; if the mind does not think that the world has any relevance, then it loses all pertinence and relevance for the creature.

It would be relevant to point out here that without the control of the Mana (mind) and Indris (sense organs) it is practically impossible to dissociate oneself from the world. The mind and the sense organs of a man are inherently very restless. Their control is called 'Nigraha'. The word 'control' implies that both of them are reined in and prevented from recklessly following their usual sense objects of the material world, seeking comfort and pleasure from them. To do this we have to set a goal, and then focus them on these goals, for then, their energy and agility would be diverted towards that goal. For this purpose the goal would be spiritual and that would mean self knowledge and self realisation. Once this spiritual goal is set, the Ahankar or self esteem, pride and ego inherent in a man will take care of the rest—for now he would do his best not to fail in his endeavour which he has set for himself by himself. A focused mind and sense would help the man to control them, for now they would find no time and energy to go berserk and have to live up to their expectations.

Another method is to focus the mind on one thing at a time—and this time it is self knowledge. Once the mind is focused on this target, it would try to find out how to achieve it, and then actually implement that method.

These methods are positive and are more helpful as compared to methods used to suppress the mind and sense organs, because then they would feel like being trapped

under duress and would try to break free at the first opportunity, creating greater distress to the seeker.

A *Jivan Mukta* person is one who has become enlightened enough to realise the truth about his own self as well as the falsehood of the world surrounding him. He therefore does his worldly duties but remains detached from them. He realises that all that he sees is an illusion and perishable, and it makes no sense in pursuing a mirage. On the contrary, he is deemed to have tasted the nectar of eternal bliss and happiness which gives ecstasy and thrill which no material pleasure and comfort of the world can match. Such a man is deemed to have obtained liberation from the fetters that shackle an ordinary creature to the delusions created by this entrapping world of materialistic pleasures which are illusive and temporary as well as the miseries and torments which are equally false and transient. Such a person remains engrossed in contemplation and meditation of the supreme Brahm in the form of Lord Ram, and derives immense eternal pleasure and bliss by remaining submerged in this ocean of bliss and happiness while he is still alive in this world and goes about his daily routine in a normal way. In other words, though he appears to behave normally externally, from the inside he remains detached from and indifferent to his materialistic surroundings and their inherent plethora of miseries and pains as well as pleasures and joys. On the contrary, he remains perpetually submerged in an ocean of bliss that is obtained by meditating upon the supreme Truth known as Brahm as well as his own self which is his Atma representing that Brahm. Once he has tested the nectar of ultimate eternal bliss and happiness that fills his heart and being with ecstasy and thrill of self-realisation, he gives a damn to the superficial, temporary and pith-less happiness derived from the sense objects of the materialistic world, as well as is unmoved by its pains and miseries because these only affect his body and not his Atma, which is pure consciousness and his actual and truthful identity.

The concept of *Jivan Mukta* has been elaborately described in other Upanishads also, notably Maho-panishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 36-73; Ram Rahasaya, Canto 5; Muktiko-panishad, Canto 2; Paingal Upanishad, 3/9-11; Mandal Brahmin, 2/4/3-4 and Annapurna, Canto 2.]

2. 'I' am not the body of the creature, a body that has been hypothetically divided into three sub-divisions—viz. the gross body, the subtle body and the causal body. On the contrary, I am nothing but 'pure consciousness' personified. I am therefore Brahm personified¹.

A person who has this holistic and divine view of his own self is deemed to be *Jivan Mukta*, or freed from all shackles represented by ignorance of the truth, and thereby is deemed to be spiritually delivered even while alive and having a gross body in which his Atma, his 'true self' lives in this world (2).

[Note—¹The pronoun 'I' refers to the 'true identity' of the spiritual aspirant which is his Atma or pure conscious 'self' which is different from the gross body in which this Atma lives during its sojourn in this world. The body of any individual creature has been divided into three sub-divisions in order to facilitate its analysis and the understanding of its functioning from metaphysical point of view. These three divisions are the following—(a) The gross body consisting of the five organs of perception such as the eye, nose, ear, tongue and skin which deal with the five sense perceptions such as the sight, smell, hearing, taste and feeling, and the five organs of action such as the hand, leg, mouth, genitals and excretory which deal with the five actions of the gross body such as acceptance, movement, eating and speaking, reproduction and elimination of waste from the body. (b) The subtle body consisting of the mind and intellect which acts as the control and command center of the body. And (c) the causal body which harbours the pure conscious Atma and is so-called because it is due to the presence of this Atma that the body is alive and conscious.

This Atma is the 'cause' of the entire setup becoming active and alive, and hence the body in which it lives is called the 'causal body'.]

3. A person who is convinced that he is an embodiment and an eternal treasury of bliss and happiness of the best spiritual kind, a person who has complete disregard for his physical gross body (i.e. he does not regard his body as his 'self') and is firmly convinced, without having any doubt, that he is a personification of the supreme transcendental Brahm—such a person is full to the brim with immense bliss of self-realisation, and is deemed to be Jivan Mukta (3).

4. A person who does not believe in the truthfulness of the body but is firm in his conviction that his pure conscious Atma is his true self, who believes that his establishment as a living being who has a body which exhibits life and vitality is due to the presence of the Atma inside the body, the Atma which is pure and sublime and nothing but enlightened Consciousness—such a man is Jivan Mukta (4).

5. A person who sees this Atma as one complete whole, self-sufficient and without any shortages and shortcomings, the Atma which is an all-pervading and all-encompassing divine entity, an indefinable entity that is full of eternal and infinite beatitude and felicity that cannot be described—such a man is Jivan Mukta (5).

6-8. A person who has a holistic view of his own self as pure transcendental consciousness, who is devoid of all illusive attachments and entrapping infatuations of all kinds, preferring to remain without any company other than his own Atma, one who remains in a perpetual state of bliss and happiness, one who is a personification of the eternally happy and bountifully joyous Atma, one who is without any worries of any kind, one who does not believe in the truthfulness and existence of anything else other than the individual Atma which is the creature's pure conscious 'self' and the supreme transcendental Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness of the entire creation—such a person is said to be Jivan Mukta.

He is steady in the conviction that he is not any one of the following entities, i.e. that he cannot be judged and defined by any of the characteristic features, any of the qualities and virtues that are hallmarks of the following entities—Chitta (mind and the sub-conscious along with their powers to focus attention, think and remember), Buddhi (intelligence, rationality and powers to intelligently deduce), Ahankar (the sense of pride, ego, arrogance, haughtiness and hypocrisy), Indris (the various organs of the body), Deha (the gross body), and Pran (the life-giving vital winds, such as breath).

Similarly, he is convinced that he is untainted by and beyond the reach of such negative traits as Maya (delusions and ignorance pertaining to the artificial world), Kaam (worldly desires, lust, passions, yearnings etc.), Krodh (anger, indignation and wrathfulness) etc.

Verily, I am absolutely distinct from them (6-8).

9-10. This world is not at all related to me and I have nothing to do with it. I am immaculate and without any of the taints that are so characteristic of this world. I am without any specific gross features or signs that are regarded as criterion for establishing an entity's existence and truthfulness in this mortal world of material sense objects.

The eyes, mind, ears, nose, tongue, hands etc.—none of these gross features belong to me or my formless sublime form.

I do not keep awake nor do I sleep—that is, I do not have any specific physical state of my existence which can be defined as either sleeping or wakeful. [This is because, as I have already affirmed, I do not have a gross physical body which sleeps or keeps awake, as I am the Atma which is an ethereal Spirit that neither sleeps nor keeps awake.] (9-10).

11. The fourth state of existence of the creature, called the Turiya state, is also not the state in which I exist (for I transcend that state and live in the fifth state called 'Turiya-teet' state. A person who is wise, erudite and enlightened enough to sincerely believe in the truthfulness and authenticity of these statements is the one who is deemed to be Jivan Mukta. [Refer also verse nos. 48-49 of this Canto.]

All that which is seen around me (i.e. all my physical characteristics as well as the visible world in which I live and move) has got anything to do with me, and neither have I got anything to do with it (11).

12. I am not to be sought in this manifested world in any of its myriad forms such as 'Kaal' (any existential plane of time, era and circumstance), 'Desh' (some specific geographical area or country considered more holy than the other, such as a piece of territory designated as a holy place, a pilgrim city or any other holy place such as a mountain or cave), 'Vastu' (any material thing or sense object), 'Mati' (the various conceptions of the mind, understanding and thought, the sense, opinion, belief, desires, inclinations, wishes, etc. that any individual creature has developed with relation to the physical world around him), 'Snaan' (taking ritualistic purifying baths in the false belief that such activities would provide 'Mukti'—emancipation and salvation—to the creature), 'Sandhya' (the religious sacraments, such as prayers, that are offered three times a day when two periods of time meet each other, i.e. at dawn, at noon and at dusk), Deva (various Gods that are worshipped in holy places as well as to whom offerings are made during religious rituals in the hope that it would provide me with Mukti), and 'Sthal' (a particular holy or religious site or location where people offer prayers and do rituals in the hope of attaining salvation). [Refer also verse no. 50 of this Canto.] (12).

13. Similarly, I am not to be found in 'Tirtha' (pilgrim places or going on pilgrimage), 'Sewa' (service), 'Gyan' (acquisition of knowledge, scholarship, erudition and skills), 'Pada' (various honours and titles, different epithets and designations having so many names).

I am not bound by fetters of any kind (as I am eternally free like the ethereal spirit). I have no birth (as I am immortal, imperishable, eternal and infinite). I am not defined by words and am beyond the faculty of speech (a reference to the fact that Atma is such a subtle and sublime entity that no letter, word or phrase can ever hope to describe it). I am not even 'Ravi' or Sun (because of the fact that the Sun has a certain life span whereas I am eternal, the Sun is visible and hot while I am invisible and cool, the Sun rises and sets whereas I am steady and constantly shining as the pure conscious Atma in the subtle sky of the heart of the creature) (13).

14. I am not affected by such mundane considerations as 'Punya and Paap' (something being auspicious, righteous and good or something being just the opposite of it, that is, it being inauspicious, unrighteous and bad respectively). I do not depend

upon Karya (action and deed) and neither do my Mukti (emancipation and salvation) depend upon any auspicious and righteous deed done by me¹.

I am not a Jiva (an ordinary creature with a gross body) as I am the purely enlightened consciousness known as the Atma (which has no form whatsoever). I am beyond the purview and definitions of the three worlds (i.e. the mortal world where mortal creatures live, the celestial world where the Spirits live, and the heaven where the Gods live). This is because I have an independent existence as the unique, most exalted, eternal and non-dual Atma (14).

[Note--¹In other words, my spiritual enhancement and well being, my emancipation and salvation does not depend upon my doing any good deed, and neither would its fall and demotion would dependent upon my doing any bad deed. This is because the deed is done by the body and not the Atma, and the body is not my true identity and as such I am not liable to be either rewarded for good deeds or punished for bad ones.]

15. I do not come within the purview of concepts such as 'Moksha' (liberation and deliverance, emancipation and salvation—because I am eternally liberated and delivered, I am forever emancipated and do not need any fresh salvation), 'Dvait' (the concept of duality that there are two independent forms in which the creation exists, one is the mortal creature and the other is the immortal creator—because the pure consciousness known as the Atma is the ultimate 'Truth', and the latter is a non-dual entity).

I do not need to know the 'Vedas' (the body of all available knowledge—because I am all-knowing and omniscient myself, being a personification of the Vedas themselves in my form as wisdom and enlightenment personified) and the different 'Vidhis' that these Vedas contain and espouse. [The Vidhis and Vidhans are the numerous doctrines, codes, tenets, maxims and axioms enshrined in the scriptures to guide a person in his day to day life. I do not need them because I am always righteous, noble and auspicious in my actions and deeds.]

I have no end (as I am endless, infinite, eternal and imperishable). I am not far (as the truthful and pure conscious Atma is a resident of the heart of the creature and can be sought inside his own self by meditation and contemplation instead of being somewhere far off in the heaven where a man can go only after death, or some distant holy place which has to be visited after a long journey).

I am a neutral entity, for I am neither knowledgeable nor ignorant (15).

16. I cannot be limited by specific titles, designations, attributes or qualities and segregated according to them, such as me being a 'Guru' (a moral preceptor, a teacher, an expert and a guide, a person who is skilled in any particular field and has an excellent knowledge of a subject), or me being a 'Sishya' (a disciple or student who is still ignorant of that knowledge and goes to the Guru to acquire it). [This is because I, as the Atma, am present in both of them besides the fact that there is nothing that this Atma does not know and needs to learn as it is omniscient and all-knowing. Therefore there is no need for creating an artificial segregation between two people as one being a Guru and the other being his disciple. Both are equal from the spiritual perspective.]

In other words, I do not lack in anything and neither do I have anything in bountiful. [The disciple lacks knowledge whereas the teacher has this knowledge. Since the Atma is the same in both of them, such segregations into separate classes as one being more knowledgeable than the other is artificial and man made, and not a correct depiction of the fact.]

I am not Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer and protector, Shiva the annihilator or concluder, or the Moon God (16).

17. I am not any one of the elements such as the earth, water, wind or air, sky or space and fire. I have no 'Gotra', i.e. I have no race, caste, clan, family or blood lineage, relations etc. I am not an object that can be physically seen or observed, and neither can I be the target or aim of any material research and treasure hunt. I am beyond such considerations (17).

18. I am not the 'Dhyata' (a person who aspires for anything, who seeks and searches for anything; the meditator who meditates in order to attain divine knowledge and mystical powers), nor am I the 'Dhyea' (the aim of all search, the spiritual goal or objective in life for which the seeker meditates), or the 'Dhyan' (the process of meditation and contemplation, the focusing of the mind on the task at hand and fixedly pursuing it till its successful accomplishment)¹. [Refer verse no. 28.]

I am not the mind that is subjected to such perceptions as hot and cold, or has the feeling of thirst and hunger. [In other words, I do not feel cold or hot, and neither do I have thirst and hunger.]² (18).

[Note—¹In other words, I do not need to pursue anything and think about it, as I am fulfilled and fully contented, not needing anything whatsoever.

²I do not feel such things as I am of an equitable mind, have equanimity of emotions and am full of fortitude and tolerance, treating opposing inputs of perceptions originating in this gross world with stoic indifference and equanimity. This is because I know that such things as hot and cold, thirst and hunger etc. are felt by the physical body which is gross and fickle in nature, but not by the Atma which is sublime and subtle, of a calm and even bearing, stable and poised, and ever contented, fulfilled, satisfied and blissful. The Atma is an ethereal Spirit and not gross like the body. So, there is no question of the Atma ever feeling the need for drinking water or eating food to quench its thirst or hunger. The Atma is never swayed by external influences which are nevertheless transient and would sooner or later pass away in due course of time.]

19. I am neither a friend of anyone nor am I anybody's enemy. Similarly, I do not have a friend or an enemy. I have nothing to do with 'Moha' (the notion of having attachment and infatuation with anything or anyone in this world; the concept of delusions and misconceptions) and 'Jaya' (the idea of victory and success in any worldly endeavour).

I am not limited to and defined by such indicators of directions as western or upper or any other specific direction¹ (19).

[Note--¹In other words, I have no horizontal or vertical dimensions or specific planes of existence. No measurements or yardsticks apply to my exalted being, and there are no specific paths or courses that can or cannot lead to me, or where I am not present. It should be noted here that the pronoun 'I' is being applied to the Atma which is the all-pervading and omnipresent ethereal Spirit present as the conscious soul of an enlightened person. 'I' does not mean his physical gross body which has a lot of limitations as opposed to the ethereal Atma which has none. Like the sky or air element, this 'I' is present everywhere.]

20. I have nothing to say, nothing to hear, no where to go, and nothing to think or contemplate about (20).

21. I do not have to either enjoy or suffer from anything. I do not have to remember anything either (for everything is known to me).

I am not interested in 'Bhog' (enjoyments of the material comforts and pleasures of the sense objects in this world) or 'Raag' (having mental attachments, desires, love and infatuations with anything or anyone in this world). Likewise, I am not interested in becoming a Yogi (an ascetic, a hermit, a monk, a friar) who has renounced the world along with all its myriad charms and delusions, including the notions of Bhog and Raag mentioned here, nor do I wish to completely renounce and abandon everything and dissolve myself into nothingness¹ (21).

[Note--¹In other words, I have no specific wishes that remain to be fulfilled. If I had wished to become an ascetic then it implies that till date I was not one, and if I desire to vanish from sight and dissolve myself into the elements by leaving this body and allowing it to disintegrate into the elements, it would mean that till date I was having a body which needs to be left and discarded, and myself to be merged into the primary elements of creation which are nothing but my primary forms in Nature. As I am an enlightened being, these assumptions are excluded, and so I do not have any specific wishes, for the very idea of having any wish whatsoever would suggest that I am not fully free from shackling desires and aspirations.]

22. I am not a stupid being of a dull mind-intellect, and neither do I need to cultivate tranquility, calmness and serenity of temperament and demeanors in me¹.

I am, at the same time, not indolent, lethargic and disinterested in everything like an entity which has no life in it (because I am very much active and conscious).

I do not have any kith and kin, any friend and companion. I have no one who is dear to me and who I love (because I am dispassionate and remain detached from this body and am therefore immune and indifferent to the various relationships that exist in this world).

I am not interested in numerous comforts, pleasures and enjoyments that are part of this material world and its sense objects.

I am neither gross nor subtle, nor am I fat or emaciated (because I don't have a physical body which has these characteristics) (22).

[Note—¹In other words, I am not a fool to indulge in senseless gossip, do senseless things, and run aimlessly in search of no fixed target. Similarly, I am already peaceful and calm, so I don't have to inculcate these eclectic virtues afresh in me.]

23. I do not become big or expand in any way, and neither do I become small and diminutive or get reduced in stature and importance. [That is, I do not feel elated and feel puffed up by praises, nor do I feel humiliated and belittled by insults. I am not a giant nor am I a dwarf.]

I do not develop nor do I decay (because I am eternal, even, infinite, constant, steady, imperishable and perpetual).

I do not have anything to do with 'Adhyaarop' and 'Apavaad' related to the Vedas and their tenets and doctrines¹.

Whether such misconceptions and illusionary ideas are one or many, whether they pertain to one or more than one object—I have got nothing to do with them (23).

[Note—¹*Adhyaarop* is the erroneous conception of imagining anything unreal in another thing which is real. It is a faulty perception or inference of the truth. It is a false accusation based on erroneous perceptions and defective mind. To wrongly transfer an attribute from one entity to another, thereby creating wrong impression about the latter's true nature and form.

Apavaad literally means slander, reproach, infamy, aspersion, defamation, accusation, blame, exception. When these two words are applied together in relation

to the Vedas it implies that one wrongly interprets the tenets and doctrines of the Vedas and then creates an entire body of assumptions and precepts that are totally at divergence from the truth, and are therefore misleading. Such misrepresentations of the truth and misreading of the maxims and axioms of the scriptures lead to a vicious cycle of delusions, wrong ideas, erroneous theories, and the hordes of their accompanying problems.

For example, to visualise that the artificial, fractured, perishable and deluding world exists in the supreme transcendental truthful Brahm which has none of these characters, instead of the other way round—i.e. seeing the universal Brahm in everything in existence as its fundamental building block, its basic unit, and then realising the fact that the unstable form in which this world exists are actually revelations of the one and the same non-dual universal entity known as the cosmic Brahm. It is like the metal ‘gold’ being moulded into numerous ornaments but having worth only because of the presence of gold in them as their primary ingredient.

Misconceived and half-baked knowledge is more dangerous than not having any knowledge at all. A person who knows that he has no knowledge would endeavour to acquire it, and at least would not have false pride of knowledge in him. On the other hand, a person who thinks that he has a correct knowledge would not only fall down the spiritual precipice himself but take others down with him.

“He who knows and knows that he knows is a wise man; seek him. He who knows not and knows that he knows not is a child; teach him. He who knows and knows not that he knows is asleep; wake him. And he who knows not and knows not that he knows not is a fool and ignorant stupid; shun him.”]

24-25. I am not blind, nor am I stupid or clever—because such conditions pertain to the body which I am not. That is also why I am not someone who has a physical gross body consisting of the following seven elements—flesh, blood, abdomen, marrow, bones and skin (and other skeletal structures).

Similarly, I do not have a colour to my complexion, such as white (fair), red (copper colour or tanned skin), purple or dark complexion etc. (simply because only a physical structure such as a gross body can have a colour and complexion) (24-25).

26. I have no torments or miseries affecting me. I have nothing to gain from anything.

I am neither anybody who is honoured as a chief or have any special privileges, nor am I—or can be—sidelined by anyone and relegated to the fringes as being inconsequential and irrelevant¹.

I do not have any doubts and confusions and their accompanying perplexities and vexations in me. I neither roam about nor do I stay put at one place.

I am not something that is a secret and mysterious (because anyone can access me, the pure conscious Atma representing the supreme transcendental Brahm by proper level of enlightenment and self-realisation).

I do not belong to any clan or caste or family (because I am not someone who takes a birth, for I am eternal and universal ethereal Spirit which does not take birth nor does it die (26).

[Note—¹This stanza can be read as follows also—‘I do not regard anyone as important and consequential, nor do I treat anyone as unimportant and inconsequential. I treat everyone with stoic indifference and equanimity’.]

27. I do not regard anything worth discarding or being disinterested about, nor do I treat anything to be worthy enough to being accepted and making efforts to access it or reach it.

There is nothing that I laugh about. [In other words, I do not think anything or any circumstance to be so useless, so funny, so incredulous, so ridiculous, so absurd and so hilarious that I treat it with disdain and laugh at it with contempt at its stupidity and irrelevance.

I do not follow any precepts, tenets, doctrines and principles and neither do I conform to them (because these have been devised as instruments to guide a creature towards its destination, but I have already reached it and have realised the Truth, so I do not need them any longer). That is also why I do not conform to any preset rules and regulations as well (because I am not a mortal creature of this humdrum world who must be properly trained and regulated in order to keep the society civilized, regularized and controlled).

I do not have any regrets and feel depressed in mind (when I make the above bold observations because of the fear that they might cast me in a bad light as being haughty and arrogant simply because I am sincerely speaking the truth and not deceiving anybody to serve some selfish vested interests of mine). I do not cause any harm to anyone. I do not desire and wish anything from anyone (27).

28. I am not a 'Gyata' (an expert and knowledgeable person), nor am I the 'Gyan' (the knowledge itself) or the 'Gyea' (something worth knowing; the object or aim of knowledge). [Refer verse no. 18.] Actually, I do not know how to describe myself.

You are not for me and neither am I for you. Similarly, neither can I call you mine, nor can you call me yours. [This is because the concept of 'I' and 'you', 'my' and 'your', 'mine' and 'yours'—are limited to the gross physical body and not to the ethereal Atma which has no physical relationships with anyone. Refer verse no. 42 below.] (28).

29. I am not old, I am not a child, I am not a youth or an adult. Verily, I am Brahm; I am indeed Brahm; certainly and irrefutably I am Brahm!¹ (29).

[Note—¹Refer Canto 3, verse nos. 60-74 in this context.]

30. I am an embodiment of enlightenment and wisdom. I am pure consciousness personified. I am nothing but it—this realisation, when it is heart-felt and sincere, is the state when a spiritual aspirant can say with conviction that he has become 'Jivan Mukta', i.e. he has obtained spiritual liberation and deliverance, he has achieved spiritual emancipation and salvation even while living in this world with a physical body, or even while he is still alive and going about his normal duties in this mortal world.

I am indeed Brahm personified. I am indeed no one else—this realisation is Jivan Mukti; it is spiritual liberation and deliverance even while the person is still alive in this world (30).

31. A person is called Jivan Mukta if he is like a divine 'Swan'¹ because he is established in his own divinity and glory. He sees his own truthful form (as the pure conscious Atma and the supreme Brahm) everywhere and in each unit of this creation. Thus, when he observes that the entire creation is his kingdom, he cheerfully lives in it like a King does in his realm. He enjoys the bliss and happiness that comes with the realisation of the true nature of the exalted 'self' (31).

[Note—¹The concept of Swan being a representative of a truly self-realised soul has been elaborately described in Hanso-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition. It has

been explained as note no. 3 to verse no. 4 of Canto 1 of the present Tejobindu Upanishad also.]

32. A person is called Jivan Mukta who treats himself as the only brave warrior (who has conquered all the enemies in the form of numerous delusions and ignorance that are related with this mundane life, the world and the body). He has realised that he is the only Lord of his own self (as the Atma is not bound to anyone to serve him); and that his own self is glorious and divine (32).

33. [From this verse onwards, the concept of 'Videha Mukti', i.e. to be liberated from the fetters of the gross physical body is being elucidated. This is a higher form of Mukti which envisions complete dispensing of the physical body. A Videha Mukta person's body may be set afire or put to great discomfiture but he would not even feel it. This state of existence is above the Jivan Mukti state of existence and is attained after success in obtaining the latter stage. It is like one doing Master's degree from a university which assumes that he must have successfully completed the Bachelor's degree. What one learns in the undergraduate class is simply elaborated and fortified in the post-graduate class; what spiritual gains are made by an aspirant in the Jivan Mukta state are simply reinforced and bolstered in the Videha Mukta state. A person who is Videha Mukta must automatically be Jivan Mukta. In fact, these two forms of spiritual liberation and deliverance go hand in hand, complimenting and supplementing each other, and do not exclude or contradict each other.]

'I have become one like the supreme transcendental Brahm. In this form of existence (or, with this divine and holy view-point firmly established in me), my Atma is blissful and happy, experiencing the glorious beatitude and felicity of Brahm-realisation. I, as my ethereal Atma, am contented and happy, pure and uncorrupt, silent and calm. I am convinced that I am not the body as Brahm does not have a physical gross body'. A person who has these magnificent thoughts firmly ingrained in his psyche is indeed 'Videh Mukta'¹—that is, he has freed himself from the fetters that shackle an ignorant and deluded man to this gross body (33).

[Note—¹The word *Videha* means one without a physical body. This state is obtained obviously when a person dies, for then his Atma or soul escapes from his body as Pran, the vital wind responsible for keeping the body alive and active; the vibrations of life; the rhythm and essential functions pertaining to life. The Pran leaves the body in the form of 'breath'; and therefore, it is also treated as being synonymous with breath. Now, breath is 'air' with all its characteristic virtues and qualities. It is present everywhere, but it is neither visible nor felt unless it blows as a soft breeze when it is felt by its touch on the skin. So, in this case, the soul of a person who has become *Videha Mukta* is compared to this all-pervading but invisible wind or air which is the mainstay of life in the form of breath or 'Pran'.

The Atma is not physically felt or seen but can be witnessed when a gross body becomes alive when consciousness is injected into it as its Pran. This same body which is lifeless without the Pran can achieve stupendous feats once the Pran makes it alive and active.

When a person dies, the breath or Pran easily moves out of the body without any trouble. Air as breath known as 'Pran' is not a dead entity but very much alive and active like the Atma or soul of the creature. In practical terms, Pran and Atma can be regarded as being synonymous with each other because the creature cannot survive without either of them. When a person dies it is said that his Pran and Atma are freed from his body. In other words, these two divine entities are set free from the artificial boundary that was imposed upon them in the form of the gross body, thereby limiting their maneuverability and versatility. Upon death, the Atma sets itself free

and merges with the vast cosmos which is present outside the body even as the 'Pran' (or breath; the vibrations of life; the rhythm and essential functions related to life) present inside the body is liberated from it when it is exhaled and merges with the air present outside the body. This is tantamount to having liberation without the encumbrance imposed by the body on the Atma of the creature. Taken in its literal sense, the Videha form of Mukti is this.

Since the true identity of the creature is not his body but the Atma, in the case of *Videha Mukti*, this Atma or soul exits from the trappings of the body much like the breath going out from inside the body and finding liberation in the outside air. Even as the air does not perish after it leaves the body, the Atma which is the true identity of the creature also does not perish once it leaves the body and is set free.

The word *Videha* means without a body, and the word *Mukti* means liberation and freedom, emancipation and salvation. So loosely, the phrase 'Videha Mukti' means 'freedom from the encumbrance and limitations of the body'. This Videha Mukti, generally speaking, is possible when the individual Atma, which is the truthful identity of the creature, leaves the body to merge with the cosmic Atma present outside the body of the individual creature. The example of the breath leaving the body as cited above is the best and simple way to explain the concept. While the breath is inside the body, it represents the Atma of the individual because it is surrounded by the physical, gross body, but as soon as it is exhaled it becomes synonymous with being provided with Videha Mukti because it finds freedom from the encumbrances and limitations of the body and merges with the wind present in the vast space outside the body. So if a wise creature becomes totally unaware of his body so much so that he does not even feel the pain of a pin pricking it, when he is totally oblivious of the fact that the body even exists, then in that state of existence he is equivalent to having actually lost the body altogether—that is, the creature has obtained Videha Mukti. This state is usually achieved during meditation by Yogis when they enter 'Samadhi' which is a trance-like state of consciousness.

In the context of this particular Tejobindu Upanishad however, the phrase 'Videha Mukti' assumes a special significance in as much as that it does not necessarily mean leaving one's body in physical terms, but becoming totally detached from it as if it did not exist at all for all practical purposes. The body may be subjected to any sort of physical treatment but for a true Videha Mukta person it just does not matter. Obviously, it is not as easy as it seems to be; an extremely high level of spiritual evolvment and development is needed to inculcate this stoickness and indifference and make this state of spiritual existence practical.

As soon as this highly detached and indifferent mental condition is developed, the person becomes immune to anything related with the physical body and it is equivalent to his actually leaving it altogether. It ought to be understood here that an idea expressed in words should be taken and understood in a complete and holistic fashion, for it may mean different things under different contexts and circumstances, sometimes appearing to be contradictory to each other if the 'spirit' of that idea is not properly comprehended. The best approach to interpret any great idea or understand the essence of any axiomatic maxim and see it correctly is to relate it in the light of the context in which it is said or expressed without compromising on the basic truthfulness of the idea or maxim which has been expressed in a particular phrase or word by allowing one self to be mired in and get flummoxed or perplexed by too literal a translation of the concerned word or phrase.

Paingalo-panishad, canto 3, verse no.12 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition explains what it is like to be in the Videha Mukti state. It says—"In the final analysis, the soul or Atma transforms into an entity that is without a speech or which cannot be ascribed words to describe it, that cannot touch or feel and can neither be touched or felt, that has no form and shape, that has no taste or sap and neither can it taste any sap, and that has no smell or fragrance nor can it smell any fragrance. It achieves the stature which is imperishable, that does not decay

or diminish, that is without a beginning or is most ancient, that is eternal and infinite, and that is most majestic and stupendous. It attains the supreme transcendental state which is steady and stable, which is pure and immaculate, and which is known as the faultless and healthy Brahm (12).”

A truly liberated soul is one who has understood the import of these two types of Muktis and creates a synergy between the two. Such a person not only becomes ‘Jivan Mukta’, or freed from the burdens cast by this mundane world, but also attains ‘Videha Mukti’, or is freed from the encumbrances and limitations caused by the body at the same time. These two types of liberation and deliverance go hand in hand; they complement each other.

The best example of a person having both these forms of Muktis simultaneously is the legendary king Janak (father of Sita and father-in-law of Lord Ram) because although he was a king taking care of the mundane work of the kingdom, internally he was completely detached from the world and is considered the most enlightened and wise king that ever existed. That is why he is also called ‘Videha’. The concept of various ‘Muktis’ has been elaborately explained by Sri Ram to Hanuman in Shukla Yajur Veda’s Muktiko-panishad.

This concept has been also explained by King Janak to sage Shukdeo in Mahopanishad, canto 2, verse nos. 36-73, Canto 5 of Sam Veda tradition.]

34. A Videha Mukta person is one who has a holistic view of the Atma and sees it everywhere in an omnipresent and all-pervading form. He has a uniform view of the world because he sees the same Atma everywhere, treating everyone without any distinction as a manifestation of the Atma. He is clean in his view of his own self and treats his Atma as pure, uncorrupt and untainted.

He has no sense of false superiority complex about himself in the belief that he is one notch better than the others in this creation because his Atma is supreme, divine and holy, leading to the breeding of such negative traits as ego, self pride, haughtiness and arrogance of his superiority and immaculacy. This is because these negative emotions are not the attributes of the perfect, immaculate and uncorrupt Atma which is as much the true self of the Videha Mukta person as it is of the other person who is engrossed in the world out of sheer ignorance.

He treats the entire world as a manifestation of the same Atma that forms his ‘self’, and which is unique in the sense that it is non-dual and one of its only kind. Therefore, all the living creatures in this world have this Atma in them which gives them their unique identity and individuality which is uniform, universal and independent of the physical form that this creature has got. It is the universal presence of this ubiquitous Atma in all the creatures in creation that binds them together in one uniform whole (much like the thread that holds the beads of the rosary together and gives the latter its identity, importance and shape¹).

In fact, the essence of this creation and the world around him is only the Atma which is also his true self (34).

[Note—¹In this example, the thread is the Atma, while the colourful beads are the numerous bodies of countless species that form this multifarious and varied creation of astounding diversity.]

35. A Videha Mukta person treats the Atma as having no birth or beginning, as it is eternal and imperishable. Therefore he treats himself also as without having any birth or end (because his true ‘self’ is his Atma and not the body). He regards himself as the Atma which is a wellspring of Amrit, the ambrosia of eternity and bliss, the fountainhead of divinity and holiness, the treasury of auspiciousness and goodness.

He has only one aim in life, an aim that is worth pursuing and achieving, and that is the obtaining of a holistic, correct and true knowledge about the Atma. He sees this Atma literally as the target at which his sight is fixed. This Atma is very beautiful and auspicious; it is fascinating and magnificent beyond description.

Having decided his aim and target in life, he concentrates on it by becoming silent and fixing all his energy and attention on it in a quiet manner¹ (35).

[Note--¹In other words, he quietly meditates upon this Atma, fixes his attention and concentrates his energy on accessing it so that this difficult citadel of divinity can be eventually conquered. He does not boast of his progress or is ever proud of his success in this endeavour, preferring to pursue his goal silently and without advertisement, doing it with a focused mind and fixed attention that is needed by an acclaimed archer who is able to successfully shoot the bull's eye from a long distance.]

36-37. A person is deemed to be Videha Mukta when he is convinced that the Atma is an image of Anand (bliss and joys), that it is most dear and loving in this creation, that it is perpetually emancipated, that it has overcome and conquered all obstacles and broken free from all the fetters of delusions and ignorance that are so characteristic of this mundane world and which keep the creature shackled and bogged down in their swampy prison, preventing its salvation.

Such a person has a holistic view of himself as Brahm personified. He regards himself as pure consciousness and an embodiment of wisdom, erudition and enlightenment. He does not allow himself to be drowned in and be deluded by so many doctrines, for he thinks of nothing else but his own self-enlightened and conscious Atma (36).

A person who is firmly established in the view point that he is nothing but the pure conscious and self-illuminated Atma which is wise and enlightened, is deemed to be Videha Mukta¹ (37). [36-37.]

[Note—¹A person with such a noble notion of the self is deemed to *Videha Mukta*, or one who is not bound to the shackles of the body which cause hordes of hindrances in his spiritual progress because he has freed himself from the basic erroneous conception that mires the mind and intellect of all ordinary creatures who are not fortunate enough to be self-realised. It is the fallacious belief that 'I am the body; the body is my self; my identity is my body, and I am recognised and known by it. If my body is harmed, I am harmed; if my body suffers I also suffer', and such other ideas centered around the misplaced notion about the true nature of the body vis-à-vis the Atma.]

38. A person who has only one firm conviction, who believes in one 'truth' and does not get confused by any doctrine other than the maxim 'I am Brahm personified' ('Aham Brahmeti') is the wise, erudite and enlightened person who can be called 'Deha Mukta'—i.e. one who has obtained freedom from the fetters created by ignorance related to the true identity of the 'self'¹. He is known as 'Videha'.

Such a person's inner self is calm and serene, devoid of all consternations and perplexities, and is full of beatitude and felicity (which comes naturally with Brahm-realisation and self-realisation (38).

[Note--¹That is, such a person has realised that his true self is not the body but the Atma, the pure consciousness that has all the glorious virtues and divine qualities which are associated with the supreme Truth in creation. This 'Truth' is the common denominator in every conceivable form in which this creation has evolved, both the visible as well as the invisible, and from the minutest single-cell organisms to the colossus form of creatures that ever walked on the surface of the earth, not to mention

all forms of heavenly bodies that exist in the sky and in the farthest recesses of the cosmos. This 'Truth' is called the cosmic Consciousness, or the supreme transcendental Brahm without which the creation would lose its meaning.

When we talk of the heavenly bodies as revelations of Brahm we do not mean that they are as lively and vibrant with life as our mother planet Earth, but we refer to the fact that they show some physical activity such as movement, changes in their atmosphere, surface and core, that they are in varying stages of development or disintegration as the case may be, the fact that they are subject to some well defined set of laws of Nature which they cannot violate—all indicative of some cosmic Authority and superior Power that is regulating them and exercising its control over the remotest recesses of the universe in the same way as it does on Earth and the creatures that inhabit it. From the perspective of the Upanishads, this cosmic regulating and controlling authority is called Brahm, the supreme transcendental Authority.

This Brahm has its existence comparable to the basic entity known as the 'atom' in this material world. The best way to understand the philosophy of Advaita Vedanta would be to understand the basic concept of the structure of all material things which states that the 'atom' is the fundamental unit around which all the structural features of all existing material things are crafted. It is the atom which forms the molecules, and these molecules give the material its specific texture and shape. The atom has certain basic structure and it remains the same in all the things. So, if one were to understand how this single entity known as the humble, neutral and invisible 'atom' can not only create the uncountable number and variety of material things seen around us but even embody in its self a hidden source of stupendous energy, called the atomic energy, the potential of which is unimaginable to say the least, it would be easy to visualise how this single cosmic entity known as 'Brahm' can reveal itself in this multifarious and diverse world which has no two units exactly alike. When we talk of this basic unit of creation at the macrocosmic level we prefer to call it 'Brahm' which is universal, all-powerful, all-pervading and all-inclusive, and when we talk of it at the microcosmic level we prefer to call it the 'Atma' of the individual creature.

We learn in science that the single element called 'carbon' is at the core of the entire field of chemistry known as organic chemistry, and the uncountable number of chemical compounds produced in this field is due to bonding of this single element with other elements of the periodic table in a stupendous array of combinations and permutations so much so that no two compounds are alike and even their chemical names are so complicated and grotesque that a layman is unable to even pronounce them let alone comprehend their chemical structure. When we extend this analogy to the Atma, we deduce that the same Atma (like the carbon atom) assumes countless personalities showing as many individual characteristics, forms and attributes depending upon the way it (the Atma) allows itself to be associated with or influenced by numerous qualities, attributes and virtues pertaining to the world in which it lives, such as the different Vasanas and Vrittis (worldly passions, desires, wishes, yearnings etc. on the one hand, and the numerous variations in temperaments, nature, habits and inclinations on the other hand respectively), Gunas (e.g. the three Gunas of Sata, Raja and Tama as described in note to verse no. 49 of Canto 3), Ahankar (the element of ego, self pride, vanity leading to arrogance and haughtiness), Maya (delusions etc.) and so on and so forth depending upon the theory of Karma, or the deed done in the creature's previous life and its consequences that are carried over as spiritual baggage. These so-called elements then combine in numerous combinations with the Atma and give rise to so many forms of the same Atma that no two units are alike. The magical part is that the pristine nature of the Atma is lost in the process and completely forgotten, as the 'new Atma' is a transformed entity which has no resemblance to its parent. The creature whose 'true self' is the Atma forgets who he truly is as he gets cloaked in a veil of Maya or delusions, and the main

purpose of the scriptures in this context is to awaken him and enlighten him about his forgotten 'self'.

Let's take it another way. Even elementary knowledge of science tells us that the atom is the fundamental unit in creation that forms the basic building block of life and all things in creation in all their multifarious variations, whether animate or inanimate. The atom has the basic structure called the classical 'planetary' model in which the central core consists of the nucleus made up of electrically neutral neutrons and positively charged protons, and the surrounding cloud of moving negatively charged particles called the electrons. The atom derives its name from the Greek word 'atomos' meaning something that cannot be divided any further, much like the Atma or Brahm. The atom is the smallest unit into which matter can be divided and still retain its characteristic properties of an element. The atom is, left to its own account, neutral and inactive because its protons are neutralized by the electrons. But the same atom becomes positively or negatively charged by losing or gaining an electron, thereby producing enormous amount of energy. This energy is hidden in its bosom, and needs to be activated, and once done its potentials can be simply mind boggling in their reach and application as is amply evident when we consider the powerful energy released when an atom bomb is detonated. This energy can be used for destructive purposes as well as for constructive purposes as in the case of producing endless electricity with it. The characteristic of a particular element is determined by the number of protons present in the atom, the electrons determine its charge, and the neutrons decide the isotope. The isotope of an element is a form of an atom which has a different atomic weight from other forms of the same atom, but the same chemical structure.

Now this ideal atomic structure can be compared with the supreme Brahm. The various elements formed out of this single atom because of its different number of protons can be likened to the uncountable number of things and creatures that this single Brahm has produced. Each material thing in this creation has its unique molecular formula, and a molecular formula is based on the way the same basic entity known as the atom aligns itself with its various other incarnations or manifestations having slight variations in its basic structure to give rise to different elements which then combine together to produce a certain thing having its distinctive characteristic qualities, virtues and features which would have no resemblance to the parent atoms. This briefly explains how Brahm has revealed its single self in the form of this world of so much diversity and variations but still retaining its unique singular characteristic and making its presence felt as the Atma throughout the length and breadth of creation.

The individual Atma of a creature is like the individual atom present in a particular chemical compound or material thing, while the basic structure of the atom and its fundamental properties and characteristic attributes are like the ubiquitous supreme transcendental Brahm. The variations in individual nature and characteristic features can also be easily understood by this atomic model. The Atma in its various manifestations is almost like the same atom existing variously as different isotopes and molecular structures that give rise to so many variations and diversities in things in this world that no two things are exactly alike.

The hidden spiritual energy present in all living creatures can be compared to the vast reservoir of energy present in the atom, demanding to be tapped and used. Otherwise, it is like wasting away some precious and endless source of energy, strength and vitality inherent in all things that live in this creation. How this concealed reservoir of energy—which we shall call spiritual energy to draw a parallel with the atomic energy—is used depends upon one's own wisdom.

This 'ability to perceive, think, analyse, deduce and determine intelligently and consciously' is the factor which finally sets to rest the distinction between something as non-Atma and grossly material as the atom from that which is called the ethereal, sublime 'spirit' which is conscious and able to make intelligent decisions, something that the atom

can't do of its own. So, inspite of saying that the Atma and Brahm are like the Atom, one must be absolutely clear that this is just for the purpose of pictorial visualization and understanding the mysteries of the Atma and Brahm, and not an actual description of these two forms of Divinity because there is no comparison whatsoever.

Refer also to verse no. 41 of Canto 6 of this Upanishad.]

39. He (i.e. a person who has attained the exalted stature of being Videha Mukta) does not get trapped in philosophical debates as to 'this is the truth' and 'this is not the truth', or 'this exists' and 'this does not exist' which lead to unnecessary perplexities and doubts. [Refer verse no. 42 below.]

Similarly, he remains aloof from confusions and vexations that arise from doubting the axiomatic maxim of the scriptures 'I am Brahm personified'.

This attitude removes all causes of agitations and restlessness, and such an enlightened spiritual aspirant remains in a perpetual state of 'Satt' (truthfulness), 'Chetan' (spiritual wakefulness, enlightened consciousness) and 'Anand' (eternal bliss and joyous abandon) (39).

40. He does not allow his Atma to be tainted or affected by even a rudimentary form of doubt and confusion arising from any idea or notion that might rob him of his infinite peace and tranquility. He never allows such ideas or notions to ever come to him, in any form and in any circumstance.

He remains steady and firm in his well researched conviction about the truthfulness of the Atma (pure conscious soul), and does not regard anything other than the Atma as true. With this conviction firmly grouted in him, he becomes silent¹ (40).

[Note--¹That is, his mind and intellect stop searching for the 'spiritual truth' because this has been found. Such a man stops talking and discussing the subject with others once he has come to know the 'truth' because discussion and consultations would again lead to new and more confusion as each man has his own take on what constitutes the 'truth'. So it's better for him to become quiet. Besides this, useless chatter vexes his spirit.

It must be noted here that he talks and discusses spiritual truth till the time wisdom and enlightenment does not dawn on his mental horizon because after all knowledge has to be acquired through asking questions and getting answers for them. But once this purpose is served, the aspirant should not go to town boasting of his knowledge but turn inwards and become introspective and thoughtful. It has been wisely said "Knowledge speaks, but wisdom listens silently."]

41. The Parmatma (the supreme transcendental Soul of creation; the Supreme Being; the supreme Brahm, the Lord and Master of the entire creation) is beyond all 'Gunas', i.e. he cannot be limited to any set of attributes, characteristics, virtues and qualities no matter how profound, how glorious, how divine, how holy, how grand and magnificent they might be; they cannot define even one aspect of the Supreme Being comprehensively.

Parmatma is the Atma of all living beings¹. He is dear to all living creature (because 'life' is dear to all of us, and without the Atma or consciousness this body would be useless and has to be immediately cremated or buried as it would start decaying).

This supreme Soul of creation called Parmatma has no limitations, i.e. is not subjected to the limitations imposed by such factors as Kaal (time, era and circumstance), Vastu (things such as gross or light, small or big, useless or useful,

visible or invisible etc.), and Desh (country and other geographical demarcations). In other words, Parmatma is present in all the periods of time, in all the circumstances, in all the things and in all the places in a universal and uniform manner².

Therefore naturally the person's 'self' is also a place where this Parmatma lives, as there is no place, not a single place where 'he' does not live! (41).

[Note—¹*Parmatma* is the supreme transcendental Soul, while *Atma* is the individual soul of the creature. It is the 'Parmatma', the cosmic Soul at the macro level of the creation that has revealed or manifested itself as the individual soul of the creature as his *Atma* at the micro level of this creation. This can be visualised by a simple example—the drop of water in the tumbler is the *Atma* of the creature, while the body of water in the fathomless and measureless ocean is the *Parmatma*.

²There is not one place or thing in this existence where *Parmatma*, the cosmic 'Truth' and 'Consciousness', does not exist because the very fact that this place or thing has its truthful and verifiable existence is a proof in itself of the presence of that 'Truth' and 'Consciousness'. For instance, if there is rainfall then there must be an ocean and sun because without them the 'rain' cannot materialize, though only a learned man would know the science behind the entire process of rain formation and precipitation. It is the heat of the sun's rays that evaporates water of the ocean as water vapour that goes up to form the clouds that come down subsequently as rain.]

42. This *Parmatma* has no distinctions (based on *Kaal*, *Vastu* and *Desh*). He is not separated into different units or entities; he cannot be segregated into separated classes or societies based on any consideration of geography and place, time and era; he cannot be regarded as less important or more important; he cannot be treated as lower or higher in status on the basis of the different levels in which life exists in the ladder of evolution, etc. That is, the *Parmatma* is a divine non-dual cosmic conscious entity that is all-inclusive and all-pervading, and that transcends all known physical and material boundaries, limitations and definitions—which is a great axiomatic maxim of the philosophy of Advaita Vedanta.

The creature is influenced by the *Maya* (delusions) created by *Kaal* (various aspects of time and circumstance) and begins to erroneously have notions of my and yours, me and you. This is a fallacious conception, a distorted view of reality as all that exists is a manifestation of the same non-dual *Brahm*. [Refer verse no. 28 above.]

Therefore, there is no question of 'this' being different from 'that'. [Refer verse no. 39 above.]

In fact, the *Atma* and *Parmatma* are one and the same entity and much beyond the purview of delusions created by misplaced notion of what actually constitutes 'truth' (42).

43. [The following verses outline the glorious and unique virtues of the enigmatic *Atma*, the soul of the creature.]

The *Atma* is neutral and like the numeral zero; it is like the void of the sky and deep recesses of the universe¹. This *Atma* is most miniscule and sub-atomic in form; it is the subtlest element in creation. At the macro level of the world, this *Atma* of the individual has revealed itself as the *Atma* of the creatures in existence, making it all-pervading and omniscient. In spite of this, the *Atma* is free from the corrupting influences of the world².

This *Atma* is endowed with all the God-like glorious virtues and has manifested itself as various Gods. Like the mortal creatures in this creation, even the Gods have this same *Atma* in them; the Gods are the physical manifestation of the *Atma* at the subtle and macrocosmic level of creation just like the ordinary creature is

at the gross and microcosmic level. But the Atma is not limited to simply being Godly or being manifested in the form of divine beings called Gods, as it transcends them and their glorious virtues³.

This Atma is so exalted and highly placed that it deserves the highest honours. But it is impossible to measure its divine glories and magnificent virtues, its majesty and grandeur. It is impossible for anyone to assign epithets and other measuring yardsticks to qualify something that cannot be qualified and measured in any way (43).

[Note—¹The zero has no value of its own but when added to some other numeral it tends to enhance its value ten and thousand folds and goes on enhancing it with each shift in its position. The shape of the zero is like this cosmos—i.e. round like a ball, a sphere, a circle, a ring. This shape has no beginning or an end; it is a continuous and unbroken circle. Similarly, the Atma has no beginning or an end; it is continuous and eternal. It remains neutral itself but adds glory and magnificence to the creation by infusing it with a colourful factor of 'life and consciousness'.

Again, the Atma is fathomless and measureless like the sky and its deep cosmic void where no one knows how many universes are still lying in a nascent stage and how many are gasping their last breaths.

²In other words, though the Atma lives in all forms of bodies of various denominations and in as many countless forms as there are creatures in this vast world, it remains aloof from everything related to either the body or the world in which this body lives. This is because the Atma by nature and in its purest form is inherently wise, immaculate and incorruptible under any circumstance. It may be misled by the mind to get momentarily deluded, but in due course of time it is bound to recognise its true self and feel dismayed at its momentary waywardness. The Atma's graceful auspiciousness would rebound if it was not subjected to worldly fetters and delusions.

³In other words, the numerous Gods are simply manifestations of one or the other wonderful divine qualities of the Atma, and they would have no meaning, importance and significance if they do not have these qualities in them. They are honoured because they vividly display the divine qualities of the Atma. But none of these Gods are a complete definition of the Atma; at the most they display one, or more than one divine virtue of the Atma. The only difference between an ordinary creature and the God is that the former has a gross physical body which takes birth on this gross earth and has a greater propensity to be easily deluded and get trapped in the web cast by Maya which is the hallucinating effect of this artificial world of illusive charms. This body is a great limitation imposed on the Atma because it becomes mired and bogged down by its numerous constraints. The Gods on the other hand have a subtle existence not limited by any of the constraints imposed by a gross and physical body because they do not have a gross body in the first place. They have a comparatively longer life and a greater density of divine virtues in them as compared to the mortal creature. But the Gods are also subject to being deluded and fall prey to the magical effects of Maya, and the Purans are full of such anecdotes. So, in brief, the Atma cannot be limited to being likened to Gods simply because the word 'God' means some exalted, almighty, holy and divine entity. The Atma goes much beyond this meaning, and that is why there is even some entity known as a 'Parmatma'—some entity that is even beyond the normal concept of an Atma as being a God or a super God. Everything in existence, including the Gods and the individual Atma of the creature, are subordinate to this Parmatma.]

44. The Atma is free from all grossness, inertia and indolence. This Atma is a resident as the truthful inner-self of all the living beings in creation. It is free from all 'Sankalps', i.e. it does not make any vows and determinations, and neither does it make any promises and has any aspirations or volitions. [This is because it is a neutral

observer of everything and remains indifferent towards all. It desires nothing and needs not to please anyone.]

Indeed, a Videha Mukta person is of a firm conviction that his Atma is nothing but eternal pure consciousness (44).

45. A Videha Mukta person is of a firm conviction that—‘I am nothing but the supreme Soul of creation called the Parmatma, the Supreme Being, himself revealed in my form. I am nothing but an image of Gyan (truthful knowledge, wisdom, erudition and enlightenment). [In other words, ignorance and its attending delusions do not touch me.]

My truthful and real form is the Atma; it is my only authoritative and truthful identity. I do not have any fears in and from this world¹ (45).

[Note—¹When the self-realised person discovers that the true identity is the Atma and not the body, all causes of fears related to the latter’s interaction with the world are automatically dispelled. The world can make the body suffer, the body is subjected to cold and hot temperatures, the body has relations that take birth and die, the body does various deeds, whether good or bad and enjoys or suffers from their consequences, it is the body that takes birth and dies in this world, and it is the body that has friends and foes. So, once the enlightened person realises that the body is *not* his real and truthful ‘self’, but it is the Atma, all fears and uncertainties arising from the world vanish on their own.]

46. A truly self-realised, enlightened and Videha Mukta person does not allow himself to be entangled in the web created by numerous paths and innumerable doctrines, thereby getting bogged down in the swamp of confusions and perplexities caused in their wake. He does not wish to learn and get involved in endless search for the truth about such subjects as to who or what is a Jiva (a living creature), who is Ishwar (Lord God), what are such things as Vaani (speech and the spoken word), Vedas (scriptures), Shastras (the other scriptures such as the Purans and Ithihas etc., the different philosophies, various sciences and other bodies of knowledge), and many other factors in creation such as ‘Aham’ (or Ahankar—ego, pride, haughtiness and arrogance that prevents a reluctant creature from realising the level of ignorance he has vis-à-vis the world, preventing him from accepting his folly that he is pursuing something that is perishable, illusive and completely artificial in the hope of deriving permanent happiness from it at the cost of forgoing the truth and reality that can actually provide him with it)¹.

A truly self-realised and enlightened person knows only one certain thing, and it is this--‘The only thing that really matters in this world is the Truth, and it is pure consciousness manifested as the ‘self’, both at the individual level of the creature as well as the cosmic level of the creation at large. This consciousness is ‘I’. In other words, everything in this world that has any worth is consciousness, and since this is a fact it follows that ‘I’ too am consciousness personified; I am nothing but consciousness which is enlightened and self-illuminated² (46).

[Note—¹The simple meaning of this stanza is that a person who wishes to really free himself from all entanglements pertaining to this short-lived world of delusions and confusions, and instead find eternal peace and tranquility for which he would rather do anything and willingly go to any length to achieve it, should not get involved in avoidable superficial exercises and long drawn processes when the essence can be had much easily.

In other words, he does not wish to waste his spiritual energy and precious time, which is nevertheless very limited in this perishable world, in meandering through the endless maze of scriptures and the vast body of knowledge that exists in this world in

search of something that is self-evident and unanimously proclaimed by the all of these scriptures as their fundamental tenet and axiomatic maxim. It would be foolish not to accept the truth staring in the fact and going around on a wild goose chase to search for it in the dense forest of Vedas, Purans, etc. by pouring over the large tomes of religious scriptures, or letting one's sense of false pride and ego coming into the way of remaining quiet and aloof and not pretending to be a scholarly person by delving into thick tomes for years on end, or going to great teachers with queries to show that he is very intelligent and sincere in acquiring knowledge, or attending and engaging in metaphysical and theological debates to showcase one's mental agility, acumen, prowess and scholarship, and attain worldly acclaim. These exercises can give him worldly fame and wealth but would snatch from him his internal peace and calmness.

²Everything has value because of the presence of consciousness in it; no one would like a dead thing. Who would like to keep a dead body in his house? 'I am what I am because of this consciousness; otherwise I am of no value. My gross body and its organs, its beauty and strength, its relationships and ability to perform tasks are there because it has consciousness residing inside it; otherwise it would be a useless entity that decays rapidly and has to be cremated or buried outright.']

47. With this firm conviction that he is the self-illuminated and enlightened pure consciousness personified, a Videha Mukta person becomes absolutely neutral and indifferent to everything else. [Indifferent to what? To things enumerated in previous verse no. 46 above; to things that are *not* consciousness, things that are *not* truthful.] He becomes fulfilled and has deemed to have attained his spiritual objective of self-realisation of the pure conscious Atma. He remains perpetually engrossed in the thoughts of this Atma, and remains in a blissful state of existence (47).

48. A Videha Mukta person is one who exists in the form of the Atma which is endless, measureless and infinite. He treats everything, the minutest or the most colossus, equally and with equanimity. He has transcended the fourth state of existence called Turiya¹, and remains in an eternal state of an extreme blissful existence (48).

[Note—¹Turiya state is the state after the deep sleep state of existence, which is the third state of existence of the consciousness. Briefly it is the state in which the spiritual aspirant remains absolutely blissful. But there are two sub-divisions in it—the Turiya and the post-Turiya states. The latter is the climax of spiritual enlightenment and realisation of the eternally state of beatitude and felicity.]

49. A Videha Mukta person regards himself as having no name and form (because these notions are restricted to the physical body, whereas the Atma is the true self of the self-realised Videha Mukta person and it has no name and form; in fact the term 'Videha Mukta' itself implies this realisation). He treats himself as the Atma which is eternally and extremely blissful and joyous. It is beyond the touch and purview of such worldly criterions as something being auspicious and another being inauspicious, and artificial distinctions based on these perceptions. In fact, the Atma is perpetually in a state of 'Turiya-teet'—a state beyond the Turiya state. (Refer verse no. 11 and 48.) (49).

50. A Videha Mukta person regards himself as an Atma which has created or forged a temporary union with the body to be called the 'Yogatma', i.e. the Atma that is associated with something; here the reference is to the body by which the Yogi (an ascetic) is known in this world. This Atma remains in a perpetual state of Yoga which

implies that it rests eternally in a state of meditation and contemplation, which in turn are the qualities characteristic of a true ascetic¹.

Being an ethereal Spirit, the Atma is without any bondages and restrictions; it has no fetters and shackles attached to it. Therefore there is no question of it seeking and getting freedom from anything (simply because it is not bound in the first place).

The Atma is not tainted or affected by any of the Gunas (i.e. by any of the three qualities of Sata, Raja and Tama that invariably mould the character of all living beings in this creation depending upon the ratio in which they are present in any given individual). Similarly, it is also beyond the influences of Desha and Kaal (i.e. it remains unaffected by any place or circumstance, any era and time)². [Refer also verse no. 12 of this Canto.] (50).

[Note—¹In order to do Yoga in physical terms, the Atma would need the body. The Atma in its purest form is an ethereal Spirit without a physical body. Due to unfortunate past circumstances and ill chance, it has tumbled down from its high citadel onto this mortal world in which it had to assume a body in order to lift itself once again to its original habitat. Given the fact that the Atma is the truthful identity of the ascetic, its association with the body gives this ascetic his worldly identity and physical existence. It also gives him an opportunity to do meditation and contemplation to achieve higher latitude of spiritual growth that would enable his Spirit to go higher and higher and finally break free from the 'gravitational pull' of this deluding world. The various techniques of Yoga that describe so many exercises to arouse the latent energy in the person, to control the various vital winds by Pranayam and other vital wind-controlling exercises, to kindle the dormant energy of the Kundalini, and so many other aspects of Yoga such as Aasans and Mudras etc. are all aimed at helping this trapped Atma to sneak out of the body and lift it from the gross level of the body astride the vital wind called the Pran and set it free into the lighter and subtler space called the sky representing the cosmic ether, to finally merge with it once again. This would be the Atma's final liberation and deliverance.

²This is because the Atma is eternal, unchanging, uniform, steady and immaculate. Such things as various good or bad qualities, geographical settings and locations, and time factors such as past or future, favourable or unfavourable circumstances—none of them have any effect on the ethereal Spirit which is much beyond such mundane considerations.]

51. A Videha Mukta person is one who does not allow himself to be perplexed and entangled by getting involved in the debate of who a witness is and what he witnesses¹, what is there and what is not².

Therefore he does not bother himself whether or not everything around him is after all a 'Prapanch' (a motley assemblage of delusions, ignorance, illusions and deceit), or if it is the supreme Brahm (i.e. the eternal Truth and absolute Reality in creation) personified (51).

[Note—¹This relates to the metaphysical philosophy that the Atma, the pure conscious self of an individual, is merely a witness of all that is happening in this world. All confusions, vexations and consternations to the spirit arise when it is not certain of the truth, of its truthful identity, and is therefore misled into believing that it is the actual doer of deeds and a participant in the drama that is evolving every few moments in this world. This sense of involvement with the deeds and their results prevents it from remaining neutral and dispassionate. It forgets that all deeds are being done by the body and it is the body that is affected, either positively or negatively, by such deeds.

²Then there is one philosophy that says that everything in this world is false and mirage-like and therefore worthy of renunciation and abandonment, while there is another which says just the opposite that the world has a real existence and whatever

is seen is the actual truth that can stand the test of material science, logic and rationality, and therefore it should be enjoyed to the hilt. One philosophy says that there is life after death of the body as the Spirit never dies, while the other says that once the body is cremated or buried, there is no such thing.

So a truly wise, erudite and sagacious spiritual aspirant who wishes to obtain emancipation and salvation for his self, his Atma, his soul, should not enter this swampy ground and pick up the cudgel to prove what is true and what is false, as this debate has no end and would lead him down the dark vortex of confusions and perplexities instead of giving him peace and tranquility, and without peace and calmness of mind there is no scope of his ever attaining bliss for which he has set forth on his spiritual path in the first place. There are certain things about the Spirit that cannot be ascertained or deduced conclusively in material terms.]

52. A Videha Mukta person sees his true self as an entity that is self-illuminated, and he remains contented with this exalted and divine form of his pure conscious 'self' known as the Atma and enjoys his constant company with it.

His state of extreme blissfulness and ecstasy is so extreme that it cannot be assessed and described in words, and neither can the faculty of speech as well as the mind can ever narrate anything about his own 'truthful self' (52).

53. A person who remains aloof from everything in this world, from all notions, all emotions and all deluding influences—only such a person is deemed to be one who is Videha Mukta.

Though such a person remains indifferent to the various 'Chitta Vrittis', i.e. he is not influenced by any of the numerous tendencies and natural inclinations that the mind and the sub-conscious possesses and exhibits, he nevertheless provides light of consciousness, the 'illumination of conscience', that show the mind the way to proceed ahead¹ (53).

[Note--¹This is because he is dispassionate and neutral, and therefore clinically analyses everything and every given circumstance on its merit, and not under any duress and influence of either the emotional and sentimental influences of his heart, or the misconceived, misunderstood and erroneous advice given to him by his deluded mind. He is in total control of his own self and his organs, including the mind and heart.

His decisions are based on clinical examination of facts and not on assumptions and hearsay. The numerous worldly passions, desires and longings, the uncountable shades that his emotions and sentiments take, the various temperaments and attitudes that his decision making process has to encounter and cope with—none of them affects his decisions and determinations. He remains steady as a rock once the decision is made based on clinical analysis of available data and facts, and free from all extraneous considerations. He sticks to his decisions in spite of all things to the contrary.

The concept of 'Chitta Vrittis' has been described in Canto 3, verse no. 67 as well as in verse no. 54 below.]

54. A Videha Mukta person is one who is free from all 'Vrittis', i.e. he has no habits, tendencies, inclinations and impulses that normally form a part of a man's natural character, driving all his actions and determining his behavioural patterns and overall personality.

Since all these characteristic Vrittis are related to the body and not to the ethereal Spirit, the pure conscious Atma which is the truthful 'self' of the wise, self-realised and spiritually enlightened person, such a man is deemed to be Videha

Mukta—that is, he is a person who is free from all the fetters of ignorance and its attending delusions that pertain to the fallacious notion that the body is the true ‘self’ instead of the Atma (54).

[Note—The concept of *Vrittis* in the context of the sub-conscious mind called the Chitta has been explained in Canto 3, verse no. 67.]

55. As soon as one remembers anything related to this world, the body automatically comes into play because it is the medium of the Atma’s interaction with the physical world; it is the body that harbours the mind along with its astounding abilities to perceive and recognise things and then remember about them in the future. So, when an enlightened man allows himself to perceive, recognise and remember anything pertaining to this material world, his truthful identity as the ethereal Atma gets hidden behind his external façade of the gross body. That is why a Videha Mukta and a spiritually enlightened man abhors remembering anything at all. [This is because he has no need for anything related to the material world of sense objects. Hence, he would not need the mind to perceive and recognise anything of this world and then a memory for storing this data to be remembered and recalled in any future time if the need arises for them; he does not need them in the first place so there is no need to remember them. He does not wish to remember anything because such remembrance would drag him into the swampy quagmire of this world from which he is attempting to extricate himself.]

As long as the Atma is involved in this world by even remotely remembering of its existence, it forgets about its true nature as pure transcendental consciousness that is a fount of eternal and extreme blissfulness. [The world does not provide true and everlasting happiness and rest to the creature, and whatever semblance of happiness and rest it does provide is transient and perishable. They only act as a bait to trap the creature and ensure that he remains entangled in its web, instead of caring for his long term spiritual well being. The happiness and joys obtained from the world have no sustainability in comparison to the one obtained by being associated with the Atma, i.e. by being ‘self-realised’.] (55).

56. The supreme transcendental Atma is the object of study and research by all the scriptures called Vedanta or the Upanishads; it is through them that one can know about this Atma and learn about its true form and nature.

This eclectic knowledge thus obtained enables the Videha Mukta person to enjoy and exult in the delicious taste of the spiritual elixir known as ‘Brahm realisation’ which gives him a spiritual high and fills him with extreme ecstasy and unbound exhilaration of having tasted (experienced) the most delicious essence (nectar) in existence (56).

57. Having once tasted (experienced) this extremely addicting and ecstasy-providing elixir (nectar) of divine bliss and unbound joys, he himself becomes addicted to it and is infatuated with its bewitching charms. He drowns himself in it and soaks it so much that he loses his own individuality and paints himself in its colours. He remains oblivious of everything else so much intoxicated he is by the elixir of Brahm realisation. He begins to worship this state of Brahm realisation as the only truthful and auspicious state of existence that makes him equivalent to being Lord Shiva himself (57).

[Note—That is, the bliss of Brahm realisation is overwhelming for him so much so that he undergoes a metamorphosis by changing his earlier character of what ever he

was and now becomes a brand new person known as a spiritual 'drunk' who remains submerged in his state of extreme blissfulness obtained by drinking the spiritually rejuvenating and invigorating 'drink' of Brahm realisation.]

58. The Videha Mukta person derives extreme contentedness by drinking the elixir of Brahm realisation. He gets extreme satisfaction by experiencing the supreme sense of spiritual happiness and joy, of bliss and tranquility, of ecstasy and beatitude that come with Brahm realisation.

This beatitude and ecstasy obtained by Brahm realisation is most eclectic, auspicious and truthful. It is radiant with a divine glow that illuminates his inner self and radiates out in the form of a divine halo around him that appears like some diffused subtle light effusing from a self-illuminated and effervescent source. This 'source' is his Atma (58).

59. A Videha Mukta person remains engrossed and submerged in the extreme bliss and ecstasy of supreme transcendental state of Brahm realisation which is like a celestial source of eternal light for him (which can be compared to the sun in the sky). This light eternally illuminates not only his own self but the entire world for him. [That is, he sees and understands everything in the light of Brahm. He judges everything as to their worthiness and truthfulness in the context of their relevance to Brahm—if they are true and worthy, then surely they must be Brahm, otherwise they are better shunned as being untrue and worthless.]

This supreme transcendental Brahma-Anand (bliss and ecstasy of Brahm realisation) is what he is fond of drinking and eating. [That is, he derives his spiritual nourishment from it.]

Brahm is what constitutes his kith and kin, his family and friend. [That is, he knows no one else but Brahm, and just as anyone gets great comfort when surrounded by his family and friends, he gets the same degree of comfort and happiness when engrossed in thoughts of Brahm. Just as a family man identifies himself with his family name, a Brahm-realised man identifies himself with Brahm—indeed, Brahm becomes his surname, title and honour; Brahm becomes his identity; he belongs to Brahm; he is a member of the brotherhood of Brahm-realised persons. Even as a family man longs for his family when away from home, getting a sickening homesick feeling, even as he loves his family to the exclusion of all others who he treats as outsiders and strangers, a Brahm-realised person longs for Brahm and treats everything non-Brahm as not belonging to him. His entire life revolves around Brahm.] (59).

60. A Videha Mukta person remains firmly established in his state of extreme bliss and ecstasy obtained by Brahm realisation. It is a unique state of pure conscious and enlightened existence.

He establishes his affectionate relationships with it by remaining submerged in it and full of the divine bliss and happiness that it provides to him (60).

61. A Videha Mukta person treats the multitude of spiritual benefits obtained by Brahm realisation as the numerous favourable relationships that one develops in this world which come in handy in his day to day life and its orderly functioning, ensuring his all round well being¹.

He sees his own Atma in all other creatures in this creation (because he knows the maxim about the Atma being universal and uniformly all-pervading and

omnipresent). In fact, he does not see anything but the Atma anywhere; he does not pay heed to anything other than the Atma in this world (61).

[Note—¹A person develops so many relationships with so many people with whom he comes in contact during his day to day life in this world. Those relationships that are of any benefit for him, he retains them, while those that harm his interests are shunned and altogether disowned by him. Similarly, since the bliss obtained by Brahm realisation is conducive to his spiritual peace and health, he courts it, and he shuns all other enticements of happiness offered to him by this world that only get to trap him in their snare.]

62. A Videha Mukta person is one who is of a firm conviction and who is unwavering in his belief that 'I am that entity known as the Atma which is present as the conscious Spirit or soul of all living beings; I am this Atma which is a personification of the supreme cosmic Consciousness and the ethereal Spirit. This Atma is eternal and omnipresent. It is perpetually blissful and peaceful.' This connection marks the pinnacle of 'self-realisation' (62).

63. The Atma is complete and fulfilled in every respect. It is great and magnificent in every way. It is most dear and worthy of being endeared with. It is eternal, perpetual, immortal and permanent.

The Atma is all knowing and omniscient; it assumes all the forms in which all living beings are known to exist in this creation. It is pristine pure, most immaculate and absolutely uncorrupt in every possible way. It is subtle and sublime; it is ethereal and divine, having no attributes and characteristic features limiting its divinity, sublimity and subtlety (63).

64. The Atma is without any taints, faults and shortcomings of any kind. The pristine pure and immaculate Atma is an embodiment of peace, tranquility, serenity and calmness.

The Atma has a perpetually unchanging, steady and uniform existence, remaining calm, unruffled and stoic even during extremes of emotional storms, for it treats those circumstances creating peace as well as those creating turmoil in equal terms. This quality of profound equanimity, great composure and poise, calmness of demeanors and evenness of existence are the grand hallmarks of the Atma, and anything other than this is not the character of the Atma (64).

65. A Jiva Atma, i.e. the individual creature who has realised his true 'self', who possesses the above grand virtues and magnificent qualities is equivalent to the Parmatma, i.e. there is no difference between the self-realised and enlightened individual creature and the Supreme Being known as the Parmatma¹. With this heightened awareness about one's inherent divinity and inheritance of holy and glorious virtues that makes one an exalted and revered being, the individual should forsake all forms of worries, fears and consternations about his future and spiritual well being².

This Atma is eternally and infinitely 'Mukta', i.e. it is always liberated and emancipated, and therefore there is no question of its being bound and therefore seeking liberation, or it's having any fear of getting shackled and caged after leading an existence of freedom (65).

[Note--¹In other words, when the individual aspirant acquires the holistic divine virtues and grand qualities enumerated above and below in this Canto, he becomes as holy and reverend as the supreme Lord of creation. Taken differently it implies that a

man can become God-like, and truly speaking there is indeed no difference between him and Divinity, if he inculcates such noble and auspicious qualities as described in these verses. Given this fact, it follows that each one of us is inherently a potential divine being, but it is due to our own stupidity, folly and shortcomings that we push this divine element inherent in all of us to take a back seat and instead put the steering wheel of our lives in the hands of corrupt and pervert forces in the world to enable them to take control of our lives and steer it to degradation and towards a demeaning destination.

²When a man has realised that he is fundamentally divine and holy because his true identity is the Atma which is a treasury of divinity and holiness, he stops worrying for his spiritual welfare for now he is deemed to have reached a stage when external corrupting influences of the world would never have any affect on 'him'. This is because now his *true self* is the 'Atma' which is eternally incorruptible, holy, divine and immaculately pure, and not the 'body' which is an easy target for such denigrating influences. The only thing that he has to guard against now is to be careful not to be deluded by false charms and claims, and slip back into the slushy swamp from which he has been fortunate enough to extricate himself at present.]

66. Similarly, the Atma treats the concept of 'Bandha' and 'Moksha' equally, and is beyond the purview of such notions¹. [Refer Canto 5, verse nos. 44, 49.]

Likewise, the Atma is beyond the scope of such debates as to what is dual and what is non-dual, i.e. the idea of 'Advaita' and the 'Dvaitya' respectively, because it is eternally 'one' and has no duplicate or parallel which is its image or with which it can be likened and compared². [Refer Canto 5, verse no. 27.] (66).

[Note—¹*Moksha* is emancipation and salvation of the soul of the creature, while *Bandha* is the fetters that shackle the soul to this world. Since the Atma is eternally liberated, being an ethereal holy Spirit, there is no question of it seeking Moksha and neither of it having any kind of Bandha.

²In spiritual realm, Moksha/Mukti has different connotations for the two main schools of Hindu philosophy—the *Advaita* and the *Dvaitya*. The Advaita school of thought, as the name suggests, means 'non-duality' while Dvaitya means 'duality'.

The *Advaita school's* belief, inter alia, is that the soul of the creature is one with the supreme Soul called Brahm. This is an eternal, omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent absolute entity. It is the ultimate truth and reality. Hence, Mukti in this context means the individual soul of the creature breaking free or being 'liberated' from the endless cycle of birth and death, and it getting 'delivered' from its temporary abode in the physical body of the creature. It being 'emancipated' means that its disability to break free has been overcome and it has been finally liberated, but this liberation or emancipation must logically end in the 'salvation' of the creature which means merging of the liberated soul with its primary source which is the Brahm. It is like pouring the cup of water back into the ocean. The main exponent of this philosophy was Sankaracharya.

The *Dvaitya school* believes in duality, i.e. that the supreme Lord (God) and the Jiva (creature) are two separate entities. For this school, there are four types of Muktis, viz (i) *Salokya* which refers to finding an abode in the supreme divine abode of the chosen deity of the seeker; (ii) *Sayujya* which refers to intimate union between the individual soul of the creature and the supreme Soul of creation which is the supreme transcendental Brahm manifested in the form of the Lord whom the aspirant worships has his patron deity or Lord God. It implies to become one with the Lord; to merge one's own identity with the Lord so that one becomes inseparable from his Lord; this form of salvation is very similar to the one that which comes under the definition of Kaivalya; it is also called the 'Param Pad' or supreme state of being one with the Lord. (iii) *Samipya* which refers to being able to reside near the Lord to serve him; and (iv) *Sarupya* which implies that the aspirant becomes one with the deity

whom he worships as his ideal. This last form of Mukti is almost similar to the 'Sayujya' type of Mukti and is very much like the *Kaivalya* form of Mukti which literally means 'the only one of its kind', thereby implying that there is no other forms of Mukti except the one when the Atma abandons the gross body which is like a shackle for it, and then inseparably and indistinguishably merging with the supreme transcendental Soul of the cosmos. This 'Kaivalya' Mukti is the ultimate, eclectic and holistic form of Mukti extolled by the Upanishads. This Mukti means the dissolution or merger of the individual soul with the parent supreme Soul. The realisation that the soul of the individual creature is the same as the cosmic Soul residing in all the creatures of this world, to see the supreme Brahm as a resident of the inner-self of the individual creature as its Atma, and identifying oneself with that Atma which is synonymous with that supreme Brahm, which in turn leads to the recognition of non-dual nature of the soul of the creature and the supreme Soul of the cosmos, realising therefore that there is no notion as 'duality' when dealing with divinity and the supreme transcendental being called 'Brahm' vis-à-vis the creature, and other such basic tenets of Vedanta are the foundation upon which Kaivalya Mukti rests. According to Yoga Upanishads, Kaivalya Mukti is achieved even when the creature is alive because it primarily involves total realisation and disassociation from the body and the world with which it has to interact. When the seeker dies, he simply abandons his mortal coil, the gross body consisting of the different sense organs, and merges his Pran or the Atma with the macrocosm outside. Since the word 'Kaivalya' means 'the only', this form of Mukti refers to the realisation of the one and the only spiritual Truth which is the absolute and irrefutable Reality in creation.

Since the Advaita school believes in only one end of the soul— its merger with the parent Soul— they emphasis 'Kaivalya Mukti' as the only form of salvation and emancipation. The word Kaivalya itself means 'only'.

The path to emancipation and salvation according to the Dvaitya school is through the medium of various mediation techniques such as— (i) Japa (repetition of the holy name of a chosen God), (ii) Huta (offering of rituals and sacrifices), (iii) Archana (roughly meaning worship and service), (iv) Puja (meaning adoration and worship of the chosen deity) and (v) Dhyana (concentrating on the various forms, activities and glorious stories associated with the deity). For the Advaita School, meditation emphasises control of the functions of the body through various exercises, restraints and concentrations, a process called Yoga.

Contemplation in the end, in both the cases, makes the seeker/aspirant realise the futility of the world and kindles in him an intense desire to search out the ultimate Truth and Reality. The Upanishads here act as a referee and guide. They advise the seeker/aspirant about the goal of life. What one contemplates with intensity is what one becomes. So, if one contemplates seriously on the 'Truth', he verily becomes the truth personified, and if he contemplates on the 'False', he verily becomes false himself.

The concept of *deliverance* has been encapsulated in the epic Mahabharat in these words:-- Who gets deliverance

सुखदुःखे समे यस्य लाभालाभौ जयाजयौ । इच्छाद्वे गौ भयाद्वे गौ सर्वथा मुक्त एव सः ॥
वलीपलितसंयोगे कार्यं वैवर्ण्यमेव च । कुब्जभावं च जरया यः पश्यति स मुच्यते ॥
पुंस्त्वोपघातं कालेन दर्शनोपरमं तथा । बाधिर्यं प्राणमन्दत्वं यः पश्यति स मुच्यते ॥

----- (महा० शान्ति० २८८/३७, ३९-४०) -----

He who is unmoved by and treats joys and happiness as well as sorrows, miseries, sufferings, troubles and misfortunes, gains as well as losses, victories as well as defeats equally, with equanimity and fortitude, whose desires, envies, ill-wills, hatreds, fears and agitations have been completely vanquished or eliminated— is the one who is truly liberated. When old age comes, the body develops wrinkles, becomes lean and decrepit, the hairs change colour to grey, the general appearance looses its sheen and attractiveness while the back tends to bend— one who constantly remains aware of these facts is truly liberated. When the time comes, manliness

declines, eyesight fails, the ears do not hear and the vital forces of life becomes weak and on the verge of collapse— one who is always aware these thing is truly liberated. (Mahabrt, Shanti Parva, 288/37, 39-40).]

67. This Atma appears to have assumed so many uncountable and myriad forms and shapes which are in consonance with the infinite varieties of creatures and innumerable life forms that exist in this creation. This is because all living beings have an Atma invariably residing in their bosom. But taken in its basic form, this Atma is one, uniform and universally non-dual, and therefore it has only one form and not the countless ones in which it appears to be.

While in the form of uncountable varieties of living creatures enjoying life to the hilt in all its glorious colours and deriving pleasures and comforts from the sense objects of this material world, the Atma appears to be the one that is actually enjoying and deriving pleasure and comfort in this world. But this is a misrepresentation of the true nature of the Atma; it is a misconception about its real form; it is misleading and totally fallacious. This is because it is the body that enjoys anything in this world, and the Atma has nothing to do with it¹ (67).

[Note--¹This erroneous view has cropped up because the deluded creature has begun to think that his true self is the body and not the Atma. This basic misconception sets off a chain reaction, leading up to all sorts of phantom images and hallucinations. All the misgivings about the Atma as listed in verse no. 65 onwards, such as the doubt as to whether it is Mukta or not, whether it is Bandha or not, whether it is Advaita or Dvaitya, whether or not it enjoys the world etc. have their genesis in this fallacy.

However, this Atma is accused of being the perpetrator of all deeds as well as the sufferer or enjoyer of their results for the simple reason that the Atma is the sovereign of the body of the creature and his truthful identity; the Atma is the 'true self' of the creature. Even as the King is morally responsible for whatever happens in his kingdom though he might not be directly involved in them and the Prime Minister is equally held morally responsible in a parliamentary form of democracy, the Atma cannot plead innocence and absolve itself of the responsibility of the deeds done by the body of the creature.]

68. A Videha Mukta person is one who has risen above the need of having or making any 'Sankalps', i.e. he does not have any desires and aspirations to fulfill, and therefore needs no determined push to fulfill them, or make a resolution of doing some yet undone task¹.

He is one with a divine and holy view about the Atma. This Atma is without any blemishes and taints. It is pure and immaculate, incorrupt and crystal clear. It is wise, erudite, sagacious and enlightened. It is an image of the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic form of the supreme transcendental Divinity known as Brahm (68).

[Note—¹For example, he does not regard himself as 'bound in any shackle', and therefore there is no need to make any effort to find ways to unbind himself. He does not have anything to do with the body, and therefore need not bother about attending to its comforts and pleasures. He is already enlightened and wise, and therefore he need not study thick religious tomes to seek knowledge. And so on and so forth. Refer Canto 5, verse nos. 2, 5, 16, 63, 97.]

69. The Atma is neutral and totally dispassionate in its bearing and attitude, and therefore it does not enjoy anything nor does it ever feel the need or desire for any such enjoyments. The Atma is a wellspring of Amrit, the divine ambrosia of eternity and perpetual spiritual blissfulness.

Since the entire creation in all its many hues and having a vast genre of variations is a manifestation of the same universal Atma, an Atma which is uniform, eternal, infinite and imperishable in nature, the Atma which is the essential soul and life of all forms in which this creation has been revealed, it is deemed that this Atma covers the entire spectrum of creation in all the three planes or phases of Kaal¹. But since Kaal keeps on changing, the Atma is not within its ambit also; it is not affected by the changing dimensions of Kaal as the Atma is unchanging and constant by nature (69).

[Note—¹*Kaal* has many connotations, such as age, period, era, epoch; it refers to the time and circumstance which results in change of the present and determines the fate of the future.

There are three phases or planes in which the factor of time exists—the past, the present and the future. These factors constantly keep changing, and no two era or time is always the same or identical. But this variable nature of Kaal does not apply to the Atma as it remains the same in all the three phases of Kaal, i.e. it is today what it was a long time ago and would remain identically the same even in the distant future. Refer Canto 3, verse no. 49 and Canto 5, verse no. 17.]

70. The Atma which is cosmic Consciousness and uniformly present in the entire creation, being all-pervading and all-encompassing, is infinite and measureless like this creation, and it is the same Atma that resides in my own bosom. It cannot be measured and quantified; it has no specific attributes and characteristic qualities that can be weighed, compared with and measured against any given standard and then qualified or quantified by it. In fact, the Atma is a standard in its own self inasmuch as it determines whether or not anything is worthy to be accepted and honoured in this creation, whether or not one entity is to be regarded as truthful and worthy of paying attention. The Atma is a benchmark to judge the truthfulness and validity of all other entities in this creation; it is like the touchstone against which the purity of gold is measured; it is like the gold-standard of purity and immaculacy in creation.

The Atma is self-evident everywhere in this creation on a daily basis (because whatever that has life and essence in it is nothing but the Atma in that form; anything otherwise is not a conscious entity and is therefore worthless and useless). Its tangible existence and evident truthfulness, its glories and astounding virtues, its divinity and uniqueness, its sublimity and subtlety, are manifested in a tangible and visible manner regularly and every instant of existence, thereby removing all doubts about its authenticity and truthfulness¹ (70).

[Note—¹The very fact that life exists in a vibrant and pulsating form all around us, both in the animate form of unlimited number of species of animals, insects, worms and birds etc. as well as in an inanimate form of equally bewildering array of plants and other facets of creation such as the rainbow colour of the sky, the intriguing shades and forms that sound takes, the astounding and divine qualities of such a humble thing as water, the powerful force of the fire element, the most fascinating and absolutely enchanting geography of the earth, and the unknown recesses of the fathomless and mysterious cosmos—all conclusively establish that there is some force that is there, that makes all this happen, that sustains them and controls them. It is like the 'electricity' that drives modern life, though it is not visible in material terms but its existence is evident by inference. Nothing would be of any worth if there was no 'consciousness or life' in the person's body who beholds this world. The attractions of the material world would be meaningless if he would not be able to distinguish between what is charming and what is loathsome. Similarly, anything has worth for the creature only as long as it serves to provide him with some kind of comfort and pleasure as well as is conducive to his well being and welfare.

For example, no one would like to eat rotten apples. In this instance, the rotten apple has lost its essential goodness, or it has lost its 'Atma or soul', as the very fact that it is rotten indicates that its life force has been spent. We throw away such apples because they do not have the 'Atma' in them, and therefore are worthless for us though they are apples nonetheless!]

71. The Atma does not behave like any other entity (animate or inanimate) in creation, and neither does it have any of their characteristics. It is splendorous, self illuminated and self evident; its stupendous glories and magnificent divinity are self generated and self radiant. The Atma does not need a prop or support to support its self, and neither does it need another source of light to show it any kind of illumination, or another source to power its own light.

The Atma is beyond the purview of Vidya as well as Avidya, i.e. it cannot be known by hypothetical application of theoretical knowledge obtained by studying the scriptures without understanding their profound metaphysical and spiritual import and having a properly tuned mind to accept its profound glories, nor can it be disregarded outright as being false and inconsequential simply because it is beyond the comprehension and grasp of the mind out of ignorance of its profundity and truthfulness. In fact, the Atma can be accessed even without having knowledge of the scriptures, but ignorance about its divinity, holiness, magnificence and greatness is also counter productive because it can never be conducive to its realisation (71).

72. The Atma is free from such notions as something being 'Nitya', i.e. being eternal, immutable, invariable, unceasing, constant and steady in a perpetual way, and the other being the opposite of it, i.e. 'Anitya' or something that is perishable, temporary and transient¹. The Atma has no distinction between this world and the other world². [This is because the Atma is 'non-dual' and beyond any reproach by nature.]

The Atma does not trouble its self to acquire any of the so-called six divine assets such as 'Sham' etc.³ (because it is eternally contented and satisfied with its self and already possess all virtues in existence). It also does not desire to find liberation and deliverance (because it is already eternally liberated and never bound to anything from which it needs to be freed; refer verse no. 65-66 in this context) (72).

[Note—¹The Atma has all the qualities called *Nitya* and none of those called *Anitya*. So by saying that it is free from both it is meant here that if one tries to judge the essential nature and form of the Atma based on what he has read about it in the scriptures vis-à-vis what he observes in this physical world, it is bound to create an immense amount of vexation for him and bewilder him beyond measure. This is because the scriptures describe the Atma as *Nitya* and also emphasise the fact that the world is a manifestation of this Atma. But when one closely observes this world, he finds it to be *Anitya*. These two are contradictory phenomenon—one being eternal and the other being mortal. So this verse is meant to warn a spiritual aspirant from falling into such traps which have their genesis in half-baked knowledge or total ignorance. The world which is perishable is the 'gross part' of what is perceived by equally gross organs such as the eye or nose or ear or tongue or skin. The Atma is not a physical gross entity that these organs can perceive, as it is the subtlest and most sublime entity in existence, being ethereal and micro in nature, much lighter than the air, much subtler than the sky, and much smaller than the atom. Hence, one should not make any quick and perfunctory judgments about such a divine and ethereal entity off hand based on certain quirky, lopsided and impulsive criterions. Knee-jerk deductions and responses do not apply to the Atma.

²The ethereal and cosmic Consciousness known as the Atma is uniform and the same in all forms that life takes in this creation. It remains the same in all the

creatures; it remains the same even when it migrates from one body to another after the death of a particular creature.

³The six spiritual virtues or divine assets are the following--(a) Sham (self restraint, control) (b) Dam (forbearance, tolerance, patience), (c) Uprati (renunciation, detachment, dispassion), (d) Titiksha (endurance, sufferance, patience), (e) Samadhan (solution and answer to all confusions and doubts), and (f) Shraddha (faith, reverence, belief, conviction).]

73. The Atma is such an enigmatic, mysterious, mystical and esoteric entity that though it assumes a physical body but it has no gross body (consisting of the various organs of perceptions and action), no subtle body (consisting of the mind and intellect), and no causal body (which is said to be the 'cause' of the existence of the other bodies as well as the external world) of its own¹.

Similarly, the Atma even transcends the Turiya state of existence of the creature² (73).

[Note—¹In other words, the Atma cannot be measured and qualified by any of the yardsticks used to identify a creature's physical existence, such as his body and his mind etc. It is believed that the Atma lives in the subtle space of the heart inside the causal body giving the latter its name because the very existence of the creature is possible only due to the presence of this Atma inside the body.

Here the context is the description of a Videha Mukta person, and in this context this verse means that such a person sees his Atma as not a single unit located in his own body in the form of his soul but as the vast and all-incorporating cosmic Consciousness that goes much beyond such limiting definitions. The Atma only 'lives' inside the physical body as its temporary dwelling during its sojourn in this world, and it leaves it at the time of 'death' much like a snake discarding its old cuticle wriggling out effortlessly out of it, or a caged bird flying to its freedom when the cage is opened.

The physical body is one but it is hypothetically divided into three components for the purpose of metaphysical study and analyzing how it functions. These three components are the gross body, the subtle body and the causal body. The gross part is the exterior part consisting of the five organs of perception (ear, eye, nose, tongue and skin) and five organs of action (hand, leg, mouth, genitals and excretory); the subtle body consists of the mind-intellect complex; and the causal body harbours the pure consciousness of the creature.

²The Turiya state is the fourth state of existence of consciousness. A Videha Mukta person goes this state to reach the fifth state which is called the 'Turiya-teet' state in which he obtains eternal and permanent state of beatitude and felicity.]

74-75. The Videha Mukta person realises that the pure consciousness known as the Atma transcends the five sheaths into which this gross body is divided—such as the Anna Maye Kosh (the food sheath), the Pran Maye Kosh (the vital wind sheath), the Mano Maye Kosh (the mind sheath), the Vigyan Maye Kosh (the intellect sheath) (74), and the Anand Maye Kosh (the bliss sheath)¹.

The Atma is a unique entity that is one of its kind and non-dual. All other notions or concepts are not applicable to it even by a remote chance. The Atma has no alternatives and no parallels, and if any attempt to draw a parallel with it or find an alternative to it would be undermining its exalted existence and a futile exercise (75). [74-75.]

[Note—¹The five sheaths: refer also Sarwasaar Upanishad, verse no. 5 and its accompanying note. This Upanishad is Chapter 12 of this volume.]

76. The Atma remains aloof from and indifferent towards whatever enticing sights that are seen in this physical world, and neither is it tempted by any of the enamouring forms of sound that emanate from it¹.

The Atma remains in a perpetual state of Samadhi—a transcendental state of extreme detachment and dispassion when the creature has withdrawn himself from this world and even the awareness of his own body which leads to a great sense of perpetual bliss and contentedness, and in this state the creature is unaware of his surroundings and lives in a steady state of ecstasy and blissfulness. It is deemed to be in a state of complete void, an ethereal existential state of complete physical neutrality when nothing that is gross, material and physical matters, as if it does not exist at all. It is a state of perpetual meditation and contemplation.

This Atma has no beginning, no middle and no end (simply because it is constant, perpetual, eternal, infinite, imperishable, indestructible, indivisible and immutable) (76).

[Note—¹In other words, the Atma is not charmed by the rainbow colours of this fascinating world; it is not tempted to look at and get hooked to the beautiful sights of this magnificent world of enchanting sights. It is also not attracted by the sweet enchanting words that constitute such compositions as classical poetry, literature and legendary songs of various hues, or by the affectionate, sweet, and lovable uttering of one's beloved, or by the captivating and enchanting sound emanating as sweet melody from musical instruments, so on and so forth. This is because the Atma is beyond the purview of such enjoyments and it is not interested in any kind of gratification of sense organs.]

77. The Atma is such an exalted, wise and enlightened entity that it does not need to be constantly reminded about its divine, holy and supremely transcendental stature as a manifestation of the Supreme Being in the form of the ethereal cosmic Consciousness by making such enlightening spiritual statements as 'Aham Brahmasmi'—i.e. I am Brahm personified, 'Tattwa Masi'—i.e. That Brahm is you, 'Ayamaatma Brahm'—i.e. This Atma is Brahm, etc. (77).

78. Even the ethereal and most holy word of all words, i.e. OM which is regarded as being synonymous with and symbolic of the supreme transcendental Brahm, is also not the apt word for the Atma. In other words, no words, no signs, no symbols, no synonyms, no adjectives or nouns and any other part of speech, no aphorisms, no definitions, and no epithets can ever sufficiently and satisfactorily describe what Atma is in its true form.

The Atma is beyond the purview of the three states of existence of all living beings in this creation¹. The Atma is imperishable and immutable; it is not subject to decay and ruin. It is pure and divine consciousness itself personified (78).

[Note—¹The three states of existence of a creature are the waking state, the dreaming state, and the deep sleep state of its consciousness.]

79. The Atma cannot be ascertained by knowledge alone. It is an esoteric and enigmatic entity that can neither be positively described as having been fully realised or understood, or can be said to be beyond realisation and grasp. The only way to know the astounding magnificence and splendourous glories of the Atma first hand is to experience and witness its irrefutable presence as the splendour of cosmic Consciousness, the effervescent light of Divinity, and the glorious virtues and myriad other magnificent attributes that it displays in its numerous colourful manifestations in this world.

The Atma is such a mysterious entity that it cannot be perceived in the ordinary sense of the word. A person who is convinced about these stupendous virtues and glories of the Atma as his ‘true self’ is indeed said to be Videha Mukta. That is, he has freed himself from the ignorant view about himself as the body which has none of these divine and magnificent virtues possessed by the Atma (79).

80. Oh Shadaan (Kartikya)! View the Atma constantly everywhere; enlighten yourself about the Atma. Enjoy the divinity and stupendous glories of the Atma and be firmly established in it (80).

81. Let your own self be fully contented and feel fulfilled by realisation of the magnificence and divine glories of the pure conscious Atma, and let yourself be perpetually in its company, constantly enjoying it and remaining engrossed in its thoughts.

This ecstatic and blissful state of existence upon the realisation of the Atma would make you Videha Mukta. That is, you would be free from the delusions and pains caused to you by your body as you would have realised the fact that you are not the body but the Atma, and this Atma is naturally endowed with divinity and holiness which the body lacks. This realisation would be tantamount to being liberated and delivered from the fetters of ignorance pertaining to the truth of existence in this world, the ignorance of which leads to all sorts of spiritual problems and physical miseries that rob the creature of all mental peace that he so much yearns for. Once he becomes aware of the ‘truth’ about the pure conscious Atma being his glorious ‘self’ and his divine and ethereal form, he gains eternal peace and beatitude’.

Verily, this is what this Upanishad says (81).

Thus ends Canto 4

Canto 5

[Canto 5 is a revelation of the divine and eclectic virtues of the Atma, the pure consciousness, along with the factors which distinguishes it from anything that is regarded as ‘non-Atma’. This subject is comprehensibly described by the learned sage Ribhu when asked to elaborate upon it by his disciple Nidagh. The entire Canto 3 and almost half of Canto 4 of this Upanishad are dedicated to the theme of the Atma. Hence, they ought to be read along with this present Canto. Whereas the earlier discourse was given by Lord Shiva for the benefit of Kartikya, the present one is expounded by sage Ribhu for the spiritual good of Nidagh.]

1. Once, sage Nidagh approached the great seer Ribhu¹ and asked him—‘Oh Lord! What is Atma, and what is Anaatma (the opposite of Atma)! Please enlighten me about it in a holistic way’.

Ribhu began his discourse about the Atma—‘The Atma is synonymous with the supreme transcendental Consciousness and the eternal cosmic Divinity known as Brahm. It is the measurement and the last frontier of creation, and as such it has many unique characteristics and eclectic virtues which would now be enumerated for you. It is, inter alia, an all-inclusive and all-incorporating entity (just like the common noun or pronoun in grammar) that alone stands for everything in existence; it is a synonym

for each and every unit of creation, from the most miniscule to the most colossus, the animate as well as the inanimate, whether it is visible or not. It is like the Guru (a wise and learned moral preceptor, guide and teacher) who dispels all the worries and perplexities of his disciple, ward or student².

The Atma is the cause and reason for everything happening in this world, but there is nothing that can be called the cause or reason for the Atma to be what it is; there is no cause or reason for the Atma coming into being³ (1).

[Note—¹A brief and interesting introduction to the two great sages Ribhu and his disciple Nidagh is included in Varaaha Upanishad, Chapter 30 of this volume.

²In other words, the person who has come in direct contact with the Atma by becoming self-realised has nothing to worry for his spiritual well being any longer.

³This is because the Atma is eternal, immutable, infinite and imperishable cosmic Consciousness that has no beginning and end, and therefore there is no cause for its coming into being or having any form of existence in this creation. In fact, the rest of the creation is here because there was an Atma in the beginning which caused this creation to come into being; the creation is here in all its multifarious hues because the Atma lives in it and makes its existence possible. And when the creation would have lived its full length of life till its natural end, it would finally collapse and merge into this Atma from which it has emerged. This Atma is like the ocean from which the water molecules evaporate to form the clouds, and when rain falls, the same water flows down to merge with the primary source, the ocean.]

2. The Atma has no 'Sankalps', i.e. it is free from having any determinations and resolutions, it makes no vows and promises that have to be kept and would require efforts to fulfill, it makes no volitions and takes no decisions in this regard¹.

It has manifested itself as the cosmic Naad which is the primary source and primordial activity that set forth the process of creation².

The Atma is Shiva personified. [That is, it is the most auspicious, eternal, holy and divine entity in creation, and like Lord Shiva, it is enlightened and wise, detached and dispassionate towards everything in this material world. The entire Canto 3 of this Upanishad is based on this eclectic spiritual philosophy. Refer Canto 3, verse no. 1.]

It is nothing but pure and immaculate consciousness personified. It is an embodiment of beatitude and felicity; it is ever blissful, ecstatic, happy and joyous (2).

[Note--¹This is because the Atma is self-fulfilled and ever contented. Whatever it desires to do, it does spontaneously and does not have to make any pre-determined bid for its realisation. It is almighty and omnipotent in this regard. Refer Canto 3, verse no. 67; Canto 5, verse nos. 16, 63, 97-98.

²The *Naad* is the ethereal background reverberating sound energy in Nature which is said to be the primary source of energy that provided the vital spark to set off the chain reaction in the primordial cosmic gel from which the rest of the creation eventually evolved. The Naad has been envisioned by ancient sages and seers as the cosmic sound having its genesis in the form of waves in the cosmic ether, the waves which overlapped and coalesced with each other to generate sufficient energy that produced the background sound which traveled in the sky and was heard by them during their meditative sessions which lasted for extended periods of time. Now once having heard it, they devised a word to encapsulate its fundamental notes and tones, and they came up with the word OM to capture the essential mode in which this cosmic Naad was heard by them. When they revealed this secret to their disciples, it was through the word OM, and they went on to analyse this sound and deciphered its components as the basic letters that constitute it, i.e. A, O, U and M.

Refer also Canto 1, verse no. 6 of this Upanishad.

Since the primordial cosmic gel was a neutral and static entity, this energy generated by the sound waves was the first to create some sort of activity in it—like subtly and imperceptibly stirring it from within. This energy multiplied itself manifold and in due course of time the different elements present earlier in the homogenous cosmic gel separated from one another to give it a heterogeneous character, the heavier ones settling at the bottom and the lighter ones going upwards to float on the surface. While this process was progressing, the elements captured or soaked energy according to their capacity much like sponge soaks water or earth attracts anything by its gravitational pull.

This is how basically the earth and other elements such as the water and air took up their respective places in creation, with the heavier earth solidifying at the lower level and the lighter water floating on its outer surface and the air going still higher into the space of the sky. The fire element however required a medium to hide itself in because the water and air were inimical to its existence; the water would douse it and the wind would blow it out of existence. Therefore it hid inside the bowls of the earth and entered subtly into things originating from earth. That is why it is present even under the vast reservoir of water known as the ocean, and at the same time lives subtly inside everything that grows on earth, such as food. The creator is so wise that he has this tremendous source of life, energy and vitality in the earth because he knew that if life is to be made sustainable it would need a viable source of self-sustenance in the form of an inexhaustible source of energy. Finally, the grossest element known as the earth also solidified into its present shape.

Since the Atma is the only conscious factor in creation showing basic elements of the existence of life in any of its myriad forms, and the Naad is also the first sign of primordial activity in the cosmos, it naturally follows that the Atma, the ‘soul or life’ of all that exists in Nature, and the Naad, the primary source from which the entire creation is said to have evolved and derived its energy, are synonymous with each other. This cosmic Naad is still hearable when one closes one’s ears when one hears the roaring sound of the blood flowing through the veins and arteries inside the body.

The Naad Bindu Upanishad of the Rig Veda tradition describes this Naad in great detail. Refer also to Canto 3, verse no. 43.]

3. The Atma is self-illuminated and self-radiant in its own splendid glories, grand virtues and transcendental divinity. It is a synonym of Naad (as explained above) and an embodiment of ecstasy and bliss.

It is neutral to all worldly perceptions and does not experience any emotional feelings pertaining to anything¹. It is self evident and self present, needing no effort to remind one of its existence by doing Dhyan (meditation and contemplation)² (3).

[Note—¹This is because the Atma is eternally dispassionate and detached from everything in existence, just like the emperor of the realm who does not allow himself to get emotionally and sentimentally involved in petty things in his empire, but at the same time is closely concerned about the general welfare of the subjects and intricately involved with the running of his administration though appearing to be unconcerned and unduly perturbed with its day to day functioning and instead rolling in the comforts and pleasures of his palace. After all, which great emperor has left his name in history who has not cared for the welfare of his subjects and tended to the prosperity of his empire?

²In other words, a self-realised spiritual aspirant need not observe a specific routine of daily meditation or contemplation in order to witness the bliss generated during these spiritual activities because he has come in direct contact with the Atma and remains in its constant contact so that he enjoys this bliss and ecstasy on a perpetual basis. Once this high state of existence is reached, there is no further need

of doing Dhyān or meditation and contemplation because the purpose has been served.]

4. The Atma is a composite; it is one whole entity that is immutable, indivisible and non-dual. It is not something that can be hypothetically divided into various fractions, sections or parts to study or for any other purpose like it is usually done with the Naad and its Kalaas. That is, the Atma is not definable by the terms Naad¹ or Kalaa².

A self-realised man thinks in the terms that 'This Atma is 'me''. The Atma is imperishable; it does not get diminutive or decays in the least.

A wise, erudite and enlightened person is one who does not fall in the trap of debating what is the Atma and what is not the Atma, and what is the difference between the two, because this would vex him no end, with no light at the end of the dark tunnel as it were. So it is wiser for him to abandon such doubts and banish such thoughts from his mind (4).

[Note—¹Naad has been visualised in the form of the cosmic sound pronounced as OM. In order to understand the cosmic genesis of this word OM, it has been further broken up in its constituent sound elements represented by the various letters and sound syllables such as A, U, O and M. These alphabets represent the basic forms in which sound exists in this creation. Then each was further analysed and assigned symbolisms—such as the letter 'A' for example was envisioned to represent the appearance of the first signs of creation, the letter 'U' for its evolvment, development and growth, and 'M' for its conclusion. Then a geometrical or pictorial symbol was devised to physically depict this word OM, and it is 'ॐ'.

Sound has its own classifications which are used in the field of learning music. For instance, in the Indian classical system of music there are seven notes such as Sa, Re, Ga, Ma, Pa, Dha and Ni. But the Atma is such a unique and magnificent entity that even though it has been said that it is like the cosmic sound called the Naad but it is only to emphasise the fact that like the Naad (refer verse no. 2 above) it too is a cosmic and enigmatic phenomenon, but this observation should not be treated too literally because the Atma is much superior to the Naad and does not qualify to be treated at par with any physical phenomenon like the Naad. The Naad is actually heard by ascetics who have risen above certain level in their meditation like the Atma which is also experienced by all spiritually enlightened aspirants who have progressed to a certain level of self-realisation, but the comparison ends there for the Atma cannot be analysed and classified and mastered like the sound element is done by an expert musician who plays around with it to create masterpieces of music, or by teachers of metaphysics and theology who try to explain the creation by using the word OM as some form of model in a scientific laboratory to explain fundamentals. The concept of Naad has been explained above in verse no. 2.

²The word *Kalaa* means the different shapes, forms, divisions, phases, fractions or parts in which any particular thing exists. For example, the changing phases of the moon are called its 'Kalaas'. It also refers to the various inherent subtle qualities that are present in all the creatures that determine their characters and behavioural patterns. But it must be remembered here that anything that has Kalaa is deemed to be changeable like the moon which is never alike on any two consecutive nights, and is therefore said to be a typical example of an entity having Kalaas. But since the Atma is unchanging and uniform, since it always remains steady and constant, the word Kalaa does not apply to it. Similarly, the word Naad cannot be applied to the Atma because its word OM has been broken up into letters and it is represented by the symbol 'ॐ'. This classification is not possible for an ethereal entity such as the Atma.]

5. The Atma is beyond the purview of such notions as something being peaceful and calm and something being not¹. It has no end. It is like the cosmic Naad which is eternal and imperishable; it is the light of consciousness that is ever present in the bosom of all creatures; it is an image of light and illumination that is eternal and infinite

It is the essential meaning of the great sayings of the scriptures called the Maha Vakyas; these axiomatic maxims have this Atma as their object and point towards it in their proclamations². One such Maha Vakya is 'Aham Brahmasmi' or I am Brahman personified. But the Atma is such a great and enigmatic entity that merely this statement is insufficient to completely describe it; it is only one of the ways to look at it, and not the complete and comprehensive narration of its truthful being as there are other Maha Vakyas too in this direction and none of them can individually describe the Atma fully (5).

[Note—¹This situation arises in the case of an entity that changes, that is emotionally and mentally unsteady and impressionable, that is exposed to external influences which affect it emotionally and sentimentally. Only such entity can be upset one moment, getting agitated and perplexed under one given situation, and become calm and quiet the other moment under different situation. The Atma is eternally stable and steady, not at all influenced by external impulses of any kind, and therefore such emotional criterion as being calm, peaceful, tranquil and serene, or being restless, agitated and fidgety does not apply to it.

²The Maha Vakyas are enumerated in Shuk Rahasya Upanishad of this volume.]

6. The Atma cannot be described in words; the faculty of speech is ineffectual and incompetent to even outline its magnificence and glories. It cannot be limited to or delineated by too literal a meaning of the great sayings.

It has no end and there is no reason why it should be subjected to such debates as whether or not it is perishable and decayable. It is like the cosmic Naad which is eternal and imperishable; it is the light of consciousness that is ever present in the bosom of all creatures; it is an image of light and illumination that is eternal and infinite (6).

7. The Atma is immutable, indivisible and steady; it is uniform and universal. That Atma is me and therefore I am an embodiment of eternal bliss and happiness that are the characteristic qualities of the Atma. Everything else is barred from me; nothing else applies to me; I am nothing but that Atma.

The Atma is beyond all definitions and all descriptions; it transcends all emotions and sentiments; it is beyond the purview of all ideas, all feelings, all meanings, all designs and intentions that can be expressed in words and even imagined or visualised. It is like the cosmic Naad which is eternal and imperishable; it is the light of consciousness that is ever present in the bosom of all creatures; it is an image of light and illumination that is eternal and infinite (7).

8. The Atma has no words (because it is very subtle and sublime consciousness that has no physical mouth with which to speak), and it cannot be described in words¹.

That Atma is nothing but eternal beatitude and felicity personified, and anything that does not possess these eclectic virtues is not the Atma. Indeed the Atma is 'Sanaatan'—that is, it is eternal, perpetual, infinite, everlasting, primary, primeval, most ancient, traditional and universal. [Refer Canto 5, verse no. 62.] (8).

[Note—¹In other words, the Atma is such an enigmatic, esoteric and mysterious divine entity that to restrict its profundity and infinity in a circle of words, to

encapsulate its stupendous glories and ethereal magnificence in too literal an interpretation of the meaning of various axiomatic statements or tenets of the scriptures which are nothing but a cluster of letters and phrases having their own limitations, is like an attempt to cover the sky with a blanket as it were. Even an attempt is most incredulous, and the thought to bring the Atma within the ambit of words is most outrageous and preposterous.]

9. The Atma is impossible to be described, and its grand virtues and profound divinity cannot be enumerated and restricted by the Vedas in their words¹.

There is nothing outside it, and it is not possible to conclusively say what is inside it² (9).

[Note--¹That is, though the Vedas can be an instrument in getting to learn about the Atma, but to think that the Atma is limited by what they say is a fallacious idea for the simple reason that the Atma's glories, virtues and divinity cannot be described in words as already asserted in verse no. 8 above, and the Vedas use words and phrases to describe it. So, this narration of the Atma in the Vedas cannot be comprehensive, it is at the best only indicative of what it actually is like, but much remains to be known and yet to be realised. That it why it is emphasised that the best way to know what the Atma is, is to meditate and contemplate upon its greatness as directed by the great tenets of the Vedas, and then witness and experience its profundity first hand. Merely attempting to seek the Atma in the words of the scriptures is a stupid exercise. The scriptures can give directions and advice, but the walking has to be done by the spiritual aspirant himself much like a parent can show the child the correct path but not change his destiny.

²The entire cosmos or creation is pervaded by the cosmic Consciousness called by the name of Atma. Nothing exists outside of it—this is certain. But what and how much exists in this creation is impossible to determine as the cosmos is fathomless and infinite, has been in existence from time immemorial, and is still evolving and expanding. Numerous and diverse universes are known to have been born and have died, numerous are in a nascent stage of their development, and still more are yet to emerge in the never-ending process of creation and destruction. So it is impossible for anyone to say with definite certainty what and how much exists in this creation.]

10. There is no iota of doubt in the fact that the Atma is the supreme transcendental Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness that has no body, and therefore no organs having any tangible gross shape and form in the physical sense of the word. This Atma has no physical gross existence like the earth or other elements, nor is it like the mortal creatures that have a physical body and subject to all the defects associated with it and the elements that constitute this body (10).

11. The Atma has no name and form. It is neither something that can be consumed nor is it something to be enjoyed. It is beyond the purview of discussion as to whether or not it is truthful and real (because such debates are applicable to things that are doubtful and not to those that are irrefutable and unequivocally truthful). It is equally beyond doubt that it is imperishable and not subject to decay and ruin (11).

12. The Atma has no specific Gunas (qualities, attributes and virtues), either good or bad. This is because it is a neutral entity that has an equitable bearing and treats everything with equanimity. It behaves in a uniform manner under diverse circumstances, and shows no preferences based on its natural inclinations influenced and guided by the dominance of one or the other Gunas¹. There is no doubt about it.

There is no word to describe it or define it. It therefore cannot be heard of nor can it be pondered on and thought about² (12).

[Note—¹There are three natural qualities in this world such as Sata, Raja and Tama. The Sata is the noblest quality and the Tama is the meanest, while Raja occupies a middle path. The creature's habits and natural inclinations are guided by these Gunas. If the Sata is in excess, the creature is said to be more inclined towards being righteous and noble, having a religious bent of mind, whereas a predominance of Tama would have the opposite effect on his behaviour and character for now he would be pervert and sinful in his emotional setup. The Raja would make him a man of the world, tending to be attracted by its charms and having a desire to live life to its hilt.

Since the Atma is above such mundane considerations and changing attributes, since it is immaculate and beyond any hint of corruption, it follows that it remains steady in its path of neutrality and equanimity towards everything that is happening around it in this world. Such attributes as righteousness and auspiciousness, or sinfulness and perversions do not concern it. Refer also to Canto 3, verse no. 49.

²Since words cannot describe or define it, one cannot learn about it merely by means of studying books or hearing religious discourses on it because both means reliance on letters, words and phrases as a vehicle of expression. The Atma cannot be expressed in words, thereby precluding its knowledge by the use of words.]

13. The Atma is uniform and universal, having no distinction as one of its manifestations being a Guru (a teacher) and the other being his disciple¹. In a similar vein, the Atma is the same in the Gods as well as the Asurs (non-Gods). This is the holistic view of the cosmic Atma.

The notions of something being in accordance with the tenets of Dharma (righteousness, probity and propriety) and the other being not, the idea of something being pure and the other being impure are also artificial and illusive (13).

[Note—¹The Atma lives in a body, and as such there are worldly relationships that it appears to exhibit such as someone being a senior and learned person occupying the position of a teacher and the other less wise and known as the student of the first. In fact, these segregation are merely based on the physical conception of the body as the identity of the Atma which is in itself a fallacious idea as the Atma is neither senior nor junior, it is neither a learner or learned one. The pure consciousness Atma is omniscient and all-knowing, so it need not learn anything in the first place, and since this Atma is the same inside the body of both the teacher and the student, such distinctions based on worldly relationships are artificial and an erroneous depiction of the truth of the Atma to say the least. Refer also to Canto 4, verse no. 16, and Canto 5, verse no. 21.]

14. The Atma is beyond the purview of such notions as good times or bad times ('Kaal' and 'Akaal'), something being certain and another being uncertain, some group of letters having divine powers entitling them to be called Mantras while others lacking such authority and sanction, some body of knowledge being classified as having great value and therefore called Vidya and the other being denigrated and ridiculed as being lacking any value and thus called Avidya (14).

[Note—The Atma transcends all definitions and shines unilaterally, uniformly and unaided like the brilliant Sun in the sky. Even as the Sun is not at all affected by any of the pollutions of the earth, the Atma is also not at all affected by any of the tainting effects that mire the surroundings of the creature's existential life on earth. But the Sun *appears* to be dim when its shine is obscured by the haze caused by city pollution or when it is completely blocked from view by banks of dark clouds in the sky. The Sun *appears* to be dark during a solar eclipse though this is only an optical illusion.

Similarly, the pristine glory of the Atma *appears* to be tainted when the creature allows himself to be affected by the numerous delusions and faults of the world in which he lives. The inherently eternal Atma *appears* to die when the creature dies.

The awareness that the Atma is pure and incorruptible is Gyan, while to think that the Atma has become tainted and corrupted is Agyan.]

15. The Atma is beyond the trilogy consisting of the seer, the object seen, and the process of seeing¹. The Atma stays in such a sterilized environ so to speak that such measures of judging the authenticity of any entity's existence that are normally applied to things of this world do not apply to it and never corrupt it. The Atma is neither the Mana (mind and heart—i.e. the subtle aspect of the body) of the creature. In fact, the Atma is the pure and truthful 'self'² (15).

[Note—¹This trilogy applies to the visible world which is gross and has a physical body. In this world, anything that can be actually seen and observed by the eyes is regarded as truthful, and the rest merely hearsay and based on imagination. The Atma is a very subtle and an infinitely sublime entity that cannot be physically seen in the ordinary sense of the term 'seeing and observing' as it is applicable to other material things of this physical world. But merely the fact that it cannot be physically seen by anyone does not exclude its being in existence just like the fact that no one has seen an atom or the air element, but no one can deny their existence at the same time.

²The Atma is such an enigmatic and mystical entity that it cannot be subjected to any standard yardstick or fixed criterion; it cannot be confined within the parameters of definitions and connotations expressed in words. It cannot be said to this or that, or even denied to be not this or that—for it is everything all at once. This is what makes the Atma such a paradoxical entity and unique. If anything exists, it must be certainly the Atma much like the case of golden ornaments compulsorily having gold in them if they are to be called 'golden'.]

16. When everything that is not Atma ('Anatma')—that is, which has no truthful existence and no essence, something that is like a mirage and merely a magical illusion—is eliminated from consideration, then at that time what remains is the Atma. Be certain about it. [Refer Canto 5, verse no. 37.]

This Atma is devoid of having any Sankalps—that is, it does not make any determinations and resolves (refer also verse no. 2). It does not get involved in doing any worldly deeds (as it remains totally detached and dispassionate towards everything in this material world) (16).

17. Whatever is there is nothing but the supreme transcendental Brahm manifested in that form. This is an absolute certainty. [Here, Brahm is replaced for the Atma to indicate that there is no basic difference between the two.]

The Atma has nothing to do with the concept of three bodies that the creature possesses¹, and neither does it have to do anything with the three phases of Kaal² (17).

[Note—¹The three bodies of the creature are the gross body, the subtle body and the causal body. Refer Canto 3, verse no. 49.

²The three phases of Kaal are the past, the present and the future. The Atma is an eternal and constant entity that does not change with time, remaining steady and unwavering under all planes of existence. It was in the past what it is now and would be in the future. Refer Canto 3, verse no. 49 and Canto 4, verse no. 69.]

18. The Atma does not possess the three Gunas¹ that all the creatures have as their integral character, and neither is it affected by the three Taaps² that torment them.

The Atma has no separate existence in the three Lokas³, for it is a non-dual universal entity which is uniform everywhere (much like the sky or air element). The Atma is the all-pervading, all-encompassing, all-incorporating, omnipresent and almighty Authority (18).

[Note—¹The three Gunas are Sata, Raja and Tama. Refer Canto 3, verse no. 49 and Canto 5, verse no. 12.

²They are the fears or torments arising from the following--Adhi-bhautik—related to terrestrial creatures such as enemies, cruel kings and wild animals; Adhi-daivik—related to unfavourable Gods and malignant stars; Adhi-daihiik—related to the body such as diseases and horrors of old age etc. Refer Canto 3, verse no. 46 also.

³The Lokas are the terrestrial, the celestial and nether worlds.]

19. The Atma has no physical brain (like the gross body has), and therefore it does not remain engrossed in thinking, studying, contemplating and reflecting (like the gross body of the creature does). Since it does not have a physical body, there is no question of it becoming old and infirm.

Without the physical body it is natural that it has no legs, so it does not move and go from place to place. Similarly, it has no hands and therefore it does not accept or catch hold of anything (19).

20. The Atma has no birth, and therefore it has no death. It has no mind, and therefore it has no feelings of sorrows and miseries or happiness and joys. It does not feel or think.

The Atma does not distinguish between any two given entities, and therefore it has no conception of anything being especially classified as Dharma (righteous, auspicious, noble and proper) and Shuchi (pure, immaculate and uncorrupt)¹. With all these eclectic qualities, the Atma has no fears whatsoever from any quarter² (20).

[Note-¹The notion of something being right and the other being bad arises only when one begins to see a distinction between the two. But the Atma is like a small child who is so pure in its heart that it just does not know the difference between a rotten piece of apple and one which is succulent and ripe; the infant would catch hold of a live snake with the same cheerfulness as it would a harmless length of rope.

²The Atma does not have to fear from enemies and bodily sufferings, or from old age and death, because it has no body; it does not have to worry about the future and regret about the past because it is the same in all frames of time; it need not go for pilgrimage to purify itself or do religious deeds to accumulate good credit because it is eternally pure and holy. Refer verse no. 53 herein below of the present Canto 5.

In short, all these things do not apply to the Atma for one simple reason, and that is it is a divine and holy ethereal Spirit and not something as gross as the body of the creature.]

21. The Atma cannot be ascertained by hearing words being spoken (such as religious discourses and chanting of Mantras or hymns of the scriptures). The Atma has no distinctions as one person being a Guru (a teacher) and the other being a Shishya (a disciple). [This is because the conscious Atma is the same in both the persons. Refer Canto 4, verse no. 16, and Canto 5, verse no. 13.]

If the Atma is deemed to be non-dual, one, immutable and indivisible whole that is uniform and universal, there cannot be two separate entities having the same name and identity as the Atma. The Atma has no image and no second one that is of its kind (21).

22. The Atma is consciousness, and therefore it is truthful, real and not imaginary. That which is truthful cannot be false and imaginary, and vice versa (22).

23. The Atma is auspicious and holy, and therefore it cannot be inauspicious and unholy, because these two concepts are not compatible with each other.

If there was fear, then there would have been something as being fearless. When there is no concept of fear in the Atma, the question of it being fearless or it being fearful does not arise at all. [In other words, the Atma is eternally fearless.] (23).

24. If there was some kind of fetter or bondage, there would have been the need of getting liberation and deliverance from it. But when there is no such concept of any bondage or shackle, there is no question of seeking any kind of liberation and deliverance from it. [Refer verse nos. 38, 44 of this present Canto 5.]

If there is death, there can be birth. If there is birth, there is bound to be death. This is an endless cycle. [So, if there is no birth for the Atma, it cannot die, and vice versa.] (24).

25. Hence, the Atma has none of the characters and attributes mentioned above.

Since the Atma is an ethereal entity which is all-pervading, all-incorporating and all-encompassing, being non-dual, one, immutable, uniform, universal and constant everywhere in this creation, there is no scope of concepts such as 'Twam' or 'you', and 'Aham' or 'me' having any pith and substance. In other words, since the same Atma resides in both 'you' and 'me' as our soul and pure consciousness, there is actually no difference between the two of us though we both have different and separate bodies.

Similarly, there is no question of there being two separate existences or two different forms of life, such as one being a mortal creature and the other being an immortal Spirit. That is, there is no such notion as one being 'Idam' or 'this', and the other being 'Tada' or 'that'. In other words, there is no such thing as 'this' and 'that' because the same Atma is here as well as there, the same Atma is present in 'this' as well as in 'that'. [Refer verse nos. 48-49, 51-53 of this present Canto 5.] (25).

26. If there was the notion of 'Asti' or 'is', there would have been something as 'Naasti' or 'not'¹. If there was a 'Karya' or 'an action', there would have been the notion of 'Karaan' or 'the cause of that action'. [The Atma has none. Refer Canto 1, verse no. 48, and Canto 5, verse no. 33.] (26).

[Note--¹That is, for example, if the world existed then there would have a debate whether or not this existence is real and truthful, whether it is an illusion and mirage-like or physical and tangible reality. If it did not exist, then again the same doubt would have arisen—how can one possibly deny the visible world when one can actually see and witness its existence. The Atma is above such confusions.]

27. If there was the notion of 'Dwait' or 'duality', then there would have been something as 'Advait' or 'non-duality'. Since there is no notion of duality in the Atma, there is also no corresponding notion of non-duality in it. [Refer Canto 4, verse no. 66, and Canto 5, verse no. 37.]

If there was something worth seeing, something real that could be possibly seen or observed, then there would have been the need for the faculty of sight and the organ of the eye. Since there is no such need for the Atma since it does not have to see

anything and there is nothing worthy for it to see, it does not need this faculty and its corresponding organ (27).

28. If there was some notion of 'inside', then there would have been an 'outside'. None exists in the Atma. Similarly, if there was some concept of 'full and complete', then there would have been its opposite concept of 'unfulfilled and incomplete'. None of these two concepts apply to the Atma (28).

29. None of these attributes and characteristics is applicable to the Atma. The concepts of 'you and me', 'this and that', 'something actually visible and something that is cited as an example though it is not presently visible'—none of them are applicable to the Atma. This Atma is an irrefutable and unequivocal Truth; it has no birth (as it is eternal, infinite and imperishable) (29).

30. The mind that thinks 'I am the supreme transcendental Brahm' is also not there in the Atma (refer verse no. 19-20 of the present Canto 5), and therefore this notion (that I am Brahm) is fundamentally fallacious¹.

The fact is that this entire world is Brahm personified, and nothing other than that. Therefore, it is implied that both 'you' and 'me' are Brahm personified (30).

[Note—¹Since the Atma is supposed to be neutral, highly enlightened and omniscient, having a high degree of equanimity and uniformity of view, it is to be expected from it that it sees no distinction between 'me' and 'you', and therefore the supreme Divinity and cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm is not an exclusive domain of 'me', and neither is it limited in 'me', which implies that it is not in 'you'! All confusions and the need to remove them arise because of the fact that the mind is doubtful and it has the propensity to debate and analyse things in various perspectives and then make certain conclusions, whether right or wrong, of its own. In the case of the Atma, this situation does not arise as it is most wise and highly enlightened. It sees Brahm as inherent in everything; it sees itself as a manifestation of Brahm. So it need not repeatedly assert or affirm that it is Brahm personified.]

For example, a boy need not go shouting at the top of his voice in the town to say that he is a boy and not a girl. That is ridiculous and most insane thing to do. Then why is this fact repeated in this Upanishad? This is done for the purpose of teaching and driving home the point and not meant for those who have already understood it. Basically the Upanishad was revealed when either Kariteya or Nidagh had asked a question—which means that they were not aware of this fact and therefore had to be repeatedly reminded of this eclectic Truth so that it gets firmly engrained in their mind. On the contrary, wise and already self-realised sage or seer was fully aware of this fact, and therefore he did not need to reaffirm or reassert that he—i.e. his Atma, his 'true self'—is Brahm personified.]

31. A wise man should think that this deluding and illusionary world is not 'me' (i.e. is not the conscious Atma which is the true 'self' of all living beings). In fact, my 'true self' is the pure conscious Atma. One should be certain about it.

This vast world has no substance, pith and essence in it; it is without any truth and reality; it is deceitful and illusionary in nature. It neither had an origin or birth, nor does it end or die¹ (31).

[Note—¹Anything that has an existence would have a beginning, and anything that has a beginning is finite and can have an end. Since there is no reality in this world as it is merely an imagination of the mind, it does not have either a beginning or an end. The world exists only because of the mind that thinks it to be there as is proved by the fact that something lying just in front does not exist for us if our mind does not

register its presence, whereas most incredible things seem real for us if our mind is convinced that they do exist.]

32. The delusions and deceptions that exist in the form of this world do so because of the mind and its power to imagine and convince itself of its existence. This it does out of its own volitions.

Actually such things do not exist. There is no such thing as worldly ‘Prapanch’ (worldly deceptions, delusions, conceit, deceit and falsehoods). The pure consciousness or the Atma has no mind that indulges in such imaginary things and get deluded in the process¹. The pure conscious Atma has no notion of ‘Ahankar’ (ego, false pride, haughtiness, arrogance and hypocrisy). These notions of having Ahankar and getting entangled in Prapanch are the characteristics of ‘Jivas’, or ordinary mortal creatures having a gross body and ignorant of the truth about themselves (32).

[Note—¹The simple way at looking at this observation is this—since the world is an imaginary entity created by the imaginative abilities of the mind, it is not real but an illusion. Since it is not real, it follows that there is nothing that can be described as ‘Prapanch’ or falsehood. This is because the question whether anything is worthy or not arises only when it has some form of existence when one needs to find out its worth and utility. When the world has no existence in the first place, then to debate whether or not it is false, deceitful and illusive is an exercise in futility much like daydreaming or debating endlessly what would happen ten days from now when no one is certain even of the next moment. Refer also to verse no. 75 of this present Canto 5.]

33. The Atma has no ‘Maya’, or delusions, deceit and falsehoods in it, and neither is it affected by it at all. The Atma is not involved in any of the activities of this Maya, and therefore there is no fear in it due to any of the activities of Maya¹.

The Atma does not get involved in doing any deeds or taking any actions, and therefore it is not a ‘doer’ of any deed. [Refer verse no. 26]. It does not hear anything and therefore it does not have to ponder over or remember anything. [Refer verse no. 46, Canto 3; verse no. 20, Canto 4; and verse no. 12, Canto 5.] (33).

[Note—¹The concept of *Maya* : Briefly it refers to something that is based on delusions and deceit. The magical world created by a magician is a world of Maya. The trap that this charming deception creates for the creature making it believe that what it sees is for real is called the ‘Maya Jaal’ or the net of delusions which entangle the creature like a bird getting caught in a bird catcher’s snare. When one sees a magic show he gets so engrossed in its illusions that for the time being the person forgets that what he thinks is so life-like and real has no substance and pith. He thinks that what he sees is real and true. The same basic concept is applied in metaphysics to explain the concept of delusions vis-à-vis this world. The deluded creature begins to get involved in this magical world, and does so many things as if walking in a dream. But a wise man realises that the truth is above this illusive world and does not allow himself to be misled by any cajoling by the magician; he simply laughs at it and waves away all attempts by the latter to entice him to participate in the show. He just watches the magic show dispassionately and does not get emotionally involved in it. Similarly, a wise man does not allow himself to be involved in this deluding world, and remains a dispassionate observer, not a participant in the activity of the world.]

34. The Atma is beyond the purview of the two types of Samadhis¹, and neither can it be measured by any yardstick nor can any criterions be made applicable to it.

The Atma is such an exalted and omniscient entity that it is outside the jurisdiction of such concepts as 'Agyan' (ignorance) and 'Avivek' (lack of wisdom)² (34).

[Note--¹The term *Samadhi* is derived from the Sanskrit root 'Dha' which means to put or to place. To this root are added prefixes 'Sam' (well) and 'Aa' (fully). Thus the word *Samadhi* means 'putting or placing the mind fully well'. In Vedanta, *Samadhi* means the knowledge that identifies the Atma with Brahm. It is commonly used to mean 'absorption or meditation'. The state of *Samadhi* is free from the dual defects (faults) of duality (that the creature and Brahm are separate) and effort (diligence in deeds and actions aimed towards the goal). That is, during the state of *Samadhi*, the creature loses its self independent identity and no effort is then required to experience the bliss of the supreme realisation of the absolute Truth— which is the Atma and Brahm are the same, are infinite and eternal.

There are two types of *Samadhis*—(i) *Savikalpa Samadhi* (absorption characterised by the perception of division, distinction or difference) and (ii) *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* (absorption free from division, distinction or difference). The *Savikalpa Samadhi* is reached after long practice of the tenet 'I am Brahm' (i.e. there is no difference between me and Brahm). Unlike this practice wherein the seeker had to exert himself to maintain the thought that 'I am Brahm', during the *Savikalpa Samadhi* there is an effortless thought of 'I am Brahm'. This *Samadhi* is characterised by the perception of the distinction of the triumvirate consisting of (a) Meditator (Dhyatr), (b) Meditated object (Dheya) and (c) Meditation process (Dhyan). Though the Meditator has withdrawn his mind from all thoughts and maintains a continuous flow of a single pointed thought that 'I am Brahm', he still continues to have the distinction between (a) I, the Meditator, (b) the Object, that I am Brahm and (c) the very physical act of meditation. Nevertheless, by virtue of the strength of knowledge that 'he is Brahm', the triumvirate becomes illusionary or imaginary just like the perception of various shapes of water— such as whirlpool, wave, bubble, foam/froth etc. are nothing else but water, or the water in a cup, a glass, a jar, a tray, a pond, a lake, a river, and ocean may have different names and contours but are water nonetheless.

Sri Sankaracharya has cited the example of a clay elephant (Sarva Vedanta Siddhanta Saar Sangraha, verse nos. 821-822) to say that the elephant form does appear inspite of the knowledge that it is, after all, clay. Similarly, inspite of the knowledge that everything is Brahm, the triumvirate does exist in *Savikalpa Samadhi*. *Nirvikalpa Samadhi*— during this state, the ideal that I am the all-pervading Brahm takes firm root and it puts an end to all ignorance. The term means 'no division or distinction or difference'. Here the seeker has no distinction between the triad of meditator or meditated object and the process of meditation.

The main difference between these two *Samadhis* is that in the former there is the 'knowledge or awareness' that I am Brahm while in the latter it is the 'being' of I am Brahm. The difference of knowing and being is quite evident. It is one thing to theoretically 'know' that I am Brahm and quite different to 'be' Brahm. When the thought I am Brahm becomes effortless and complete, the meditator loses the distinction between himself, the object (Brahm) and the process (meditation)— all merge into one entity. In this *Nirvikalpa Samadhi*, the meditator loses the distinction between himself (I) and the object (Brahm). As a result, the ego that 'I am meditating upon Brahm' is vanished, and with it, the triad. By extension, it means 'there is no experience of distinction between the knower (meditator) and the known (Brahm)'.

In *Savikalpa Samadhi*, the thought 'I am Brahm' is available for perception while in *Nirvikalpa Samadhi*, the same thought is not available for perception. A lump of salt floating in water will be seen as distinct from water (*Savikalpa Samadhi*) but when that lump of salt dissolves in water, no one can see it; there is no distinction between the water and the salt (*Nirvikalpa Samadhi*).

The Nirvikalpa Samadhi is the plunging of the consciousness into the ocean of bliss encapsulated inside the causal body of the creature. All ignorance pertaining to the world is dispelled and therefore the world comes to an end simply because it exists only due to ignorance. Age, caste, position, opinion—none of these is a bar in entering the chamber of the self during Samadhi. It is open to all who seek it.

Refer also to Canto 1, verse nos. 37-42.

²This is because the Atma is eternally wise and enlightened, being the supreme consciousness from which everything has emerged, including all forms of knowledge and wisdom. It is like a treasury of Gyan—knowledge, and Vivek—wisdom and erudition. So there is no question of it being ignorant and stupid.]

35. The four ‘Anubandhs’¹, the three ‘Sambandhs’², the holy river Ganges, the pilgrim sites such as Gaya (where descendents of departed souls perform rituals for their peace in afterlife), the ‘Setubandh’ (the bridge said to have been built by Lord Ram across the ocean to reach Lanka as narrated in the epic Ramayan, and where he consecrated one of the holy Lingams of Lord Shiva), and the different ‘Bhuts’ or living creatures of all species in existence—none of them have any importance, none of them have any substance and truth. [In other words, if one does not understand the fundamental meaning of the scriptures and their axiomatic maxims, and attempts to see Divinity and Godhead in any of these sites, then he is on the wrong boat, and as such he would not reach his destination which is the final realisation of the ultimate Truth; he cannot hope to achieve real emancipation and salvation of the soul. Refer verse no. 42,] (35).

[Note—¹The word *Anubandh* means connection and attachment to anything. For example, the life long union of two persons by marriage, or the connection between them which is purely friendly. The word refers to those factors that bind or connect, or those that bind the system into one connected whole. In the cited example, the institution of marriage, or the mutual trust between two persons that bind them together is the Anubandh between them. It is a sort of contract or agreement that binds them together.

In the philosophy of Vedanta, there are four such Anubandhs. They are the following—(1) Adhikaari—a person who is competent to study and practice the science; (2) Vishaya—the subject matter dealt with in the treatises studied; (3) Prayojan—the intention and utility of such study and the gains from it and its practice; and (4) Sambandh—the relationship or connection between the text of study and the science itself, or between the text and the benefits that it promises.

In the context of the study of the Atma vis-à-vis the external world, this word Anubandh can be extended to include the study of the contact that the Atma has with the outside world through the organs of perception, the organs of action, the mind and the intellect, and its consequences. This contact results in the Atma developing the following four characteristic emotional patterns—(1) it begins to have ‘Kaam’—i.e. it develops desires and passions for enjoying the sense objects of this world, (2) it acquires ‘Krodh’—i.e. it begins to get angry and wrathful when its desires are not met and some hurdle is created in the fulfillment of its wishes, (3) it begins to have ‘Lobh’—i.e. it gets greedy and rapacious about the material things of the world and develops strong yearning for them, and (4) it gets entangled in their snare, called ‘Moha’—i.e. it gets emotionally and sentimentally attached to the world and its material sense objects in the hope of deriving pleasure and comfort from them. The net result is that it gets bound to this world and its consequential delusions. The seemingly innocuous contact with this world sets off a chain of events which slip out of control and trap the Atma, which is essentially unattached and free from any bondage. The contact is the beginning of a chain of events that have grave consequences for the freedom of the Atma, and the world then hooks its self to the

Atma as its appendage, with its attendant delusions and ignorance adding to the complexity of the situation. These delusions and misleading conceptions of the world attach themselves to the Atma and the latter, in its ignorance, agrees to this partnership, thereby willingly allowing itself to be tainted.

²The word *Sambandh* means relationship, alliance, connection, affinity, link and contact. In the sphere of metaphysics, it is the study of the three relationships that exist between (1) the Atma and Brahm, (2) the creature and the world, and (3) the religious rituals and the science or knowledge behind it.]

36. The pure conscious Atma is not restricted to any one of the elements such as the earth, the water, the fire, the wind or air, and the sky. It is also not limited to the Gods, the Dikpals (the legendary supporters of the world from all its corners), the Vedas (scriptures) and the Guru (moral preceptor, teacher and guide) (36).

[Note—In other words, it would be wrong to assume that the Atma can be compared with any of the above entities, singly or jointly, because the Atma is much superior to them and much more divine and magnificent than all of them put together. That is why it is called transcendental and supreme. None of these entities would have any value if there was no Atma or soul in them; the inherent virtues and qualities present in them which give them their due place in this creation is due to the conscious factor present in them as their integral qualities and virtues that lend them their divine hue. For instance, who would like to worship and praise the fire element if it only burnt and created havoc all around? It is the fire's inherent life-injecting, life-sustaining and life-fostering virtues that make it so valuable for creation. Life would be extinct without fire element. This logic can be extended to all other entities as well.]

37. The Atma has no notion of far and near, of an end or a middle. The concepts of duality and non-duality do not apply to it (refer verse no. 27), and neither does it fall within the ambit of discussions or debates of what is true and what is not, or what is this and what is that. [Refer verse no. 16, 28-30.] (37).

38. The Atma has nothing to do with such conceptions as freedom and bondage (refer verse no. 24 and 44 of the present Canto 5), truth and non-truth, comforts and happiness, caste, clan, class and race, destiny and fate etc. that are the domineering factors in this world. In fact, as far as the Atma is concerned, there is no such entity as the physical world (because the world is an imagination of the fertile mind, and as soon as the mind decides that a particular thing is not to its liking, it immediately diverts its attention away from it, not allowing the various faculties to register the existence of that thing in the world altogether, and without the mind registering anything, the creature is unable to see, hear, taste, speak about and feel its presence—refer verse no. 31-33 of this Canto 5) (38).

39. Everything in existence is nothing but Brahm in those myriad forms, and nothing that exists which is not Brahm has any real and truthful existence. Similarly, everything that shows signs of life is consciousness, and nothing can be said of anything that has no consciousness in it (because it would be lifeless). [Refer Canto 1, verse no. 17, 23, 34; and Canto 2, verse nos. 2-43.] (39).

40. Sometimes doubts and confusions arise on this matter, but it is only due to lack of correct interpretation and truthful knowledge of the tenets of the scriptures and the wrong context in which they are quoted or interpreted.

For instance, the axiomatic maxims that 'I am Brahm personified' and 'I am eternally and always pure and immaculate' are often misinterpreted to mean an entity

that can speak, has a mind that thinks and has emotions. That is, there is body which is Brahm personified. Nothing is farther from the truth—for it is not the body but the Atma which is being referred to here. [Refer verse no. 29-32 of the present Canto 5.] (40).

41. This esoteric, enigmatic and mysterious entity known as the Atma cannot be determined by the application of the intellect and its logics and rationality, and neither can it be known by the application of the mind (as is very evident even by having a cursory reading of this Upanishad).

The Atma has no such concepts as a Yogi (an ascetic) and Yoga (meditation; bringing about a union between two entities). It is always uniform and immutable so there is no question of bringing about a union or fusion between two separate entities by the means of mediation¹ (41).

[Note—¹The basic idea here is that the main purpose of Yoga is to bring the soul of the individual creature close to the cosmic Soul so that they unite and fuse together. But this can only happen when they are separate from one another, when the soul of the individual is distinct from the cosmic Soul of the creation. Since this is not the ideal case because the creature's soul or Atma and the cosmic Soul or Brahm are one and the same entity, the question of bringing about their union and fusion does not arise. Refer verse no. 27.]

42. The Atma remains one and the same, whether it is the night or the day. It does not need to perform such purifying deeds as taking ritualistic baths or doing meditation and contemplation. [Refer verse no. 20 and 35 of the present Canto 5.]

It is certain that it is not mired by perplexities and vexations that arise out of various confusions and doubts about what is true and what is not (42).

43. If nothing in existence is true except its own 'self' as far as the Atma is concerned, then obviously for it the Vedas, the Purans, the Shastras (i.e. all the voluminous religious tomes) have no use and value, and they become redundant (because the Atma is all-knowing and enlightened, and when the main purpose of these scriptures to enlighten the creature about its exalted and auspicious heritage is achieved when the creature becomes aware of this 'true self' as the pure conscious Atma, then the scriptures become redundant). [Refer Canto 1, verse no. 15.]

The Atma does not do anything, and therefore it is not the cause of any deed being done and their consequences. [These deeds are done by the body and not the Atma.] This visible material world, the mortal creatures that inhabit it—they are all non-truths; they are all illusive. Be certain of it (43).

44. Likewise, all other erroneous notions about the true nature and reality of the Atma are equally not applicable to its exalted, immaculate, independent and supreme stature which is divine and holy.

Some of these fallacious notions are the concepts of 'Bandh' and 'Moksha' (i.e. to be in bondage and therefore requiring freedom from it—refer verse nos. 24, 38 of the present Canto 5), or of 'Sukha' and 'Dukha' (i.e. comforts and pleasures or miseries and pains—refer verse no. 49 of this Canto 5, and verse no. 66 of Canto 4). These notions arise due to the presence of the mind and its basic nature to pay attention to such things, interpret them and then register them in its memory bank. But when the Atma is de-linked from the mind, these notions vanish from existence. There is no God and no Demon; the Atma is neutral to both notions¹.

In such an eclectic state of exalted existence, nothing matters as all situations and circumstances are equal and have no affect on the Atma. Therefore, there is no such conception as something being important, the other being more important, and something else being not important at all. There is neither falsehood nor truthfulness. There is no doubt it (44).

[Note—¹A creature becomes *God-like* when he exhibits godly characteristics and qualities which are broadly classified as Sata Guna—i.e. the noblest and most auspicious qualities in existence. On the other hand, the same creature can show *Demon-like* attributes if the Tama Guna—i.e. the meanest and lowest of qualities, plays a dominant role in moulding his character. But, as it is observed constantly in this Upanishad, the Atma is beyond such considerations as it is not at all affected by any worldly attributes and characteristics that might have any bearing upon its pristine, immaculate and uncorrupt nature. Since a wise and enlightened creature treats everyone alike because he sees the same divine Atma in all of them, he does not see a ‘demon’ in the other person, but sees the divine god-like Atma residing in the body of that so-called demon. It is the gross body, and not the pure and holy Atma, that exhibits demon-like characteristics such as cruelty, lack of compassion, selfishness, propensity for committing evil and sins, perversions and misdemeanors of all sorts etc.]

45. That which is said or narrated by the faculty of speech, that imaginary thing for which a creature has a desire and then makes firm resolutions to successfully obtain it, and all other things about which the agile and overactive mind constantly thinks and imagines about their existence—verily, all of them are figments of the imagination as they have no substance and pith because they are all based on imaginations (45).

[Note—The creature describes even things it has not seen, and he does so based on what he has learnt by hearing about it from others. In other words, even a most lucid and vivid description of certain event might not be the whole and absolute truth; it might be completely false. Further, the narrator chooses his own words to describe a particular thing, and he might not hit at the correct word for it, and even if he managed to do so then these words would mean different things to different people, and when these people pass on this information to the next generation of listeners, the original more often than not gets distorted beyond redemption. This is what is meant by saying that the faculty of speech cannot describe the truth. This is also the reason why the truthfulness of the Atma is best understood by experiencing and witnessing it first hand rather than basing it on words, whether heard or read.]

46-47. The facts stated above have been arrived at by application of intelligent mind and its ability to think and critically analyse anything. These facts have been established elsewhere in the scriptures also.

Whatever is seen by the eyes in this deluding and imaginary world of falsehood and deceit (46), whatever is heard by the ears or any other forms of perceptions, are all deluding and misplaced. Listen carefully! The organs of the body such as the eye and the ear, along with the body itself, are all non-existent and misconceived; they are false and illusionary. [Refer verse nos. 19-21, 33-34 etc. of this present Canto 5.] (47). [46-47.]

48-49. All that which is thought to have an existence by the use of the words such as ‘Idam’ (this is), and the relationships created between ‘this’ seemingly real and truthful entity and ‘Twam’ (you), ‘Aham’ (me or I), ‘Tada’ (that), and all other such linking factors (48), that try to establish a link between any two entities in this world—all are imaginary and do not have any substance in them. All relationships, all

desires, all volitions and all resolutions that are based on these erroneous assumptions are indeed false and misleading¹. This is the truth. [Refer verse nos. 25-31 of the present Canto 5.]

Verily, they are like treating a harmless and lifeless length of rope as a live snake. There is nothing secret about it. There is no enjoyment or sufferings (called 'Bhog') because this world and the body have no reality as far as the Atma is concerned, and the Atma never suffers and enjoys anything. [In other words, the very concept of suffering and enjoyments is misplaced. Refer verse no. 44 of the present Canto 5.] (49).

[Note—¹All along it has been emphasised that the world has an imaginary existence and it is the creation of a fertile and imaginative mind. This body is equally not real. The only thing that matters for reality is the pure consciousness which cannot be seen and felt in physical terms, it cannot be limited to the notion of 'this' and 'that' because it is omnipresent and all-pervading in equal intensity and quantum everywhere without exception; it is an universally uniform and immutable entity that has no bounded or quantified existence. So to restrict such a sublime and subtle as well as all-pervading and all-encompassing entity that is supremely holy and divine besides being most enigmatic and esoteric to specific physical objects and limitations imposed by such words as 'this' and 'that', or parameters of space such as 'here' and 'there', or of size such as 'big' and 'small' etc. are basically erroneous conceptions and misinterpretation of facts. There is no difference between 'you' and 'me/I' because the same Atma resides in both of us. There is no such thing as 'this' and 'that' in this world because of the same reason, as also due to the fact that the visible world where these notions of 'this' and 'that', 'here' and 'there', 'big' and 'small' apply has no existence itself in the first place as noted in verse no. 32 herein above of this Canto 5.]

50. All the faults associated with this existential world¹ are equally imaginary (because of the basic premise that the world is imaginary and the body of the creature is not his true self. [Refer verse no. 33 of the present Canto 5 which deals with Maya.]

Thus, the very concept of me and mine, you and your—all are fallacious and misconceived (50).

[Note—¹The faults associated with this world are being enumerated in detail below. The terms used to describe the various faults or shortcomings have been described at the end of this listing and marked by **.

(a) The *six faults* or shortcomings of the body are the problems associated with this gross world that has a physical origin, takes a birth and ultimately ends or dies. Naturally they are not applicable to the supreme Lord who does not take birth and does not die. These so-called 'Vikars' are the following—(1) problems associated with birth, (2) problems associated with growth, (3) problems associated with consequences of deeds done and actions taken by a creature in this world, (4) problems associated with gradual decay and decline of the body and its functions, (5) problems associated with old age and its attendant horrors, and (6) problems associated with the ultimate destruction and end of everything that relates to the creature. One will observe that the life of a creature is a continuous graph of sorrows, sufferings and pains of one or the other kind. It is only when the creature realises the truth of existence and who he really is that he begins to disassociate himself from the body and the world, and thus is able to break free from this seemingly interminable cycle of horrors. Refer *Mudgal Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse no. 6 of Rig Veda tradition as well as *Adhyatma Ramayan* of Veda Vyas, Lanka Kand, Canto 3, verse no. 29.

According to the *Varaaha Upanishad*, canto 1 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, there are *six urmis* or faults associated with a creature. They are the

following—Ashanaaye, Pipasa, Shoka, Moha, Jaraa and Mritu—refer also *Mudgal Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse no. 7 of Rig Veda tradition.

There also *other six faults* that are considered as *enemies* of a man—Kaam, Krodh, Lobh, Moha, Mada and Matsarya—refer *Mudgal Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse no. 4 of Rig Veda tradition.

(b) The *five faults* or shortcomings of the body—According to *Mandal Brahmin Upanishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, Brahmin 1, section 2, verse nos.1-2, there are following—viz. (1) Kaam, (2) Krodh, (3) Asthma or obstruction of breath, (4) Bhaya, and (5) Nidra (verse no. 1). Their remedy are respectively the following—(1) to be without any desires whatsoever, (2) to be forgiving and tolerant, (3) to eat less and moderately, (4) to be strong, brave and courageous, and (5) to constantly devote time and energy in contemplation and meditating upon the essential nature of things called Tattwa (i.e. to keep the mind from lying idle and instead keep it occupied in introspection and deep thoughts) (verse no. 2).

According to *Ram Charit Manas* by Saint Tulsidas, Aranya Kand, Doha 39, Chaupai 2/1, there are *five shortcomings* in a creature and they are the following—Krodh, Kaam, Lobh, Mada, and Maya.

(c) The *four faults* that are associated with a creature's temperament and natural inclination and mental bearing have been described in detail in *Ram Charit Manas* by Saint Tulsidas, the greatest epic ever penned in the realm of devotional literature which is suffused and soaked in the philosophy of the Upanishads at the same time. This great treatise has the following take on the four faults or shortcomings that afflict all the creatures in this creation—(1) Baal Kand, Doha 285, Chaupai 1/2 states that the four faults are Mada, Moha, Krodh, and Bhram. (2) Doha 43, Chaupai 3/1 says that they are Kaam, Krodh, Mada and Moha. (3) Baal Kand, Doha 112, enumerates them as Shok, Moha, Sandeha, and Bhram. (4) Baal Kand, Doha 128 says that they are Moha, Matsarya, Mada, and Maan. (5) Aranya Kand, Doha 43 lists these four faults as Kaam, Krodh, Lobh and Mada. (6) Aranya Kand Doha 44, Chaupai 2/1 enumerates the four faults as follows--Kaam, Krodh, Mada and Matsarya.

(d) The *three faults* that afflict the creature, according to *Ram Charit Manas* by Saint Tulsidas, Aranya Kand, Doha 38/A, are the following—Kaam, Krodh and Lobh.

(e) The *two faults* associated with the creature that prove his great *enemies* are the following according to *Ram Charit Manas* by Saint Tulsidas, Aranya Kand, Doha 43, Chaupai 5/1—Kaam and Krodh.

(f) The greatest fault however is *one*, and it is 'Moha' (delusions and its attendant attractions towards this world and its charms, leading to attachments, infatuations and a sense of belonging to it). This Moha is compared to the dark night in *Ram Charit Manas* by Saint Tulsidas, Baal Kand, Doha 116, Chaupai 3/1, and Aranya Kand, Doha 93, Chaupai 1/2; it is like a moral disease that afflict all creatures and eat them up like cancer—Uttar Kand, Doha 121, Chaupai 15/1; Moha makes everyone blind—Uttar Kand, Doha 70, Chaupai 4/1.

****The terms used to above to describe the various faults associated with the creature's character and mental bearing are briefly summarises as the follows—Kaam** (worldly desires, lust, passions etc. and the attending greed, yearnings and aspirations that they create in their wake); **Krodh** (anger, indignation, wrathfulness and a sense of vengeance when desired results are not obtained and aspirations are not fulfilled); **Lobh** (greed, rapacity and yearnings); **Moha** (delusions that create a sense of attachment, infatuation and belonging with this world and attractions towards the material charm that its sense objects offer, along with their pleasures and comforts); **Matsarya** (envy, jealousy, malice); **Mada** (arrogance, false pride, hypocrisy and haughtiness); **Maan** (self pride and ego); **Maya** (ignorance based delusions, illusions, misconceptions and their attending hallucinations); **Bhram** (confusion and doubts caused by ignorance of the actual truth, which lead to perplexities and vexations);

Shoka (the feeling of regret, contrition, grief, sufferings, torments, miseries and sorrows); *Ashanaaye* (hunger); *Pipasa* (thirst); *Jaraa* (old age and weakness); *Mritu* (death); *Bhaya* (fear of any kind, such as physical harm); *Nidra* (sleep, lethargy, indolence, drowsiness, sluggishness and lack of alertness especially when doing some important or dangerous work requiring concentration of mind, vigilance and alertness of the faculties); *Sandeha* (doubts, skepticism and lack of confidence in some truth such as doubting the authority of the scriptures and their tenets and maxims).]

51-53. 'I am', 'You are', 'it is for me' and 'that is for you'—all these notions are completely baseless and fallacious, founded on erroneous conceptions and are fruitless exercises. [Refer verse nos. 25-31, 48-49 of the present Canto 5 also.]

Similarly, the sustainer and protector Vishnu, the creator Brahma (51), the concluder Shiva—all of them have no real meaning and have an untruthful existence. In other words, they have a pseudo existence and have been conceptualised by the mind to give vent to its creative instincts. [Refer Canto 2, verse nos. 24-30; and Canto 5, verse no. 72.]

Likewise, ritualistic baths, doing Japa (repetition of certain Mantras which are letters, syllables, words or phrase having mystical powers), Tapa (severe austerity and penance, suffering hardship for certain noble or religious cause), Hom (fire sacrifices), Swaadhyaye (self study of the scriptures), worship of Gods (52), using various Mantras for occult worship employing magical charms called Tantras, keeping company of good people where religious subjects are discussed and where one can determine what constitutes good and what is bad—all of them are superficial and perfunctory for a self-realised soul, none of them are of any importance for a self-realised and enlightened spiritual aspirant who has understood the fundamental truth enunciated and unanimously extolled by all the scriptures, and which is about the essential element in creation called the pure conscious Atma which indeed possesses all the numerous divine virtues and glorious qualities enumerated in this Upanishad.

In fact, all such thoughts and emotions that arise in the mind and heart of the creature are due to ignorance and lack of proper knowledge about the real and actual truth behind these numerous religious concepts¹. There is no doubt about it. [Refer verse no. 34 of the present Canto 5.] (53). [51-53.]

[Note—¹The main idea of all religious activities is to provide the aspirant liberation and deliverance from all worldly delusions and provide his soul with emancipation and final salvation. If this aim is not achieved then all lengthy exercises become vain. What is the use of studying the scriptures if their basic ideas are not understood; what is the function served by doing elaborate sacrifices if the fundamental aim for which they are done and the meaning of the Mantras used during such rituals are not grasped? It is like a student of medicine learning thick medical books by heart to pass his graduation exam without even knowing how to hold a syringe or diagnose a disease based on symptoms of the patient, and then what medicine to prescribe him. What good is such a degree, and what good is such a medical doctor is to the society?

In the present context we see that the main thrust of this Upanishad is to highlight the exalted and divine stature of the Atma as the only spiritual essence and the absolute truth in creation, to show the spiritual aspirant that this Atma is inside his own self as his consciousness and no where outside in this vast world, that this Atma is as much in him as it is in the rest of the vast creation because there is no life without consciousness, and that this Atma possesses all the umpteen glorious virtues possessed by the supreme transcendental Divinity known as Brahm because it is nothing but Brahm personified in its form.

This Atma lives in one's own bosom as pure consciousness even as it does so as the essence and soul of all that exists in this creation, in all forms and all variations. If

this fundamental fact is understood properly, then the rest of the religious doctrines fall into place and the intricate details automatically become redundant and perfunctory. This is because the main objective of all religious activities is to provide for the spiritual wellbeing of the aspirant by removing ignorance and its attending delusions. If this is not achieved, if the soul does not find its eternal peace and bliss by self-realisation, if it continues to suffer the horrors of birth and death due to lack of knowledge and correct guidance, if it does not find liberation and deliverance from the fetters that shackle it to this body and the deluding world, if emancipation and salvation is not actually obtained but appears to be a distant dream which the creature pursues relentlessly by doing this and that religious duty, performing endless rituals, and observing numerous sacraments, then what is the purpose served by doing these elaborate exercises in the first place; what function do they serve if the goal is not achieved?

Without proper and honest guidance, the creature thinks that by doing such and such religious activity he would be doing some holy act which would be a guarantee of his spiritual wellbeing; rather he is under false belief of obtaining redemption by spending money and time on such activities by erroneously thinking that money and time can buy him emancipation and salvation. But in the process he forgets the basic thing that these activities create their own set of entanglements and trap him in their own web. This is because when a creature does one so-called holy act, he has some hidden desire for its rewards, and then if that reward is not available to his satisfaction he does something more or new. This is like entering a labyrinthine catacomb of rituals and deeds which lead to no where. Till the time the real cause of the disease is not diagnosed, the treatment becomes merely palliative and perfunctory. The real disease is 'ignorance and delusion' about one's true self, about the divinity bubbling all around him in the form of consciousness, of the futility of elaborate rituals and exercises in the name of religion, and unless this is addressed, no real spiritual happiness and peace is obtainable. Refer verse no. 20 and its note herein above.

If the fundamentals are not grasped, then elaborate religious activities such as doing Japa, repeating Mantras, performing fire sacrifices, going on pilgrims and taking holy baths, reading scriptural tomes, hearing discourses and finding out what is good and what is not would be like a wild goose chase, and more like getting lost in the mango orchard in search of the illusive mango!

In this context, refer Sam Veda's Maitreyu-panishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 21, 26; Jabal Darshan Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 50-59; Sanyaso-panishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 74-75, 97; and the present Krishna Yajur Veda's Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 6, verse nos. 21-24.]

54. In the same vein, numerous universes are also not real. This is certain¹. All statements made by experts from all fields and from all directions of the world are equally useless until one actually understands them and benefits from them. There is no doubt in it² (54).

[Note--¹It is futile wasting time trying to learn about the numerous far flung universes, and it is proving oneself equally stupid pursuing them when one is not able to fully know and understand about one's own planet, the Earth. Likewise, it is easy to know about one's own self as the 'self' is so near and close that it does not need any hypothetical conjectures, and it can be easily verified and its truthfulness witnessed and experienced first hand. So, instead of understanding this close-at-hand 'self' if one spends his lifetime in trying to understand what is 'God' and 'where is heaven', obviously he is a deluded man who neglects what is ready at hand in search of an illusive target. Its like going on a wild goose chase for a piece of gold which is in one's own breast pocket while one turns the house upside down in search of it.

²There are thousands of books and preachers. What purpose do they serve if the student cannot grasp the subject well?]

55. The visible world and whatever is seen or observed in it, whatever seems to be present now—all are illusive and non-real (because, as has been repeatedly said, this world itself is unreal and has its existence due to the mind's proactive imagination that makes the unreal look real just like the conditioned mind begins to see water in a mirage in a dry desert and a charming scene during a magician's performance). None of them have any real existence. [Refer Canto 3, verse nos. 53-59.] (55).

56-58. Whatever that can be said or described in words (as being good, noble, righteous, holy and auspicious), whatever that is deduced and determined by someone as being of some grand quality, whatever that is approved, sanctioned, praised or encouraged by anyone for such values and virtues, whatever is inspired by such notions and conferred such honours, whatever deeds that are glorified as holy, auspicious and noble or decried as ignoble, inauspicious and unholy—all of them are worthless and go in vain if one does not have knowledge of the reality and truth. In other words, all such notions appear to be truthful because the world is regarded to be real, but once the 'real truth' of it is known, everything appears to be hollow and false. This is a certainty.

You must free yourself of all such notions of hearing this and that and getting confused and perplexed, of oscillating between doing one deed and then chucking it for some other because the first was less holy than the second, of swinging between praise and honour on the one hand, and ignominy and derision on the other, and remaining drowned in a swamp of words praising this as true and that as false.

You must realise the fact that you are a personification of the supreme Lord known as 'Parmatma' because you are nothing but supreme transcendental Divinity and cosmic Consciousness, known as Brahm, personified. [Refer Canto 3, verse nos. 61-74; Canto 6, verse nos. 2-107.]

You are your own supreme 'Guru', i.e. you must try to find out who you truly are by cultivating 'self knowledge' and endeavouring to realise your true potentials and divinity by contemplation and understanding the essence of all religious treatises leading to self-realisation, instead of getting entangled in web of words and roaming here and there in search of this truth from other persons who call themselves 'Gurus' but do not know who they themselves are. How can anyone who does not know the truth himself show it to others? Therefore you must look for the Truth within yourself (56-58).

[Note—The pronoun 'you' is being used here for Nidagh who is being preached by sage Ribhu just like the pronoun 'I' was being used to indicate Kartikeya earlier in Cantos 2-4 when he was being preached by Shiva. But from a broader perspective, they apply to any spiritual aspirant who reads and contemplates upon this Upanishad. Actually, the teacher is addressing the 'soul' or the 'Atma' of the disciple because that is his true self.]

59. You are like the sky (i.e. your Atma possesses the virtues of the sky in being vast, fathomless, measureless, infinite, eternal, without any taints and faults, all-pervading, all-encompassing etc.). You as your Atma are so subtle and sublime that no one can physically verify or see you in the form of your true self (which is like the vast and colourless space of the sky which cannot be seen or caught hold of). [Refer Canto 6, verse no. 2.]

There is no doubt that you represent all that is present in this creation inasmuch as you are Brahm himself personified¹. [Refer Canto 3, verse nos. 61-74; and Canto 6, verse nos. 2-107.] (59).

[Note--¹Since everything in this creation has been created by the Supreme Being known as Brahm, since nothing in this creation is real that is not Brahm, since Brahm uniformly pervades throughout this creation as the elements that constitute it, and since your true self is the pure consciousness, the Atma, which is Brahm personified, it follows that whatever that exists in creation is because of you. In other words, if you decide that this world does not exist, it would cease to do so. Therefore, you do not have to seek renunciation by doing some great sacrifice and making yourself a sacrificial goat by suffering extreme hardships if you sincerely wish to renounce this world and its delusions, because they have their origin in you and no where else. If you neglect this world on the mental plane, then it is as good as renouncing it in physical terms. This is the real intention of 'renouncing' the world, and merely running away from it to a forest is not.]

60. You (as your true self known as the pure conscious Atma—) are such a mysterious and enigmatic entity that you represent Kaal and, at the same time, remain beyond its reach and are not to be misunderstood as Kaal itself. You represent Kaal, you are Kaal, but this is not your correct description as you aren't Kaal and you should not be confused with it¹. You are pure consciousness and Brahm personified.

You are present in all the forms in which this creation has unfolded itself, and you are a treasury of knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment. [This is because the Atma is eternally all-knowing, enlightened, wise and omniscient. Refer Canto 3, verse no. 31.] (60).

[Note—¹The word *Kaal* usually refers, inter alia, to the concept of the different planes of time and its different phases such as the past, the present and the future as well as its effect on the individual life of a creature or creation as a whole, thereby creating newer forms of life and extinguishing older ones in creation. Kaal refers to any circumstance that influences life and creation; it refers to an epoch or period, the fate of an individual and the creation as a whole. It refers to the past, the present and the future; it means the different phases and eras in history and the varying circumstances that keep on changing every other day.

The factor of 'death' is also called Kaal because it is death that determines the end of one cycle of creation and destruction, and leads to another new one; it is death that brings to an end the present and paves the way for the new future.

Thus we observe that Kaal is a vast concept that incorporates the entire cycle of creation and destruction in its ambit. Therefore it would not be an exaggeration to like it with Brahm which also controls this cycle. In fact, according to *Adhyatma Ramayan* of Veda Vyas, this Kaal in its personified form is said to be the eldest son of Brahm who had manifested in the form of Lord Rama. [Refer Uttar Kand, Canto 8, verse nos. 22-29.]

Now, in the present context, the spiritual aspirant is being exhorted to realise his great potentials which are not unlike this supreme power called Kaal which spares none and which overrides all other factors. With this overriding authority, Kaal is Brahm personified. Since the Atma of the individual is also Brahm personified, it represents Kaal and possesses all the latter's authority and potentials. For example, if the Atma wants, this world would cease to exist as the latter's existence solely depends upon the mind that consciously thinks that this world along with its charms and attractive objects does exist. Once the Atma instructs its assistant mind to banish such thoughts, the world would immediately cease to exist.

The Atma, at the same time, remains uniform and steady in all times, it is eternal and imperishable, it is not affected by any circumstance or era, and therefore it is

beyond the purview of Kaal which changes every now and then and kills everything when their time is up. That is, the Atma uniformly lives in all the planes of time such as the past, the present and the future as the non-changing, uniform, immutable, eternal and imperishable conscious entity referred here as 'you'; it is not affected by the vagaries of time and influenced by circumstances. The external features of the Atma such as the body of the creature might undergo change, it might become old and infirm, but basically it does not affect and bring about any change in the nature of the Atma. Death known as Kaal does not devour the Atma, nor does it take any birth in any era and then have to die at the end of its tenure.

Refer also Canto 1, verse no. 24 and Canto 4, verse no. 69.]

61. [The following verses enumerate the various virtues of the exalted Atma, the pure conscious self of the creature.]

It (the Atma) is 'Satya' (truthful); it is 'Siddha' (acclaimed and fulfilled in every respect); it is 'Sanaatan' (eternal, perpetual, infinite, everlasting, primary, primeval, most ancient, traditional, universal); it is eternally 'Mukta' (liberated from all bondages and not bound by any fetters); it has obtained 'Moksha' (emancipation and salvation); it is full of 'Muda' (it is perpetually happy and joyous, blissful and cheerful); it is 'Amrit' (it is like the elixir of beatitude and felicity, the ambrosia that bestows eternal life).

It is a personification of godly characters and virtues, and hence God like. It is 'Shaantaa' (peaceful, tranquil, calm and serene). It is 'Niramaye' (healthy and without any moral or physical ailments or tainting affects that are like a disease that might afflict a person's spiritual well beings). It is indeed Brahm personified as it is complete and without a fraction, it is fulfilled and wholesome, it is supreme, ethereal and transcendental (61).

62. It (the Atma) is 'Samaan' (uniform, steady, unmoving and universal); it is 'Saccha' (truthful and real); it is 'Sanaatan' (eternal, perpetual, infinite, everlasting, primary, primeval, most ancient, traditional, universal); it is indicated by the truthful tenets and axiomatic maxims of the scriptures, called the 'Satya Vakyas' or the truthful sayings; it is 'Pratibodh' (a personification of knowledge, awakening, enlightenment and vigil about the truth).

It is without any physical body but it is perpetually present everywhere at all times. It has manifested as the three Gods such as Brahma the creator, Indra the king of Gods and Lord of all organs of the body of the creatures, and Rudra the concluder¹ (62).

[Note—¹The significance of these three Gods must be understood here. *Brahma* is the creator, and therefore is like the supreme Brahm himself because the entire creation has come into being due to Brahm's wish. He is the eldest one in creation and considered as the wise patriarch who is most wise and knowledgeable as he created the four Vedas, the fountainhead of all knowledge in creation. He has four heads indicating that he is ever vigilant and alert about everything that is happening anywhere. He is the great arbiter for the Gods and they approach him first whenever they face any problem because he knows the correct answer and the way out. Looking closely, the Atma too has these virtues.

Indra is the Lord of all the Gods who are represented by the various forces of Nature and is also the Lord of the creature as he is the Lord of his organs. The word Indra is derived from the root 'Indri' meaning 'organs of the body' such as the five organs of perception and five organs of action. He is the Lord of rains indicating his prominence as the Lord of life, fertility and vibrancy because the rains and clouds bring life to this world. He has the vital wind force as his comrade-in-arm, indicating

his control over all forms of activity and movement that characteristic life in this world. He enjoys the best things in heaven, being the king of Gods. He is very powerful and holds the thunderbolt in his hands to subdue his enemies. The Atma also exhibits these virtues.

Shiva or *Rudra* is not only the concluder but the Lord of renunciates and ascetics. He is considered wise, enlightened, dispassionate and ever engrossed in meditation and contemplation, remaining detached from all allurements of this material world. Literally, Rudra refers to the angry and ruthless form of Shiva. So when the otherwise calm and peaceful Lord Shiva who is always meditating decides to conclude the creation, he assumes a ruthless form of Rudra who is ferocious and unforgiving.

The basic idea here is to emphasise the fact that the Atma is no ordinary entity but possesses the best qualities that exist in creation. In more senses than one it is better than the best because it combines in its self the virtues of all these three divine Gods in one place; it represents the divine qualities and virtues for which these Gods are so revered and praised as it represents them all at once, and it simultaneously has the stupendous magnificence and astounding glory of all these Gods that they possess separately.]

63. You (the Atma) are free from all ‘Prapanch’ (deceptions, deceits, falsehoods and delusions) and ‘Bhram’ (confusion and doubts caused by ignorance of the actual truth, which lead to perplexities and vexations). They do not influence and affect you at all.

You appear as all the living creatures and other forms of life in this creation. [This is because notwithstanding their physical bodies which create a sense of astounding degree of physical variation and diversity, the fundamental consciousness present in all things living is the same Atma.]

You appear everywhere. You have no ‘Sankalps’, i.e. the Atma does not make any vows and resolutions vis-à-vis the world; it remains totally dispassionate and detached from everything inspite of the fact that it is present everywhere and in all forms. [Refer Canto 3, verse no. 67; and Canto 5, verse nos. 2, 16, 97-98.]

You are known as the essence of the tenets and maxims of all the Vedas (scriptures) and can be known only by understanding their essence (63).

64. You (the Atma) are always and under all circumstances perpetually contented, fulfilled, happy, cheerful, joyous and blissful.

You do not waver and sway from your chosen path and remain ever steady and constant; you do not move and do anything. [In other words, you do not wonder aimlessly here and there in search of the truth about yourself, as it is known to you. Wherever you go you find the same consciousness, and so you have decided to stay calmly at one place for all times. You are not fickle and fidgety; you are not restless and edgy.]

You cannot be visibly seen because of your subtle and sublime form which is most miniscule and ethereal.

You are the objective of all spiritual efforts made even by the exalted Gods, including Vishnu the sustainer and protector of creation¹ (64).

[Note—¹This stanza establishes that the entity which is being addressed by the pronoun ‘you’ is not an ordinary creature or his individual Atma but the Supreme Being who is known as Brahm. Vishnu is one of the numerous Gods and manifestations of this Brahm. Vishnu represents one facet of Brahm, and that is Brahm’s function of sustaining and protecting the creation that he has created himself, and in this scenario Vishnu is only one small facet of Brahm representing only one of the numerous responsibilities, and not Brahm in its entirety. This fact is reinforced and reiterated in the following verses.]

65. Your true form is truthful and eternal enlightenment and consciousness. You are independent of all.

You are established as the Atma which is marked by being without any of the attributes and qualities that define the rest of this creation, as it is neutral and ethereal in nature. [That is, the Atma is devoid of any of the characteristic features that mark the rest of the mortal creation.] (65).

66. You (the Atma) are an embodiment of ‘Anand’ (happiness, joys, bliss and ecstasy). You are a supreme transcendental entity. In fact, you are unique and one of your kind.

You are an image of eternal consciousness and bliss; you are complete and fulfilled, lacking nothing and wanting nothing (66).

67. You (the Atma) are truthful; you are wise, omniscient and knowledgeable; you observe and inspect everything and are the Judge and Adjudicator.

You are an image of eternal and truthful beatitude and felicity; you personify these glorious and divine virtues in creation.

In fact, you are that supreme Lord of creation known as Vasudeo (one of the names of Vishnu; literally the Lord of all ‘Vasus’ which are the symbolic assets created by the supreme Brahm for the sustenance of creation, such as gold and other material wealth, besides fire, water and other elements etc.) (67).

68. You (the Atma) are ‘Amrit’, i.e. you are a treasury of all those divine and eclectic virtues possessed by the ambrosia and elixir that are lauded and sought after even by the Gods for their divine qualities. You are ‘Vibho’, i.e. you are the one who is omniscient, omnipresent, all-pervading, magnanimous, eternal, almighty, omnipotent, majestic and powerful Lord of all¹.

You show unique abilities of being ‘Chanchal’ and ‘A-chanchal’ at the same time. That is, in one instant you appear to be agile, restless, unsteady, energetic, active, volatile, mobile and playful, and in another instant you exhibit just the opposite qualities². In fact, you possess all the virtues that exist in this creation, virtues that determine the characteristic features of this creation, but at the same time you remain free from their influences and detached from them³.

That is why you are calm and peaceful on the one hand (because you are not involved in the day to day functioning of this world and its attending weariness), but are also actively involved in it on the other hand (because if you stop your activity the world would cease to be active and show signs of life), and hence you show restlessness and fickleness so characteristic of this world (68).

[Note—¹*Vibho* is an epithet usually used to describe the virtues of Lord Vishnu who is regarded as being synonymous with both Brahm, the attributeless and infinite Supreme Being who had manifested as Narayan, as well as the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic gross body of this creation. He is also called the ‘Chief Purush’.

‘Vibho’ also refers to Brahm, while the word ‘Purush’ usually refers to Lord Vishnu in the form of Viraat Purush. It depends upon the context in which the word is used. It is due to the joint efforts of Brahm and the Viraat Purush that this creation has come into being.

The *Atma* is called the Vibho for it possesses and exhibits all the glorious virtues of Brahm. Earlier, verse no. 67 of this Canto calls the Atma as a manifestation of Vasudeo, one of the names of Vishnu. When these two verses are read together, the inference becomes obvious—that is, the word is applicable to any entity that exhibits

the divine and glorious virtues that characterize the supreme transcendental Brahm, the Supreme Being and Lord of creation. Here, both the Atma as well as Vishnu are honoured by the title of Vibho.

Canto 2 of this Upanishad unequivocally asserts that the Atma is 'Chinmaya'—i.e. it is eternally enlightened, wise and awakened as well as pure consciousness personified. It is the Lord of creation, hence it is Vibho.

²This is quite easily understandable when we closely observe the world around us. Since all life forms are said to have the Atma inherently present in them, they are always of the move because anything that has life would show movement. The constant shaking of the leaves on a huge banyan tree, the constant movement of the wind and the flow of the water of the river, the incessant hustle and bustle of a busy city life or movement of the clouds in the sky, the constant rotation of the earth, the rising of the day in one part of the earth and the advent of the night in the other—all are clear indications of the fact that the world which has the Atma in it would constantly remain on the move, it would be for ever active and restless. This is one aspect of the astounding manifestation of the Atma.

The other aspect is as stunning, for on the other hand we have the mountain, the tree, the rock and the surface of the earth, we have the deeply meditating ascetic and the embryo lying motionless in the mother's womb—they too are part of this world but they show no emotions and restlessness; they are immobile. But this does not mean that they do not have the Atma in them. Anything that exists is certainly 'true', and anything can be 'true' only if it has the Atma. This is the uniqueness of the Atma—that it shows opposite characteristics that defy logic and explanation.

Let us take another example. A renunciate monk is unruffled by the charms of this glamorous world, he remain steady in his path of monk-hood, while the city dweller rarely finds time to rest and find peace for himself, he has one after another goals to accomplish. Both have the same Atma; one is eternally rested while the other is never at peace with himself. Thus we see that the Atma can be restful and restless at the same time.

³The Atma in its vast macrocosmic form as Brahm indeed possesses all the virtues conceivable in creation for the simple reason that it is not only the creator of this creation but permeates throughout it, weaving itself intricately in its texture, warping and wefting uniformly in it, intimately involved in the working of this creation. The Atma cannot remain aloof from this world if it has to control it from both the outside as well as the inside. That is why the Atma is said to encompass the entire creation, enclosing and submerging it from all sides, while at the same time permeating throughout it uniformly from its inside much like a piece of sponge is soaked in water. The Atma is therefore fully 'involved' in this creation.

But this is only half the picture, for the Atma possesses the unique ability to remain detached from all this at the same time of its involvement. This is because it possesses such eclectic virtues as dispassion, detachment, renunciation, indifference, non-involvement, non-commitment etc.]

69. You (the Atma) are the supreme Authority that is self radiant and self illuminated. You illuminate this world in the form of consciousness. Or in other words, you manifest your authoritative presence in the form of the divine light that effuses from you and which lights (enlightens and activates) the world by injecting life and consciousness in it¹. Indeed, your authority is not an ordinary one, but it is supreme and transcendental, it is inviolable and unchallenged. You possess and personify all the powers and authorities that exist in this creation.

You represent the citadel of all achievements and successes, you are eternally fulfilled, fully successful in achieving all acclaim, and are well endowed with all imaginable mystical powers and potentials. But at the same time you are much beyond these achievements and remain indifferent to such acclaims and honours; they

do not influence you, and your potentials, powers and authority cannot be measured by these successes and achievements (69).

[Note--¹That is, the Atma does not require some other source to show it light and give it its authority. It generates its own power and has its own potentials which it exercises under its own will and authority. Here the word 'light' refers to the Atma's wisdom and enlightenment as well as the halo of its divinity that effuses from it and shows the world its light much like the sun in the sky which is self illuminated and lights up the entire world by its bright light.]

70. You (the Atma) are the Lord who is most ethereal, sublime and subtle in nature. But to compare you with the atom would be wrong, because you are smaller and subtler than it. Being so miniscule and microcosmic in form, you do not apparently seem to have an existence, but the miracle is nothing exists without you (70).

71. You (the Atma) do not have any physical attributes, characteristic features and definable qualities, and therefore you cannot be visualised, seen or observed in the physical sense in this world. You are 'Nirvikar', i.e. have no faults and taints; you are 'Niraamaye', i.e. you are spiritually healthy and without any moral or physical ailments or tainting affects that are like a disease that might afflict a person's spiritual well being.

You are invariably present in an imperceptible form but as an integral part of the cosmic 'Naad' from which all forms of sound have come into being. But at the same time, you do not pulsate and oscillate like the sound element which moves in the form of waves from one place to another. You are not limited to any one place or direction from where the sound appears to come from, for you are omnipresent and all-pervading in a uniform and universal manner (71).

72. You (the Atma) should see yourself as distinct from Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer and protector, and Ishan (Shiva) the concluder¹. [Refer Canto 5, verse nos. 51-52; Canto 6, verse no. 17.]

You should see your 'true self' which remains after all such divine forms of your 'self' (such as Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva) are removed from consideration. With this self-realisation, you would be filled with extreme ecstasy and happiness (because you would become the eternal, transcendental and supreme Lord of everything that exists, including these three Gods of the Trinity). You should enjoy this enlightened view of your exalted 'self' and remain submerged in it; you should bathe in it, soak in its glory and drench yourself in its exhilarating euphoria (72).

[Note—¹These three Gods of the Trinity have specific functions, and though they represent the supreme Brahm their role is limited by their respective functions. For example, Brahma is assigned the job of creation, Vishnu sustains and protects, and Shiva deals with ending what has come into being when its time is up. In contrast, the Atma has been treated as being equivalent to the supreme Brahm himself, and obviously it is far more superior to these three Gods individually. Further, these Gods have been depicted as having one or the other form in the Purans, but the Atma has no features and forms whatsoever.]

73. You (the Atma) should live with all dignity and honour in your own kingdom (i.e. you should remain like a King, being ever contented with yourself and your divine inheritance, and not bother yourself at peeping here and there in some other king's kingdom to determine who is superior!). But you should not be proud of your divine qualities; you should not let yourself feel superior to others because of your exalted

and divine stature. You should be very modest and sober, very polite, gentle and cultured in your demeanors. You must see and ensure that your reputation as the one who has realised his 'true self' must not be tarnished by any of your actions and deeds; see who you 'truly' are and behave accordingly (73).

74. Be certain that you move yourself, you make your own efforts. [That is, there is no one to motivate you and make you do or not do anything. You decide for yourself; you make efforts to accomplish your wishes out of your own free will.]

Your true form (as the Atma, the pure cosmic Consciousness) is infinite and measureless as you are eternal and without an end. 'I or Me'—this term applies to your true self; this is your real form. Be certain about it (74).

75. All the numerous 'Prapanch'¹ of the world have no pith and substance in them. They are all deluding and false in nature. Therefore, all that is seen in this world as well as the seer who sees these scenes and believes them to be for real—both of them do not have any truth in them².

They are like the non-existent horns of a rabbit³ (75).

[Note--¹All the things that are done, seen and observed in this world which are fundamentally fallacious, artificial and deluding in nature are categorised as *Prapanch*. Since this world itself has no real existence and is nevertheless transient and perishable, these things and the deeds done by the creature should not bother the Atma which should be more concerned with things of higher value and focus its attention on things that are real and have true substance in them. The word *Prapanch* covers all worldly deceptions, delusions, tricks, mischief, maverism, cunning, deceit, conceit, fraud, artificiality, illusions, deceptions, falsehoods and concealments. Refer Canto 5, verse no. 33 in this context.

²The scene is false because the world does not exist, and the person who sees them and believes them to be true is deluded and is hallucinating like a thirsty man who begins to see real water in a mirage in the hot desert sand.

³The rabbit has no horns, but when it raises its ears they appear to be like horns when viewed from a distance.]

76. [In the context of what has been said above, the spiritual aspirant is exhorted to treat the entire creation as false and illusive. The long list in the following verse nos. 76-88 ½ enumerate such individual entities that constitute this creation and which should be regarded as illusive and not of any spiritual importance.]

The principal elements such as earth, water, fire, wind/air, sky/space, Mana (mind), Buddhi (intellect), Ahankar (the sense of false pride, egoism and arrogance), Tej (energy), Bhuvan Mandals (all the different 14 worlds and their respective ecosystems; the universes; the entire cosmos); (76).

77. The ruin or destruction, birth or coming back to life, what appears to be true (but is actually not), the concept of Punya and Paap (that which is good and auspicious as well as bad and inauspicious respectively), Jaya (victory) and its opposite (defeat), Raag (attachment and infatuations), Kaam (worldly desires, lust and passions), Krodh (anger, indignation, wrathfulness), Lobh (greed, rapacity and yearning), Dhyan (remembrance; contemplation and memory; to ponder and think deeply), Dhyeya (the object of contemplation; the target or aim of any enterprise), Gunas (virtues and qualities; the 3 basic qualities in all the creatures—such as Sata, Raja and Tama), Param (something that is the best and most exalted; something which is superior as compared to others); (77).

78. The Guru (the teacher and moral preceptor), Shishya (disciple; student), Updesh (discourses and instructions), the notion of 'Adi and Anta' (a beginning and an end respectively), Shamam (serenity, peace and tranquility), Shubham (auspiciousness and holiness), the concept of Bhut, Vartaman and Bhavishya (the past, the present and the future respectively), the Lakshya and Lakshan (what is aimed for and what are its characteristic distinguishing features respectively), the concept of Dwaye and Advaye (duality and non-duality respectively); (78).

79. The concept of Sham (control over the senses), Vichar (thoughts and contemplation), Snantosh (satisfaction and contentedness in whatever is available, without desiring more), Bhokta and Bhojya (the consumer who consumes some material thing; the sufferer who suffers from something; the one who enjoys something of enjoyment), Yam and other such eight branches of Yoga¹, the notion of Gaman and Aagaman (departure and arrival; going and coming respectively) as well as none of them (i.e. remaining at a place without showing any movement; to be steady and unwavering); (79).

[Note—¹The eight limbs or branches of Yoga are the following-- According to Patanjali who is considered to be the greatest exponent of Yoga, the latter consists of 8-fold path. These are briefly the following—(1) 'Yam' or self restraint of the senses; (2) 'Niyam' or observance of certain sacrosanct rules; (3) 'Aasan' or postures for meditation; (4) 'Pranyam' or breath control exercises for purification of the body and mind; (5) 'Pratyahar' or withdrawal of the mind and its control; (6) 'Dhaarna' or having a firm conviction, faith and belief on the sanctity and truthfulness of the chosen path; (7) 'Dhyan' or contemplation and concentration of the faculties of the mind and intellect; and (8) 'Samadhi' or a perpetual trance-like state in which the aspirant loses all awareness of the external world and even himself, and remains perpetually in meditation. These eight fold path of Yoga have been listed in *Varaaha Upanishad*, canto 5, verse no. 12—12 ½ of the Krishana Yajur Veda tradition.

The *Mandal Brahmin Upanishad* of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition describes these terms in detail in its Brahmin (canto) 1, section 1, verse nos. 3-10.]

80. The concept of Adi and Anta (beginning and end respectively), Antarang (something that is inward looking; the inner self of the creature), the notion of Graahya and Tajya (something worth accepting and the other worth rejecting or leaving alone respectively), the Gods Hari (Vishnu), Shiva, Indra and his companion Mana (here referring to the different organs of the creature which are controlled by the mind), the three states of existence¹; (80).

[Note—¹The three states of existence of the consciousness are the waking state, the dreaming state and the deep sleep state. It also might mean the three phases in the life of a creature such as birth, the entire span of life and death, or past, present and future.]

81. All the twenty four Tattwas (elements in creation)¹, the four Saadhans (spiritual means)², the notion that distinction exists between two category of peoples, one belonging to one's own race, class, caste or clan and therefore treated as one's kith, kin and compatriot, while the other category of peoples are treated as aliens and strangers who are looked upon with distrust, suspicion and skepticism, the impression that there is a difference between the different types of worlds³ in existence; (81).

[Note—¹The *twenty four Tattwas* are the following—According to Harvansha Puran, 14840, and Mahabharat, xii, 11242, there are twenty-four basic elements or Tattwas. These twenty-four fundamental Elements or Tattwas are the essential ingredients

which go in to make up the body of a creature, and they are—(a) Prakriti (nature, inherent tendencies and inclinations, the fundamental truth about anything that decide its character and existential mode); (b) Buddhi (intellect, wisdom, discrimination); (c) Ahankar (pride, ego, arrogance, haughtiness); (d) the eleven organs (five organs of perceptions—eye, ear, nose, skin and tongue; five organs of action—hands, legs, mouth, genitals and excretory; one organ of intelligence—mind); and (e) the five vital Prans (the vital winds that regulate life in a creature—Pran or the life giving breath, Apaana or the wind which passes down the intestines and regulates digestion and excretion, Samaana or the wind that helps in even distribution of nourishment in the body, Vyana or the wind that maintains equilibrium in the body, and Udaana or the wind that helps to rise); and (f) the five perceptions (sight, touch, smell, taste and hearing) bringing the total to $= 1+1+1+1+5+5 = 24$.

²The *four Saadhans* are called 'Saadhan Chatushtya' and the term refers to the four fold spiritual disciplines in the philosophy of Advaita Vedanta. They are the following—(1) Vivek (wisdom and discrimination; intelligent interpretation of given set of information to arrive at the optimum solution; the best use of the faculty of thinking and contemplation to separate the grain from the chaff. (2) Vairagya (total renunciation and dispassion; a sense of complete detachment and non-involvement. (3) Sam-drishtak (the group of six spiritual disciplines having six steps such as Sam or tranquility and calmness, Dama or self restraint or self control, Uparati or the ability of the external sense organs to refrain from involvement in and pursuit of the sense objects in this material world, Titiksha or forbearance and tolerance, Shraddha or unwavering faith, conviction and belief in one's spiritual path, and Samaadhaan or concentration and finding of solutions to vexing spiritual problems by focusing of the faculty of mind and intellect to remove doubts and confusions). And, (4) Mumuksha (desire for liberation and deliverance of the soul; seeking the soul's emancipation and salvation).

³There are said to be *fourteen worlds* according to the Padma Puran. These are the following—(a) The upper worlds called Urdhava Lokas are seven in number— (i) Bhu, (ii) Bhuvha, (iii) Swaha, (iv) Maha, (v) Janaha, (vi) Tapaha, and (vii) Satyam. (b) The seven nether worlds called Adhaha Loka— (i) Atal, (ii) Vital, (iii) Satal, (iv) Rasaatal, (v) Talaatal, (vi) Mahaatal, and (vii) Paataal. The total number of Lokas is, therefore, fourteen.]

82. All the Varnas (the four classes in which the society has been divided by ancients for the purpose of delegation of powers and smooth functioning of the society)¹, the Ashrams (the four phases in which the entire life span of a man is divided by the ancients)², along with their respective codes of conduct, all the Mantras and Tantras (letters, words and phrases etc. used as magical formulae in spiritual practices along with the magical charms and mystical instruments used for occult worship), all manifestations and forms that Vidya (knowledge, skills, expertise and erudition) and its opposite counterpart called the Avidya (lack of these virtues), all the Vedas, all that exist in the form mobile creatures and immobile things; (82).

[Note—¹The *four Varnas*—The Hindu society has been divided into four sections or classes by ancient sages to regulate its functioning by delegation of authority and clearly specifying the jobs each section is supposed to do to maintain order and system in the world, to prevent overlapping of functions and avoid anarchy and chaos. These four sections are— (a) Brahmins*—the learned and teaching class; a wise one well-versed in the knowledge of the ultimate Truth about the supernatural Being called Brahm. They also presided over religious functions as priests, because these functions were central to life in the Vedic period; (b) Kshatriyas—they were the warrior, fighting, kingly class. They were assigned the job of giving protection to the society, dispensing justice and maintaining general law and order. (c) Vaishyas—they were the trading and farming class responsible for commerce and wealth generation.

They provided for the necessities for a comfortable life. And finally (d) the Shudras—the service class of people whose main function was to free the other three classes from the humdrums of daily chores and concentrate their energies to the particular jobs assigned to those classes to which they belonged.

*The salient features of Brahmins are the following—they should possess these noble qualities—(1) ‘Riju’-be expert in the Rig and the Yajur Vedas, (2) ‘Tapa’-should be involved in doing penances, observing austerities and enduring sufferings for the welfare of the soul and the society, (3) ‘Santosh’-be contented and satisfied, (4) ‘Kshamaa’-to be forgiving and tolerant, (5) ‘Sheel’-to have such virtues as good character, dignity, decorum and virtuousness, (6) ‘Jitendriya’-to have self control over the sense organs, (7) ‘Data’-to be a giver, one who sacrifices his own interests for the benefit of others, (8) ‘Gyani’-one who is well learned, wise, enlightened and erudite, (9) ‘Dayaalu’-to be merciful and compassionate. [Shatpath Brahmin.] An entire Upanishad called Vajra-shuchiko-panishad, belonging to the Sam Veda tradition is devoted to the subject.

These four classes of the human race were created from the single father, the Viraat or Brahma. Their origins are indicative of the different jobs that they were assigned so as to enable the creator perform the task of governance just like a king assigns separate jobs to his different ministers. But it must be clearly understood here that each class of the human race was like a part of the body of the Supreme Being, and even as a man feels disfigured and handicapped as well as feels the pain equally if his leg is cut off from the rest of his body as he feels when his arm or head is severed, the Lord feels betrayed and hurt when even one of his sons is subjected to humiliation and pain. The four classes had specific jobs cut for them so that the society could function smoothly.

The Brahmins have their origin from the mouth of Brahma the creator. Since the mouth is used to give advice and teach others, the primary job of the Brahmins was to act as moral guide to their brethren. The four Vedas, which are repository of all knowledge that exist, were also created from the mouth of Brahma; hence these Brahmins were considered most wise and learned. The arms are metaphors for strength and powers; they are used to protect and help others. Hence, the Kshatriyas, who were created from the arms of Brahma, were those sons of his who would give the needed protection and security to their other brethren. In order to feed his creation, Brahma had to toil and labour to provide for the maintenance and financial and material well being of the society for merely teaching and protecting would not suffice without some one to take care of the other necessities of life. So he created the Vaishyas from his thighs, symbolising labour, to pick up the mantle of mundane affairs of life. But there must be someone who would do the daily chores, such as tilling the fields, doing the harvesting, washing and cleaning, and all other such odd jobs. This was assigned to the Shudras created from Brahma’s feet symbolising service.

None of these classes were meant to be inferior or superior to one another; they were all parts of the body of the same Brahma. In fact, the leg bears the burden of the body; just imagine what would have happened if Brahma had not created anyone from his legs? How would the Brahmin walk, how would the Kshatriya fight, and how would the Vaishya do his commercial activities if he could not walk? Similar arguments can be applied to other classes. See also Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, 1/4/11-15, and Aitereyo-panishad, 1/1/4.

²The *four Ashrams*—The life of a Hindu man is divided into four segments or Ashrams—(a) Brahmacharya—this is the 1st phase of life in which a person studies the scriptures under the tutelage of a wise teacher. This phase of life is marked by austerities, keeping of vows, observing celibacy, abstinence and continence as well as leading a regimental life style, (b) Grihasta—when a person has studied and prepared himself to face the world, he comes back to his house and enters the 2nd phase called

Grihasta Ashram which is a householder life. He marries, raises a family, produces wealth and helps to carry forward the cycle of creation. This is the most important and enjoyable phase as well as the most tough one because on the one hand there are the comforts and pleasure of the world to be enjoyed, and on the other hand there are the various tribulations and miseries of a family life and dealings with this deceptive world with all their accompanying horrifying problems, (c) Vanprastha—this is the 3rd phase when a man hands over the responsibilities of the world to his heirs and renounces his attachments to the house as well as the world, and heads for the forest, leaving the home for his next generation. It is now that he goes on pilgrimage and prepares for the final stage of his life, and (d) Sanyas—this is the 4th and last stage of life when there is complete cutting off of all the ties with the world, spending time in contemplation and meditation, living a life of total renunciation and begging for food, and single mindedly aiming for emancipation and salvation. This phase of Sanyas also has many stages depending upon the spiritual elevation and accomplishments of the aspirant, viz. Kutichak, Bahudak, Hansa, Paramhans, Turiyatit and Avadhut.

These four Ashrams, their characteristic features and virtues are described in detail in an Upanishad called ‘Ashramo-panishad’ belonging to the Atharva Veda tradition.]

83. The concept of Bandha (to be tied in fetters; to be shackled) and its opposite counterpart, the concept of Moksha (liberation and deliverance; emancipation and salvation of the soul), the concept of Gyan (knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment; erudition and sagacity) and its superior counterpart known as Vigyan (the concept of putting this knowledge to test and verifying its truth and effectiveness), the concept of Bodha (awareness of anything, especially spiritual truths and self realisation) and its opposite concept of Abodha (ignorance and lack of awareness; lack of intelligence; stupidity), the concept of Dvaita (duality) and its opposite concept of Advaita (non-duality) and all that is said and debated about such concepts; (83).

84. All the tenets and doctrines of the Vedas, all the conclusions drawn by the numerous Purans, all the different theories propounded by numerous people and deductions arrived at by them; (84).

85. All things that are remembered and are the subject matter of thought and memory, all things about which the creature and his mind makes resolutions and vows to accomplish them, all things that the intellect rationalizes, deduces and decides about, all that is heard and learnt upon being told by one’s Guru (teacher and advisor); (85).

86. All that about which anything is said or elucidated upon, all that which has been preached by the learned teacher or taught by him, all that which can be perceived or known by the means of the sense organs of the body, all that which has been thought of; (86).

87. All that which can be determined by the application of philosophical aspects of Law as well as the great Vedas, all that exists in this vast creation sustained and protected by Vishnu and extinguished by Shiva; (87).

88. All that is created by Brahma in this world, all the different things and concepts that are ever visualised or conceptualised in this world, all the varying deeds and actions in this creation starting from the very beginning, all the deductions and affirmations made by the Purans; (88).

89. All the philosophies of the Upanishads and their essential meanings—verily, all of them (from verse nos. 76 to 89) are like the illusive horns of a rabbit¹ (88 ½) .

‘I am the body (i.e. my true self is the body; my true identity is the physical body and I am known by it)’—this conception is merely an imagination of the mind. It is the mind that determines arbitrarily that the creature’s true self is the body and then prevails upon the intellect and the creature to belief this erroneous idea that is imposed on the unsuspecting creature (89).

[Note—¹The non-existent horn of a rabbit is used brilliantly as a metaphor to describe the falsehood and the illusionary nature of the world in Canto 6, verse nos. 74, 90 also.]

90. [Verse nos. 90-96 highlight the metaphysical truth that the root cause of all miseries that torment a creature is his misplaced belief that his gross physical body is his true identity instead of the pure conscious soul known as the Atma.]

The erroneous concept of ‘I am the body’, or that ‘my true self and my identity is the physical body (and not the pure conscious Atma or soul)’ is the root cause of all the great delusions associated with this vast artificial world and its attending problems. This fallacious and misconceived deduction of the mind that this world is ‘I or me’ is at the base of all perplexities, vexations, doubts and confusions that mire the creature’s spiritual freedom and result in trapping him into a snare (90).

91. This determination, this belief that the ‘I am the body’ is the cause of all sorrows, miseries, pains and grief that overwhelm all the creatures in this world. This erroneous conception that ‘I am the body’ is the path that leads one to hell (i.e. it leads him to a perpetual life of miseries and torments that never seem to come to an end) (91).

92. This erroneous conception of the creature that ‘I am the body’ is the root cause of the creation of this vast and wild world of so many uncountable delusions. This misplaced notion that ‘I am the body’ is the reason why all the knots that appear as gnarls upon the subtle heart exist (92).

93. The false knowledge and misconceived awareness of the existence of the self as the body (and not as the pure conscious soul or Atma) is known as Agyan or lack of truthful knowledge and predominance of ignorance. ‘I am the body’—this fallacious idea is totally wrong, ill-conceived, unwarranted and misplaced (93).

94. ‘I am the body’—the intellect that thinks in this erroneous way is the cause of all ignorance and delusions that the creature suffers from¹.

This ignorance, that the body is one’s true self, gives rise to the sense of duality in this world² (94).

[Note--¹This is because the intellect is supposed to be the wise council for the creature, and when this supposedly wise advisor is himself deluded, it is natural that the advice it gives to its principal, the creature, would be not up to the mark of erudition and sagacity that is expected of it.]

²This is because the person begins to see distinction between two individuals having different bodies, instead of realising the spiritual truth behind this illusive appearance. This ignorant person forgets that, one, both these two individuals have the same Atma in them, and second, the body is, in any case, perishable and gross, and therefore it cannot be the eternal consciousness that has been described as the

‘pure self’ and so much lauded by the scriptures. This distinction between two entities that are fundamentally one and inseparable from one another is called Duality, or the philosophy of ‘Dwaitya’.]

95. The firm belief that the body is the true self of the creature is called Agyan or lack of truthful knowledge or ignorance of the reality. It is a limited knowledge about the creature which is detached from the truth¹ (95).

[Note—¹This knowledge is ‘limited’ and ‘detached from the truth’ because the word creature or any living being for that matter includes the body in its meaning as no one can have a physical presence in this world without a body. In fact the Atma, which is regarded as the ‘true’ self and identity of the creature, finds its dwelling inside this physical gross body; without the body the Atma would be an ethereal spirit and not known as the creature in the usual sense the word is used. So the body is as much an identity of the living being as his soul, the only misconception is to treat this body as the ‘true self’ instead of the Atma being given this honour.]

96. ‘I am the body’—this great delusion and misconception is the greatest cause of all sins because it pulls the creature away from the truth. ‘I am the body’—this thought is like the darkness of night that creates so many phantoms in the form of worldly desires, passions, rapacity and yearnings (96).

97. Whatever kind of Sankalp¹ there is in this world is a harbinger and herald of all the types of worldly miseries and torments, called the ‘Traitap’², from which the creature suffers. This Sankalp creates in its wake all sorts of problems for the creature—such as Kaam (desires, lust, passions and yearnings), Krodh (anger, indignation), Bandhan (literally meaning fetters and shackles; to get bogged down in the marshy swamp represented by worldly delusions as well as the various emotions and sentiments that continue to heave like waves in the ocean, and getting tied to the artificial world inspite of being aware of its horrendous consequences) and all other types of Dukha (sorrows, miseries, torments, pains, sufferings and grief). It is also the genesis of all types of faults and errors that one develops in one’s perception of the world, and they act like a Kaal or death-trap for the creature (because they prevent his liberation and deliverance from all the miseries and torments that are so typical of this world, and instead keeps him chained to this deluding and artificial world for a long time)³ (97).

[Note—¹The word *Sankalp* refers to the various ambitions, desires and aspirations that a creature has, and his decision, his volition, his firm determination, the strong vows and resolutions that he makes in order to be successful in fulfilling them. All these are all collectively called Sankalp. It is under the influence of delusions and erroneous conception of the ‘truth’ about the world and its material objects as well as about his own self and the real goal of life and spiritual well being that one makes numerous ambitions and have so many aspirations that impels him to make so many resolutions and vows, and then these decisions drive him to do so many things in the hope of achieving that illusive success in obtaining eternal well being and peace for himself which he so eagerly yearns for. These different Sankalps are therefore motivated and driven by delusions and erroneous conception of the ‘truth’. This concept is described in detail in Chandogya Upanishad, canto 7, section 4.

The various desires and aspirations that a creature has in relation to this material world creates in its wake a chain of problems because the creature makes so many efforts to be successful in his endeavour to fulfill these desires and aspirations which prove very illusive for him. Even if they are somehow successfully accomplished, they are very transient and the creature has to make fresh efforts to retain them. The

charm and taste of success inspires him to achieve more and more, and thus he keeps on running behind the illusive mirage of artificial world for eternity. Nothing satisfies him and nothing that he has already acquired lasts for any sustainable time. He spends his entire life-span in pursuit of a mirage, dies yearning for success and acclaim, but they evade him. So he takes another birth and undergoes another round of miseries and torments associated with the cycle of birth and death along with the perpetual mental and bodily agonies that he has to suffer in this world. His basic spiritual requirement of acquiring eternal rest, peace, tranquility, succour and solace are never fulfilled. On the other hand, these Sankalps make him fall into a pit of slushy delusions that keep him bogged down for a long time till he wakes up to the reality and discovers the truth about the falsehood of this futile worldly pursuit. He realises that eternal and truthful peace and tranquility, eternal and truthful beatitude and felicity, eternal and truthful happiness and joy, eternal and truthful well being and welfare are only available when he shuns making and having all worldly Sankalps. Refer also to Canto 3, verse no. 67; Canto 5, verse nos. 2, 5, 16, 63.

²The *Traitaps* are the fears or torments arising from the following:--(a) Adhi-bhautik—related to terrestrial creatures such as enemies, cruel kings and wild animals; (b) Adhi-daivik—related to unfavourable Gods and malignant stars; and (c) Adhi-daihik—related to the body such as diseases and horrors of old age etc.

³It is but obvious that when one's desires (Kaam) are not fulfilled, when he is not able to achieve success in his pursuit of certain objective in the way he wants, he is filled with anger (Krodh), vehemence and frustration. He begins to treat everything that appear to him as obstacles in his dream realisation with utter contempt and disdain. This creates an atmosphere of ill-will and distrust, leading to perpetual sense of insecurity and agitation. They create a lot of miseries and pains for the creature and rob him of his peace and happiness (Dukha). All these act as fetters that bind the creature to this world (Bandhan) of endless desires and efforts to fulfill them, creating newer desires and newer efforts to retain whatever has already been successfully acquired. These are like numerous fetters of this deluding world (Vishwa Bandh and Dosh) that trap him in their vice-like grip for seemingly a perpetual life of death and birth (Kaal).]

98. All the different Sankalps are created by the Mana¹ (i.e. by the mind and heart because these are the two entities in a creature's body that make him have desires and then yearn for their fulfillment). Therefore, this Mana is the creator of the entire web known as this deluding and artificial world which is the fountainhead of all miseries from which the creature suffers. Hence, this Mana is his greatest enemy.

Mana not only represents the immediate world of the creature but even the distant ones in the future² (98).

[Note—¹The word *Mana* has a broad meaning, covering the combined apparatus of the subjective mind and the heart that has emotions and sentiments. This is because they both work in conjunction. Mana refers to the various emotions and thoughts; the dispositions and inclinations; the intentions, ideas and purpose of the mind; the wishes, attractions and desires of the heart; the attractions that tempt the mind, causing it to fix its attention in these attractions, thereby also dragging the heart along which begins to love and get attached to these attractions. All these factors have a composite effect on the sub-conscious.[Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 4, verse no.38-39; the concept has been elaborately described in Chandogya Upanishad, canto 7, section 3.]

Heart is the center where all types of emotions and sentiments have their origin. On the other hand, the subjective mind and the objective intellect are the two components which are like the two limbs of the brain and they work in close cooperation with each other, being the controlling center where all sorts of thoughts and decisions made by a creature are centered.

It is the mind that perceives this world, receives its inputs by way of stimuli and perceptions, processes them, stores them for future referral, instructs the organs of action to act, gives the intellect its feedback of what it has made of the world, thereby helping the intellect to make deductions and take decisions. Under ordinary circumstances, the mind and intellect work in close coordination and in a systematic and analytical manner if left to their own accord, but in practice the heart with its own baggage of emotions and sentiments not only interferes with their functioning but also influences their actions. The resultant effect is that the action of the creature is a composite of these three units—viz. the mind, the intellect and the heart. So though the Mana is technically the mind according to the strict dictionary meaning, in practice the three units are to be taken together if we are to truthfully understand how the Mana works.

For instance, the process of learning anything is the strict prerogative of the mind, then why do we say 'learn by heart'? It is because if the heart is not included in the process of learning, the mind alone would not be able to sufficiently concentrate and sustain this concentration to learn anything.

The Mana plays a pivotal role in the creature falling into the trap of worldly delusions or being liberated and delivered from it. Further, all Mantras have had their origin in the mind and heart of ancient sages and seers when they contemplated upon any aspect of Divinity and arrived at some profound spiritual Truth in this creation. The great Maha Vakyas were then 'revealed' to them in their meditative trance. Hence the importance and primary source of everything in this creation as the Mana cannot be neglected or even over-emphasised.

²This is because when one has the notion of something existing in some distant point in time then he would desire it and then set about making long term efforts which would bear fruits in some distant time. One plans for his future, accumulates wealth and provides for his future, little realising that one is not certain of the next moment so what to talk of something that is simply imaginary and like a castle in the air. The concept of 'future' is a very hypothetical notion because, for one, it is uncertain and like the dark and bottomless void of the space; it is like a black hole in the cosmos for it is very easy to plunge into it but impossible to get out of it. Who can ever delineate the boundary of what constitutes 'future'? It is a very vague term, pointing to something that is indefinable, uncertain and imaginary. The 'next moment' is as much a 'future' as a time which is a hundred years from now because nothing is certain.]

99. It is the Mana (as described in verse no. 98) that is the fountainhead of greatest sorrows, miseries, torments and pains that afflict the creature. Mana is the cause of old age and infirmity, Mana is the cause of death (Kaal) and all the worldly taints and faults (Dosh) that trouble the creature (99).

[Note—It has often been proved that people who have become old by the body can achieve greatest of things during this particular period of life that they failed to achieve while in their prime of youth and health. Numerous examples exist when old people have produced the greatest of literary outputs, made the greatest of contribution to the society as well as to the philosophical and scientific thinking in their twilight years. It is often asserted that it is the man's mind that makes him old and not his body. Positively thinking people are as productive in old age as they were in their youth. Therefore, it is the Mana that decides what a man makes of his life. It is the Mana that makes or breaks the life of a man.]

100. It is the Mana (mind and heart) of the creature that makes all Sankalps (resolutions and volitions)¹. It is the Mana that produces the Chitta (attention, memory and thoughts; the sub-conscious)², and it is the Mana that produces Ahankar (sense of false self importance, pride and ego leading to arrogance)³ (100).

[Note--¹That is, the Atma, which is the true identity of the creature, does not make any Sankalps, and neither does the gross body. Rather, it is the Mana consisting of the complex of mind and heart which is the real culprits. First the heart begins to develop a desire and longing for something, and then the mind sits up to please the heart by planning how to successfully fulfill the heart's desires. On the other hand, it was the mind in the first place that had made the heart aware of the presence of certain things in this world by perceiving them and then deciding or determining whether or not they are good for the creature. It is the Mana that decides if the given thing would seem attractive to the creature, leading the creature to become sufficiently infatuated with it and start yearning for it. It is a symbiotic relationship in which both the mind and the heart play in concert for their own selfish ends without bothering about the long term welfare of the creature. That is why a wise creature should not see them as his friend but as an enemy number one.]

²The mind harbours the faculty of memory and thinking, and the heart keeps the mind engrossed in pursuing its objects, because if the heart loses interest in anything it would stop inspiring the mind from pursuing any objective with perseverance and diligence. The disillusioned and disinterested heart would pull the mind away from things it does not like, and instead divert its attention towards things it longs for. So, everything in this world exists and has value for the creature only as long as there is the existence of the Mana.

³When one has an active Mana, he develops so many Sankalps and the ability to fulfill them. He is proud of himself that he can think this and that and then go about achieving them. Only an able man can have any worthwhile Sankalps; for others it is an exercise in day-dreaming which has no real pith and substance. For instance, suppose a pauper's Mana makes a Sankalp to enjoy the comforts of king, can he ever do so? Such impossible and unattainable Sankalps made by the Mana lead to depression and a sense of inferiority complex in the creature. So a man who has an active Mana making achievable Sankalps becomes proud of his abilities and his prowess because he would be actually implement his Sankalps which would make him exult in his success. He develops ego and a sense of self importance. This is Ahankar.]

101-102. It is the Mana that is like the fetter represented by this world of artificiality and delusions. [This is because it is the Mana that not only makes a creature aware of the numerous attractions of the world but also makes the creature enchanted by them, and then get hooked to them.]

The mind and heart collectively called the Mana forms the so-called 'Antahakaran', literally the inner self of a creature¹.

The entire visible world is created by this Mana. So, it is the creator of the earth, the water (101); the Tej (fire and its energy), the subtle air and its moving counterpart called the wind element, the sky and its vast realm called the space along with the sound that fills this space of the sky (both in the cosmic form as the Naad as well as the general cacophony of worldly noise including the chatter of the individual words spoken by an individual on this planet) (102). [101-102.]

[Note—¹The mind controls the creature's thoughts and intellect, while his heart controls his emotions and sentiments. The Mana forms the subtle body of the creature, and hence it is called the inner being or *Antahakaran* of the creature. The other two components of the creature's existence are the physical body which is gross and consist of the external organs, and the causal body consisting of the bliss sheath enclosing the Atma, the pure consciousness. The body does not have any of the characteristic features of independent thinking and action like the Mana. In fact, the body is under the control of the Mana; it would do what the Mana wishes it to do. The Atma on the other hand is not concerned with any of the mundane things about the

world which the other two indulge in. The Atma does not think and longs for anything; it just sort of subtly empowers the whole structure of the creature's existence, consisting of his gross body and subtle body, to carry on with their respective functions as per the destiny reserved for them. The Atma is neutral and dispassionate, and therefore it is not the Mana which is fully submerged in having numerous Sankalps.

The word *Antahakaran* literally means the 'inner instrument' of the creature by which his mind works and receives the world. The word has two components—viz. 'Antha' meaning 'inner', and 'Karan' meaning 'instrument that causes the mind to work'. The external organs of the body such as the eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin which are the organs of perception physically receive the inputs from the external world, but their actual functioning is due to this Antahakaran or the inner instrument of the subtle body consisting of the mind and intellect complex because if the latter malfunctions the former are useless.

Out of the three states of existence of the creature, viz. the waking, the dreaming and the deep sleep states, the mind is active in the first two states only, and therefore the Antahakaran is related to only the first two states of existence.

The Antahakaran functions in four different ways and gets four different names according to these four functions. (1) It is called Chitta or sub-conscious mind and its ability to receive information and remember while performing the function of reception and retention. (2) It is called Mana or logical mind when it performs the function of questioning, doubting and willing. (3) It is called Buddhi or intellect when deducing, deciding and determining. And (4) it is called Ahankar or ego, self pride, arrogance of knowledge when it identifies itself with each of these functions—when it thinks that it has the ability to remember, to question and debate, to decide and will.

The word would therefore briefly mean the inner self of the creature consisting of the subtle body rather than the outer self consisting of the gross body. It is said to be one of the 19 Tattwas or essential elements that came into being at the very commencement of creation.

Antahakaran is variously described as having two, four or five components. The term Antahakaran has been described in Shaarirako-panishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse no. 4 as having four parts or dimensions. The Antahakaran with five dimensions or aspects have been described in Paingalo-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, in its Canto 1, verse no. 9, and in Canto 2, verse no. 3.]

103. It is the Mana that creates the awareness of the different sense perceptions for a creature, such as the sense of feeling that comes by touching something (which is done by the skin), the different visions and sights that are seen by the creature (which is done by the eye), the various tastes tasted by the creature (which is the job of the tongue), and the numerous aromas and fragrances that a creature smells (which is the function of the nose).

The existence of the body having the so-called 'Pancha Kosha' (the five sheaths)¹ is also due to the Mana. Likewise, the various states of existence such as Jagrat (waking), Swapna (dreaming), Shushupta (deep sleep) etc. are also due to the Mana (103).

[Note—¹The physical body of the creature has been divided into five components as follows--'Annamaye Kosh' or the food sheath, 'Pranmaye Kosh' or the vital wind sheath, 'Manomaye Kosh' or the mental sheath, 'Vigyanmaye Kosh' or the intellect sheath, and 'Anandmaye Kosh' or the bliss sheath. These sheaths cover the Atma or pure conscious self like various coverings or shrouds wrapping any object.]

104. Since the Mana has been already said to be the arbitrary creator of all that exists, it is natural therefore that even the different Dikpals (mythical Gods who support the

world from all corners), the Vasus (patron Gods of various assets needed in creation to sustain it), the Rudra (Lord Shiva), and Aditya (the Sun God)—all of them owe their existence to the Mana.

Likewise, all that is visible in this world as movable or immovable (such as mobile creatures, and immobile plants and trees), all perplexities, confusions and vexations created by such diverse things and apparently paradoxical situations—all of them are due to the effect of ignorance that envelops the Mana from all sides (and prevents it from realising and becoming aware of the reality and truth) (104).

105. Hence, whatever is established in this world by the virtue of the Mana having a Sankalp about it, i.e. whatever exists in this world because the mind has decided that it does exist in spite of the fact that it is not the real thing, are all illusive and imaginary; they are false and non-truths; they are misleading and erroneous.

The wise and learned teacher warns his dear disciple that all that is said about the existence of this world—that the world is true because it can be actually felt, seen, heard, smelt and tasted by the sense organs—is a deception and complete falsehood; nothing is true, nothing is true indeed! [The word ‘nothing’ is repeated twice to emphasise the negativity and the gravity of this observation as well as to point out the sincerity and finality with which this assertion is made. Everything is false because it is an imaginative creation of the Mana that has determined for itself that the world exists. Should the Mana decide one fine morning that the world does not exist for it, the world would actually stop bothering the creature. For instance, when the Mana decides that some music is attractive and good for the ears, the creature wishes to hear it. But the same Mana decides it is not so when it is under great emotional stress or when the body is physically uncomfortable due to a day’s hard work or when the man is sick. In this case, the same piece of music appears to be a nuisance and causes irritation to the ear.]

Verily, this is what this Upanishad affirms and asserts (105).

Canto 6

[This Canto reasserts what has already been said in earlier Cantos of this Upanishad. This is probably done to reaffirm and reiterate the metaphysical maxims and axioms said earlier, as well as to emphasise their significance and importance. Perhaps this was done by sage Ribhu to teach another bunch of disciples who were not present during his earlier discourse so that they could also benefit from what he had taught Nidagh. This Canto finally sums up the divine and glorious virtues of the supreme transcendental Divinity known as Brahm, as well as its representative the pure conscious Atma. This Canto employs the unique methodology of establishing the falsehood of this world by citing countless instances of highly incredulous things and saying that if such highly absurd things can be true then the world could also be true. Refer verse nos. 73-99 of this Canto. Another unique feature of this Canto is the use of the negation process called ‘Neti-Neti’, i.e. ‘not this, not this’—refer verse nos. 5-29 to eliminate all false conceptions that might cause confusions in the mind of the aspirant, and once his inner self is cleansed of all sorts of ideas as to what constitutes the ‘truth’ and what is ‘not the truth’, it then goes on to describe assertively ‘what *is*’ the truth known in metaphysical terms as the supreme transcendental universal cosmic

Consciousness called Brahm, and its counterpart that is known as the Atma of the creature—refer verse nos. 30-72.]

1. Sage Ribhu[#] continued with his preaching thus—‘You should treat everything and everyone of any real spiritual worth and tangible metaphysical value in this creation as being ‘Chinmaya’ (pure conscious Spirit that is self enlightened, wise and almighty). [Refer Canto 2 of this Upanishad.]

All such entities are an embodiment of ‘Sat, Chit and Anand’, i.e. they invariably possess such divine and eclectic virtues as being truthful (Sat), as being pure consciousness that is intelligent, wise, discriminating and most erudite (Chit), and as having the characteristic inherent qualities that are collectively called Anand—i.e. eternal and wholesome ecstasy, exhilaration, bliss, beatitude, felicity, happiness, joy, pleasure, cheerfulness, gaiety, and a sense of delight and merriment¹.

This divine and holy entity that is possessed of this unique and eclectic virtue of being Sat, Chit and Anand personified is indeed called ‘Advaita’ or non-dual (because it is one of its kind, having no equal or parallel)². [Refer Canto 2, verse nos. 2-23.] (1).

[Note--¹In other words, anything that has any ‘real value and worth’ in this world for the creature must have these qualities inherent in it. Otherwise, it is worthless. A creature should pursue something that is worthy of the effort made to acquire it, for otherwise it would be an effort spent in vain like running behind a mirage in search of water in a hot desert.

Everything that ‘lives’ must have ‘consciousness’ to be truly alive, and anything that is ‘true’ has tangible value and essence that gives real satisfaction and a sense of fulfillment. It would not vanish in thin air even without giving a notice like the mirage of the desert.

²In other words, if anything is ‘true’ then it must be irrefutably so because there should be no factor of doubt if anything is to be really ‘true’, and if anything is ‘not true’ then it must be ‘false’. Truth can be only one and not two, for then doubt arises as to which of the two is the real thing. It is either of the two, and not something mid-way. Therefore, the entity possessing the unique virtues of being Chinmaya and Sat-Chit-Anand is only one and not two. And this is known as the truthful Atma of the creation.

#A brief and interesting introduction to the two great sages Ribhu and his disciple Nidagh is included in Varaaha Upanishad, Chapter 30 of this volume.]

2. The eclectic and divine entity having the virtues of Sat, Chit and Anand (as described in verse no. 1) is only one and unique of its kind, and nothing else has this wholesome and eternal quality of being Sat, Chit and Anand at the same time.

Think that ‘I am an embodiment of Sat, Chit and Anand’, and all that comes under the ambit of the word ‘Kham¹’ is also Sat, Chit and Anand. [Refer Canto 6, verse no. 49.] (2).

[Note—¹The word *Kham* refers to the sky; the void of space; the heaven; the organs of perceptions in the body; the dot called Anuswar; a slit or door or exit point of the body which are nine in number—viz. mouth, two ears, two eyes, two nostrils, anus and genitals; mica; deeds; Gyan or knowledge; Brahma the creator. Refer page no. 321 of Sanskrit-Hindi Dictionary published by Chaukhamba Vidyabhavan, Varanasi.

In the metaphysical context, this observation means that the Atma of the spiritual aspirant possesses all the eclectic virtues and qualities that are possessed by the sky element—such as the fact that the sky is endless, vast, infinite, measureless, fathomless, taintless, all-pervading, all-encompassing and indescribable.

Refer Canto 5, verse no. 59 in this context.]

3. You are an embodiment of Sat, Chit and Anand, and I am too an embodiment of Sat, Chit and Anand (3).

4. Everything is Brahm; neither you nor I nor anyone else is anything but Brahm. [In other words, you and all other living beings in this creation are Brahm personified.] Indeed, nothing is true except Brahm; it is everywhere and in every point of time (as this divine and supreme transcendental entity is omnipresent, all-incorporating, all-pervading and all-encompassing in Nature). [Refer Canto 1, verse no. 17; Canto 3, verse nos. 60-74; Canto 6, verse nos. 31, 66.]

This Brahm is such a mysterious, enigmatic and esoteric supreme cosmic Authority that it cannot be known with the help of mere lifeless letters, words, phrases or sentences that are used to craft the tenets and axiomatic maxims of the Vedas and their doctrinal teachings¹. It is not something that is as lifeless as these letters, and the words and statements that these letters or words form (4).

[Note—¹That is, an attempt at knowing the supreme transcendental Being by merely searching him out in the letters and statements of the scriptures or their too literal a translation is an exercise in futility. These statements only indicate the general characteristic of Brahm, but it requires more to gain access to him than just plain reading of the text. A wise person is one who sees all the possible nuances and connotations of a given text and in the correct context in which they are said or written. He must be able to interpret and understand them correctly, and only such a man can give correct advice to others and himself lead a righteous and exemplary life. The correct and intelligent interpretation of the hidden meaning in any philosophy is of paramount importance, for otherwise it does more harm than good. For example, eating food is as integral to life as breathing fresh air, but simply gorging on unhealthy food just for the sake of its taste without paying heed to its nutritional value would be disastrous for the body.]

5. [Now, this supreme Brahm is said to be manifested as the divine Atma or pure consciousness of the creature, and lives as such not only in the creature's bosom but everywhere else in this creation, both in the visible as well as the invisible spectrum, right from the minuscule to the most colossus. In the following verses this Brahm in the form of the Atma is being described by the process of negation or elimination called 'Neti Neti', which is the standard adopted by the Vedas. This is a unique approach to say something authoritatively and conclusively about an entity to prove its authenticity and truthfulness by eliminating all possible individual ways in which it is usually perceived to be in existence to emphasise the point that the entity being described is much beyond the limited scope of how it is understood, and its truthful description is much beyond what is known about it till now.

Words cannot define Divinity and ethereal concepts. At the most, each epithet or honour that is given to this divine entity deals with one or the other facet of that wholesome entity, but it is a very narrow view of something that needs a holistic and 360⁰ approach to be fully understood. Assigning attributes, virtues, qualities and characteristics to Brahm or the Atma is not doing justice to them for they are much beyond the limitations imposed by the use of descriptive words. That is why 'Neti-Neti' is used in the scriptures to deny all possible ways one tries to bound in or hedge in the entity that cannot be bound in or hedged in.

Besides this point, Brahm is an entity that defies conventional ways of understanding anything, ways which are the standard norm in analyzing a thing in an empirical and logical fashion in this world. There are certain aspects of life that

cannot be contained in a glass vessel to be displayed to students in a laboratory of a college. These things cannot be explained in literal words; they cannot be physically demonstrated to prove that they are indeed a reality and not a figment of mere imagination.

Brahm is one such mysterious, enigmatic and esoteric Supreme Being who is best understood by first eliminating all possible criterions normally employed to define and judge anything in this world, because all the logics and arguments just aren't sufficient and potent enough instruments to completely and wholesomely describe Brahm, and then realise the latter's presence and existence by the best method to know him, and it is 'experience and witnessing him first hand in this entire creation'. It is easy said than done. This is the miracle of 'Advaita Vedanta' which says in essence that everything in this creation is Brahm and nothing but Brahm. It appears on the face of it that this axiom implies that even 'falsehood' is Brahm. It is not the case, because anything that is '*not truth*' is *not* Brahm, and since falsehood is 'non-truth' it cannot be Brahm!

Brahm is an entity that goes beyond the imagination and conception of the mind. All descriptions and all adjectives use words, and these words are totally incompetent, inapt and insufficient to describe something that goes beyond the wildest of imaginations of the man. Words cannot restrict an unrestricted entity within the parameter of their meanings and connotations and interpretations. Words have their limitations, but Brahm defies limitations. This is one reason why Brahm is compared to the sky element—refer verse no. 2 of this Canto. Refer also Canto 5, verse nos. 6, 9.]

It (the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm in the form of the Atma) has no middle, no beginning and no end (as it is eternal and infinite). It is not merely a simple statement of truth but is 'truth' personified. It has no fetters that shackle it to anything (for it is eternally free and independent).

It is therefore beyond the scope and purview of such notions as Dukh (sorrows and miseries), Sukh (comforts and pleasures), Maya (delusory effects) and Prakriti (nature and temperaments that differ from creature to creature, because the Atma is uniform and non-changing as well as unaffected by the vagaries of various factors of creation) (5).

6. It (the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm in the form of the Atma) is neither the gross body and its organs such as the mouth, the nose, the tongue, the palate, the teeth, the forehead, the inhaled breath or the exhaled breath (or Apan and Pran winds respectively) (6).

7. It (the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm in the form of the Atma) is neither the gross body of the creature consisting of the sweat pores or skin, the bones, the flesh, the blood, and urine or fluid content of the physical body, nor is it some other form of body that is different from this. It is neither far away or near. In fact, it has no physical body with an abdomen and a head or crown. [Refer Canto 4, verse no. 2; Canto 5, verse nos. 90-96.] (7).

8. It (the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm in the form of the Atma) is not the body having a hand that does any deed or the leg that moves and goes to places.

It is neither the different laws that govern existential behaviour in this creation, nor is it any text that promulgates such laws¹.

In other words, it is not possible for anyone to find or know the supreme Authority merely by reading the various Shastras or scriptural texts.

It is also not limited to any of the various states of existences in which the creature's consciousness exists, such as Jagrat (waking), Swapna (dreaming), Sushupta (deep sleep) states of existence (8).

[Note--¹In other words, it is not possible to pass any judgment about the nature of this Atma by observing the behaviour of any individual creature. For example, by seeing a man who acts wildly we cannot say that his 'Atma' is also wild just because his external behaviour is unconventional. Actually the enlightened view is that it is the deluded mind that makes the creature act wildly, but the Atma is neutral to such activities of the body. The two should not be confused with each other.]

9. It (the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm in the form of the Atma) is also not to be found in the fourth state of existence called Turiya as well as the fifth state that transcends it (i.e. the Tuiryateet state).

In fact, this supreme transcendental Being characterised by the virtues of truthful enlightenment and consciousness is to be found in all the planes of existence as it is omnipresent and all-incorporating in this creation. And it is indeed, therefore, in you as well.

It is such an esoteric, mysterious and enigmatic entity that to say that it is merely the exclusive domain of Adhyatmic study or spiritualism would be as fallacious a statement as delineating and confining it to the sphere of Adhibhautic or those things that are related to this world dominated by mortal creatures, and Adhidaivic or those that pertain to the heavenly Gods.

The Atma or Brahm is not deceitful and illusive like the delusions that have created this world. [In other words, the Atma is beyond the reach and definition of Maya.] (9).

10. It (the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm in the form of the Atma) cannot be exclusively defined by the three states of creation both at the microcosmic level as well as at the macrocosmic level. Therefore, it is not creation in any of its forms at the microcosmic level such as the Vishwa (the visible world as seen and experienced by the individual gross body of the creature which interacts with it), the Taijas (the subtle world that exists when the creature is in the dreaming state of existence), and the Pragya (the knowledge and enlightenment that exists within the causal body of the individual creature)¹.

Similarly, at the macrocosmic level of the creation, the Atma is not the Viraat (the sum total of all the gross bodies in creation), and neither is it the Sutra Atma (or Hiranyagarbha which is the sum total of all the subtle bodies in this creation) and the Ishwar (the sum total of all the causal bodies of creation).

In other words, the Atma cannot be subjected to any specific definitions or delineated by or confined to any specific areas of creation.

It does not go or move anywhere, and neither does it comes from anywhere.

It does not make any efforts because there is no reason why it should do so², and neither does it decay and come to an end (because it is eternal and imperishable)³ (10).

[Note—¹This is because the supreme transcendental Being is an ethereal Divinity having no physical body which has these three divisions. Even if it is assumed that the Atma has the unique virtue of Pragya which is awareness, knowledge and enlightenment personified, it still cannot be confined within this definitions because it is much more than simply being Pragya. For example, what good is any knowledge if

it has no practical value and applicability? To become 'Pragya', the creature need the help of the mind-intellect (called the subtle body) as well as the organs of the gross body such as the ears so that he can hear and be taught, and the eye so that he can read the scriptures and see things for himself.

²The Atma, left to its own self, does not desire anything; it is perpetually contented and fulfilled; it is eternally dispassionate and detached from all the delusions that surround it from all sides. So it does not need to do anything or make any effort in order to fulfill its aspirations and acquire success in any enterprise; it does not even need to attempt to free itself because it was never bound in the first place. Refer Canto 4.

³In other words, it is steady and everlasting, it is perpetual and eternal, neither going anywhere after the death of the body, nor coming back into this world from any outer space. It does not make any efforts, and neither does it decay and come to an end because it is eternal and imperishable.]

11. It (the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm in the form of the Atma) is not something that can be abandoned or accepted at will (because it uniformly and universally pervades throughout the creation in an imperceptible manner, and cannot be picked and chosen by anyone at his whim).

It is free from all corruptions, shortcomings and faults associated with this world. It is one, wholesome, immutable and an indivisible entity that cannot be fractioned or partitioned or segmented or broken up or divided into parts. It cannot be decapitated in any manner (like a sacrificial animal¹).

It is neither domineering, dense, grave, gross, fatty, corpulent, large, voluminous or heavy ('Peen'), nor is it thin, weak, fragile, skinny, slim, small, inconsequential or light ('Krish'). [Or, in other words, it is neither colossus nor minuscule; it is neither huge nor small; it is neither overbearing nor awe-inspiring, nor is it submissive, diminutive and inconsequential.]

It is not slimy, sweaty, sticky, damp or in any way showing the existence of life in the form of moisture oozing from its surface (like the terrestrial animals and humans who have a skin which sweats, or the aquatic animals like fish etc. which have a slimy and slippery body, nor even like the plants that breath moisture or ooze sap through their outer epidermis).

It cannot be described and limited by terms 'Kaal' (time, era, circumstance and death) or 'Desh' (country, place such as pilgrim centers etc.). [Refer Canto 4, verse no. 12; Canto 5, verse nos. 14, 16.] (11).

[Note--¹When an animal is sacrificed, it is decapitated because its head is usually severed from its body. Now if one were to regard Brahm as being present in that animal as well for the simple reason that nothing exists without Brahm, one would argue that this 'Brahm' (as the sacrificial animal) has been decapitated; its head severed from its body. This is far from the truth, because the body of the animal is *not* Brahm, it is its Atma that is Brahm, and Atma cannot be sacrificed or decapitated in any way because it is an ethereal Spirit!]

12. It (the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm in the form of the Atma) is not of any kind from which one has any sort of fear. [That is, it is not some overbearing tyrannical Emperor who is feared by his subjects.]

It is not a dual entity that can be delineated or marked categorically as a tree or a mountain. It is not to be found in Dhyan (meditation and contemplation) and Yoga (physical exercises of meditation such as various Aasans—sitting postures, Pranayam—breath control exercises, etc.). [These limbs of Yoga—e.g. Dhyan, Pranayam, Aasans etc.—are only instruments that can help the aspirant to obtain

control over his Pran (vital life giving winds present inside the body). These leads to his experiencing a sense of liberation from the limitations imposed by the grossness of the physical body, and consequentially enjoy bliss that comes with freedom and self-control. But these units of Yoga are not an end in themselves—they are not the target of doing Yoga, but only aids in its successful completion. That is, if one thinks for example that ‘Dhyan’ is tantamount to Brahm-realisation then he is of course living in a fool’s paradise.]

It is not achieved or attained either by acquiring any Siddhis (mystical and occult powers)¹. [These Siddhis are a natural accoutrement of success in Yoga, but they should not be used to gain worldly fame and honour that that would be like bartering gold for brass. Instead, a wise person should employ these mystical powers to further his prospects in the spiritual sphere and speed up his path to spiritual enlightenment by overcoming any remnants of obstacles that remain. The Yogtattva Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 76-78 clearly asserts that a wise ascetic should not allow the successful accomplishment of the Siddhis to go into his head and make him proud and arrogant. He should keep them secret and not divulge them to anyone, because the people with selfish interests would surround him seeking his intervention to help them with their worldly problems, but this would cause unnecessary obstacle in the path of the ascetic’s spiritual progress.]

It is not defined in terms of the three upper classes in which the society has been divided by ancient sages, such as Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas. [That is, it would be wrong to say that Brahmins are respected because they represent Brahm, for Brahm is equally present or is represented by all the classes and members of the society in even proportion. No one is greater or junior in this respect.] (12).

[Note--¹The word *Siddhi* refers to various mystical and occult powers that a spiritual aspirant acquires as a result of certain ritualistic practices.

There are eight *Siddhis* which are divine mystical powers which enables the person to accomplishment astounding feats. They are the following—(i) ‘Anima’ means the power to become microscopic or so minute that one becomes invisible to the naked eye; (ii) ‘Mahima’ is to have majesty, glory and fame; to be honoured and acknowledged for one’s achievements, knowledge and skills; (iii) ‘Garima’ is to have weight, stature, dignity, decorum, gravity and significance, (iv) ‘Laghima’ is to have simplicity and humility; (v) ‘Praapti’ is to be able to attain or obtain anything wished or desired; (vi) ‘Prakramya’ is to have valour, ardour, strength, powers, prowess, potential and punch leading to triumph, glory and majesty; (vii) ‘Ishwatwa’ is to be able to have lordship or sway over others; and (viii) ‘Vashitwa’ is to be able to control and subdue others.]

13. It (the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm in the form of the Atma) is not any creature with a physical body such as the air borne bird or the land bound animal.

It has none of the faults usually associated with the creatures of this creation, such as Lobh (greed, rapacity and yearning), Moha (delusory attractions and attachments), Mada (arrogance and haughtiness about one’s powers and abilities), Matsarya (envy, jealousy, malice), Kaam (worldly passions, lust, yearnings and desires), and Krodh (anger, indignation, wrathfulness) (13).

14. It (the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm in the form of the Atma) is not even restricted to such artificial classifications such as a woman, a Shudra (the fourth class in the society meant to serve the other three classes referred in verse no. 12), or even a cat (‘Vidaal’).

It is neither the one who eats nor the thing that is eaten.

It does not have any kind of dearth or lack in depth in maturity of thought, wisdom, erudition, knowledge and enlightenment.

It cannot be subjected to debates and discussions ('Vaartaa') (14).

15. It (the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm in the form of the Atma) is not something that can be measured by or subjected to any worldly yardsticks or criteria.

It is not something that can be proved or its truthfulness established by the use of the faculty of sight which can see it in physical terms to be convinced of its existence.

It is not clever enough like a business man, or a stupid and dull entity like a blockhead.

It is not the consumer of things like ordinary mortal creatures; it is not the one who suffers from or enjoys the things of this world.

It is not the one who eats, or the food eaten. It is not the drink drunk, or the pot in which this drink is kept (15).

16. It (the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm in the form of the Atma) has no relations of its own, nor can it be seen in any form of relationships that creatures develop in this world. That is, it is neither of the following—It is not the enemy, it is not the friend, it is not the son, it is not the mother, it is not the father¹.

The notion of birth, death, old age etc. are based on an absolutely fallacious idea that there is something real called the body (because it is the body that is subjected to birth, growing up, old age, decay and death etc., but not the Atma which is eternally uniform, unchangeable and imperishable² (16).

[Note—¹This is because all these relationships are centered around the body and not pivoted on the Atma which is the same in all these external forms that the Atma has assumed in this world. The Atma of an enemy, a friend, a father, a mother, a son etc. are all the same entity; it is only their individual bodies that are different and separate. But it must be remembered that the body is not their 'true identity', and it is merely a habitat for the Atma which is in fact their 'true self' or 'true identity'. Therefore, actually and truthfully speaking, there is no real difference between a friend and a foe; this is the considered view of the wise and enlightened man.

²In fact, the body has no real existence bereft of the Atma. The body is inane and a lifeless bundle of flesh, muscles, veins, bones and marrow, and had it not been for the Atma in this basket it would not show any of the grand signs of life that makes it so unique and miraculous in this creation.]

17. It (the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm in the form of the Atma) is neither a void (i.e. it is not something that is vacant, pith-less, light weight, without any substance or gravity; something that is inconsequential and meaningless), nor something that is the opposite of it (i.e. something that is gross, dense, heavy and grave; something that is consequential and meaningful).

It is not the cause of this artificial physical world in which the creature finds itself (because this world has its origin in the imagination of the creative mind).

It is not the day or the night. It is not Brahma the creator, Hari (Vishnu) the sustainer and protector, or Shiva the concluder. [Refer Canto 5, verse no. 72.] (17).

18. It (the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm in the form of the Atma) is not defined by any time frames as Vaar (day of the week), Paksha (the bright and dark fortnights of the moon), Maas (month), and Samwtsar (year). All of them are ever changing; they become old and a part of history by every passing moment, but 'it' (i.e. the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm in the form of the Atma) is unchangeable and steady.

It is not to be found in the Brahma-Loka (the abode of Brahma the creator), or in the Vaikunth (the abode of Vishnu the sustainer) and on the mountainous abode of Kailash (the abode of Shiva the concluder). For that matter, it is not to be found in any other specific place (for the simple reason that it is omnipresent, all-pervading, all-encompassing, and all-permeating, and hence not limited to one or the other place but present equally, in equal intensity and measure everywhere in this creation, here as well as there) (18).

19. It (the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm in the form of the Atma) is similarly (like stated in verse no. 18) not limited to be dwelling in Swarga, the heavens, or in the abode of Indra, the king of Gods, called Indra Loka. It is not exclusively located in the Agni Loka, the abode of the Fire God, as the almighty Fire God himself.

It does not reside in the Yam Loka, the abode of Yam, the God of death, as Yam himself. Nor is it to be found in the abode where the Lokpals, the custodians of this world, live, in the form of these Lokpals themselves (19).

20. It (the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm in the form of the Atma) is not to be found in the terrestrial world known as Bhu, or in the sky known as Bhuvaha, or the heavens known as Swarga, or in the nether world known as Patal, or on the surface of the earth as plants and animals or under the surface in its aquatic life.

It does not come under the purview and definition of such concepts as Vidya (knowledge and skills) or Avidya (the opposite of Vidya; ignorance and lack of knowledge), or of Maya (delusory effects) and Prakriti (Nature) consisting of both the animate as well as the inanimate creation (20).

21. It (the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm in the form of the Atma) is not to be defined as something which is both stable and permanent, remaining for ever in one form or state, or something that is momentary and transient, something that comes to ruin and ends one day.

It is not something that never moves, or something that always remains on the move.

It cannot be known by and be the subject matter of Dhyan (deep contemplation and pondering, meditation and focus of attention and mind), because it cannot be accessed by it and brought under its ambit. Therefore, no Mantras, which are mystical formulae and words used in religious practices especially for the purpose of meditation and doing Japa (repetition of Mantras), can ever confine 'it' (Brahm in the form of the Atma) within their restricted sphere of meaning and influence. They cannot comprehensively define and delineate 'it' and say conclusively that 'this is what *it* is' or 'this is *it*' (21).

22. It (the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm in the form of the Atma) is not to be found in any material thing that is worshipped as a symbol of

Divinity and Supreme Being (such as idols, portraits, books and other symbols), and neither 'it' is to be found in any of the things used for such worship.

Therefore, it (i.e. the supreme transcendental Being known as the Brahm in the form of the Atma) is not accessed by Pooja (ritualistic worship), or by Abhishek (ritualistic bathing of idols by some consecrated water or other liquid such as milk etc.), or by Archanaa (offering of flowers, garlands etc. as a mark of showing respect and adoration for the chosen deity to which ceremonial worship is being done), and any other method of showing respect or honour such as offering flowers, fruits, leaves of holy plants (such as Tulsi—Basil leaves etc.), fragrances, incense and any other thing used during formal ritualistic forms of physical worship (22).

[Note—In short, the supreme transcendental Authority cannot be pleased or accessed by such ritualistic forms of worship. They are not needed to honour and show respect to the Supreme Being. They are perfunctory and artificial in nature. Similar ideas have been expressed by St. Mark in his Gospel in the Holy Bible, 7/2-16.]

23. Similarly, it (the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm in the form of the Atma) is not honoured by chanting or singing any Stotras (devotional hymns), or by Namaskar (bowing humbly with palms joined together as a gesture of submission and humility), or by Pradakshina (circumambulation) of the altar where the deity is kept, or by Prarthanaa (offering of prayers)¹, or by prostrating flat on the ground in front of the deity, or by offering things to the fire during the ritual of fire sacrifice, or by any other method of adoring and praising the deity (23).

24. It (the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm in the form of the Atma) is also not worshipped and honoured by doing Hom (fire sacrifices)¹. It is not found by doing good deeds either².

It cannot be described or defined by good speech using appropriate words, and neither can poor description or use of improper words ever tarnish its exalted and divine nature*.

*[This stanza can be read as follows also—'It is not insulted or derided by the use of insulting and derogatory words, and neither is it praised by adulatory words used to sing its laurels'.]

It cannot be accessed or known by merely repeating the Gayatri Mantra three times a day when two time zones meet each other, such as at dawn (when the night meets the day), noon (when the morning meets the afternoon hours) and dusk (when the day and night meet).

It remains calm, tranquil, unruffled, steady and unwavering inspite of the conflicting states in which the mind of the creature sometimes finds itself. [These conflicting states of the mind arise due to so many worldly confusions and diversities which create perplexity and confoundedness for the creature, but in the midst of all this turmoil the Atma does not lose its poise and composure.] (24).

[Note—¹Verse nos. 21-24 should be interpreted correctly and in the correct perspective. Their intention is not to deride the practice of formal worship, but to highlight that one must understand the meaning behind what is intended by such worship. Merely a formality of doing a mechanical form of ritualistic worship by hiring professional priests is like asking someone else to eat some sweet on one's own behalf. Will the man who has paid for the sweets taste the succulent sweet-dish if it is eaten by some proxy on his behalf? The same thing applies to Brahm-realisation, and more so because it is not such easy as eating sweets by paying for it.

The formal forms of worships are done by the physical body of the worshipper, and the object of worship is usually also an idol having a fixed form and shape. Both

are contrary to what is said about the real identity of the worshipper or the Divinity that he worships. In the former case, it is not the body but the Atma which is the real identity of the worshipper, and in the latter case it is the Supreme Being known as Brahm who is being worshipped, and this Brahm has no form and shape and neither is it something as gross as a stone idol. Besides this, the Atma is a manifestation of this Brahm, so how can the Atma (the worshipper) worship its own self (in the form of the deity made of some gross material thing which is worshipped in lieu of Brahm)?

The problem with idol worship is that the idol is not treated as an 'image', 'symbol' or 'representative' of the deity or Godhead being honoured or worshipped, but as the deity or Godhead *himself*. Ignorant devotees are misled to have this belief because vested interests wish to keep this myth alive for their own financial gains. This is because the offerings made to this idol are misappropriated by them in the name of Godhead. The Lord is the giver of all things to the entire world, and he lacks nothing, so it is nonsense to give him money, gold and other material assets. The Lord is self-contented and self-sufficient; he is the treasury of everything. What the Lord actually needs is the devotee's soul and love—but this fact is never divulged to the innocent devotee because if it is made known to them the petty vested interests would lose their firm grip on the humble devotee's purse strings!

A wise and enlightened person should realise that the Lord whom he is searching in idols, shrines, pilgrim places etc. is comfortably ensconced in his own heart, in his own bosom, in his own inner self as his Atma. The Lord is so near to him that no one needs to search the Lord outside anywhere—this is the profound message of the Upanishads. But rarely anyone pays heed to it. The Upanishads are unequivocal in their prohibition of idol worship and go on to emphasise that this is counter-productive for their spiritual welfare.

This prohibition of worship of idols made of material things such as wood, stone, metals etc. or symbol worship, or for that matter any kind of external worship is expressly mentioned in the following Upanishads of the Sam Veda tradition—Maitreyu-panishad, Canto 2, verse no. 21, 26; Jabal Darshan Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 50-59; and Sanyaso-panishad, Canto 2, verse no. 74-75, 97. The Advaitar Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 5, 10, 13, stresses that real Mukti or spiritual liberation is obtained when the aspirant turns inwards and searches eternal peace and bliss inside his own self rather somewhere outside. Similar ideas have been expressed in the Holy Bible, Gospel of St. Matthew, 23/3-28; St. Mark, 7/2-13, 15; Acts, 17/22-29, 19/26; 1 Corinthians, 12/1-2, 10/14, 28. Refer also to the Holy Koran, xxvi/70-82; xxix/16-17.

²By the same count, the deeds which are done by the body cannot be of any value for the Atma or its 'self-realisation', because the Atma does no deeds as it is the ethereal Spirit and not the gross entity like the physical body of the creature.]

25. It (the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm in the form of the Atma) is not to be confused with the physical bodies of creatures having bad intentions or evil hopes, who are evil, sadistic, pervert, deceitful and rascals, who are lowly and known by the names of Chandals (low caste people who are ostracized by the society and live outside from villages, making their living by performing last rites of dead people) and Paulkas (demonic and evil mongers).

It (the supreme transcendental Brahm) is also not such lowly people as Kirat (a tribal people who hunt) and Ketav (a demon; referring to people with demonic tendency). Such people are difficult to cope with, and have a natural affinity to evil and harsh talk (25).

[Note—This is because here the external body of these people is being referred to and not their Atma which is their pure conscious soul. This soul is immaculate and

untainted by the physical body and its features and characters. Refer Canto 6, verse nos. 17-20.]

26. It (the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm in the form of the Atma) does not take sides with anyone or is more marked in one alternative than the other. It is equal in both the instances, and is an undivided uniformity that prevails in both the sides and alternatives in equal measure. It does not take a partisan view of anything.

It is not some material wealth in the form of gems or other forms of jewels that can be stolen by robbers.

It is not a deceitful person or the deceit that he indulges in.

It is neither present in excess nor is short in any person (obviously because the pure conscious Atma known as the soul cannot be fractioned into a small or big portion)¹ (26).

[Note—¹The meaning of this stanza is that no one can be called ‘small’ or ‘big’ because of the fact that the Atma is the same in all living beings. The notion of one living creature being ‘big’ (powerful, wealthy, resourceful, influential, huge in size, honourable, renowned, having fame and good name, etc.), and the other being ‘small’ (having characters that are opposite to the one who is defined as ‘big’) is a man-made classification, and has nothing to do with the actual measure of the importance or status of the Atma which is beyond reproach and classifications of any kind. No one can be classified as a king or a pauper in terms of their real identity as the Atma.]

27. It (the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm in the form of the Atma) is not confined to being one, or two or three etc. [It cannot be quantified and measured in numbers or delineated by volumes, physical counts and various definable qualities, quantities and attributes.]

It is neither restricted to the state of existence called Turiya nor to the state higher than it called the state of Mahattva (literally importance and significance). It is similarly not describable by saying simply that it is grand or great, or the opposite of it such as being insignificant and of no importance.

It is neither complete and unbreakable, nor fractioned and divided into parts.

It is not restricted to such so-called holy pilgrim sites as Kashi (Varanasi), or accessible only by keeping fasts and stern religious vows, or doing Tapa (austerity and penance) (27).

28. It (the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm in the form of the Atma) has no family lineage, no heritage, no class, no clan, no race (Gotra and Kul), and no source from which its origin can be traced (Sutra).

It is not void like the space of the fathomless sky or valueless like the numeral zero (Shunya), nor is it most grand, almighty, overbearing and powerful as to dominate the entire creation with its authority (Vibhu)¹.

It is not only in the form of a woman, a maid, an old lady or the virgin girl (Kanyaa).

Getting embroiled in such useless and endless retrogressive arguments (as to what or where is Brahm and what or where it is not) is getting bogged down in worthless controversies, and it is like the stringed musical instrument of which the string has been broken (Vitantu)² (28).

[Note—¹Brahm in the form of the pure Atma is neutral in its self like the *zero*, but lends other entities their value. Similarly, it is not a tyrannical emperor who instills fear of death in his subjects, but is the king and supreme ruler of the entire creation

who prefers to remain docile, compassionate, accommodating and quiet while exercising his control over the world as its ultimate Lord and Authority. So inspite of his being *Vibho*, he does not appear to be so as he is present even amongst the humblest and the meekest.

²This is a very significant observation. It emphasises the point that one should not enter into endless arguments about what constitutes Divinity and Brahm by quoting scriptures, because each quote would find another which counters it. This intellectual exercise is like mental gymnastic and sounds hollow for those who are sincerely interested in realising their true self and their divine heritage. Such people should not enter into such futile and pith-less debates as whether or not Brahm is to be found in a woman or a girl, and old lady or a maid. Brahm cannot be understood by arguments and counter-arguments. One should endeavour to move ahead instead of remaining stuck in olden retrogressive ways and thoughts that had dominated his mind and intellect before wisdom and enlightenment dawned on the person by studying the Upanishad and other eclectic scriptures.]

29. It (the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm in the form of the Atma) is not touched or tainted by such concepts as ‘Sutak’ that accompanies ‘Jaatak’ (defilements or impurities which a Hindu considers to be caused from the birth of a son or death in the family). It does not take any birth and therefore there is no question of it having any ‘Jaatak’ (birth). [Refer Canto 6, verse no. 63.]

It is not to be found exclusively by turning inwards in self-contemplation and meditating upon the self as the fountainhead of Divinity.

Let there be no doubt, no confusion, no error of conception and perception, and no deception about the supreme transcendental Divinity known as Brahm. Let there be no apprehensions and anxiety about Brahm.

It (the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm in the form of the Atma) is not restricted to the great saying of the scriptures known as the ‘Maha Vakya’¹, nor is it characterised and defined by any of the great mystical powers such as Anima² etc. that someone who is powerful and mighty in creation possesses (29).

[Note—¹The great Maha Vakyas are described in Shuk Rahasya Upanishad.

²There are eight mystical powers known as Siddhis. For details refer note to verse no. 12 of this Canto.]

[Now, after using the negation process of ‘not this not that’, this Upanishad goes on to say what indeed is Brahm! This Canto is very scientifically devised. The negation process of elimination by saying ‘Neti-Neti’—or ‘not this; not this’, ‘neither this nor that’—empties the mind of the spiritual aspirant of all preconceived ideas and notions. It helps to cleanse it and purge all sorts of doubts about Brahm and Atma because it tells him that whatever he had previously thought Brahm and Atma *is*, is *not* the truth. So, he now becomes ready to accept what is being taught afresh. Only an empty box can accommodate any thing, so this emptying was practical and necessary. This purging and elimination is symbolically equivalent to the ‘Rechak’ phase of Pranayam (breath control exercise of Yoga) whereby the old and impurity-laden wind is exhaled out of the body. The imbibing of new knowledge of Brahm and the Atma is like the ‘Purak’ phase of Pranayam wherein fresh air is breathed in. The reverse order would have not helped because the mind was already pre-conditioned that Brahm and Atma are this and that as enumerated in verse nos. 1-29 of this Canto. Now that the mind is empty, it can accept and imbibe fresh ideas of Brahm and the Atma as laid down in verse nos. 30-106. This knowledge fills him and is soaked by his inner self as the vital energy of the fresh air is done during the ‘Kumbhak’ phase of Pranayam

wherein the oxygen-rich air is given sufficient time to get absorbed in the tissues and blood and oxidize, re-energize and revitalize the organs and cells of the body. This leads the aspirant to exclaim that he is indeed Brahm personified as done in verse no. 107.

The negation process was to put to rest the restless mind and fill it with positive and certain ideas of what Brahm indeed *is* by discarding the ideas of what Brahm *is not*. This positive approach of ‘auto-suggestion’ has a great psychological effect on the aspirant, and it helps him to overcome depression and low spirits. When one thinks that he is great and can do anything, he is easily able to overcome worldly blues and failures in life; he develops fresh hopes and is spurred on with new vigour and energy. So, inspite of being surrounded by worldly miseries and grief, he never loses hopes of salvation and emancipation; inspite of being surrounded by pain and sorrow, he always remains happy and cheerful. Refer Canto 3, verse nos. 60-74.]

30. It (the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm in the form of the Atma) is eternally in the form ‘Chaitanya’, i.e. one that is pure consciousness and enlightenment personified. Therefore it has no taints, faults and shortcomings associated with this mortal world. [Refer Canto 6, verse no. 43.]

Everything in this creation which has any truthfulness and worth is in the form of the Atma that is immaculate and pristine pure as well as all-pervading and all-encompassing in the world. It (Atma) is nothing but ‘Chidaanand’, i.e. an eternal and infinite fount of beatitude and felicity, of ecstasy and exhilaration, of pure consciousness and enlightenment. [Refer Canto 6, verse nos. 1-2.] (30).

31. Indeed, everything is Brahm. There is nothing that is not Brahm, i.e. everything is Brahm. Indeed, I (the Atma) am that Brahm too. I am Sanaatan, i.e. I am eternal, perpetual, infinite, everlasting, primary, primeval, most ancient, traditional and universal. [Refer Canto 6, verse no. 66.] (31).

32. I am a personification of Brahm¹—the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental eternal and all-pervading cosmic Consciousness manifested as the pure conscious Atma which is my true self—and therefore I am not an ordinary mortal worldly creature.

I am a personification of Brahm—the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental eternal and all-pervading cosmic Consciousness manifested as the pure conscious Atma which is my true self—and therefore I am not simply the Mana (the subjective mind and the emotional heart)² as I am not limited by its meaning and scope (32).

[Note—¹This concept *I am Brahm* as proclaimed in verse nos. 32-72 of this Canto 6 has appeared repeatedly in this Upanishad, e.g. Canto 3, verse no. 8-51, 61-74. This statement ‘I am Brahm’ is one of the Maha Vakyas or great sayings of the Vedas. Refer Shuk Rahasya Upanishad, verse no. 2/22.

²The concept of *Mana* has been elaborately explained in Canto 5, verse no. 89-105 of this Upanishad.]

33. I am a personification of Brahm—the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental eternal and all-pervading cosmic Consciousness manifested as the pure conscious Atma which is my true self—and therefore I am not the gross body.

I am a personification of Brahm—the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental eternal and all-pervading cosmic Consciousness manifested as the pure conscious Atma which is my true self—and therefore I am not something gross

enough to be seen or observed by the organ of the eye and perceived by the sense of sight.

I am a personification of Brahm—the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental eternal and all-pervading cosmic Consciousness manifested as the pure conscious Atma which is my true self—and therefore I am not the ordinary mortal creature (who has a gross body and who does so many deeds with it in this world as a result of which accumulates so many reactions that become the cause of its taking birth again, and consequentially undergoing all the horrors of the previous life in a modified form).

I am a personification of Brahm—the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental eternal and all-pervading cosmic Consciousness manifested as the pure conscious Atma which is my true self—and therefore there is no distinction between my various forms in which the cosmic consciousness has revealed itself in this world (33).

[Note—Refer the Holy Bible, 1 Corinthians, 12/3-26.]

34. I am a personification of Brahm—the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental eternal and all-pervading cosmic Consciousness manifested as the pure conscious Atma which is my true self—and therefore I am not gross and lifeless.

I am a personification of Brahm—the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental eternal and all-pervading cosmic Consciousness manifested as the pure conscious Atma which is my true self—and therefore I do not die or come to an end at any stage.

I am a personification of Brahm—the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental eternal and all-pervading cosmic Consciousness manifested as the pure conscious Atma which is my true self—and therefore I am not the entity called Pran (the vital wind force that sustains life in all living creatures; the vital wind is one of the five principal elements in creation—I am not restricted to this meaning).

I am a personification of Brahm—the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental eternal and all-pervading cosmic Consciousness manifested as the pure conscious Atma which is my true self—and therefore I am 'Paraatpar', i.e. I cannot be exclusively called some entity that is only supreme and transcendental because I go much beyond such simple definitions and parameters; I cannot be restricted by attributes and qualities; I cannot be quantified and qualified¹ (34).

[Note—¹The word *Paraatpar* refers to some entity that is supreme and transcendental and beyond reach. Here the self-realised spiritual aspirant who has understood the real meaning of the word Brahm and Atma concludes that this Brahm is not to be thought of as some high God who is beyond the reach of an ordinary man because he remains ensconced in some high citadel inside some celestial palace in the heavens. This is because this Brahm has revealed himself in even the humblest of creature in this creation; it is equally present as the Atma of even the wild animals of the forest as much as he is in the form of the soul of the wise sage who lives in the same forest to do meditation. Since an entity that is supreme cannot be humble, Brahm should not be given any title whatsoever. This is also the reason why ancient self-realised and Brahm-realised sages, seers, hermits and ascetics could live fearlessly and alone in dense forests, mountain caves etc. which were infested with wild animals. They had no fear from them and neither did these animals fear them.]

35. This is Brahm, here is Brahm. That is Brahm, there is Brahm. Truth is Brahm, the Supreme Being is Brahm.

Kaal (the three planes of time such as the past, the present and the future; the different eras till the conclusion of creation; circumstances that keep on changing) is Brahm, and so are the changing faces of Kaal, called Kalaa. [Refer Canto 6, verse no. 63.]

Brahm is manifested in all types of notions that come under the ambit of the word Sukh, i.e. happiness and joy, comforts and pleasures, as well as Brahm is all those things that are the cause of Sukh because Brahm is beatitude and felicity personified.

Brahm is self-illuminated and self-radiant (like the celestial Sun and the burning fire) (35).

36. Brahm is one (non-dual) as well as two (dual). [It depends upon how one perceives the existence of Brahm, but there is no denying of the fact that Brahm is indeed there, whether as 'one' or as 'two'.]

Moha (worldly attachments and infatuations towards its charms) is also due to the presence of Brahm¹.

Similarly, such virtues as Sham (self control of sense organs) which are opposites of Moha are also Brahm. [This is because nothing that exists is anything but Brahm; or everything that exists is Brahm.]

Therefore, all the imaginable Gunas (good virtues, attributes and qualities) as well as the Doshas (bad qualities, faults, taints, shortcomings and blemishes) are manifestation of one or the other qualities of Brahm².

Brahm is characterised by the virtues of Dam (tolerance, fortitude, forbearance) and Shaant (peaceful, calm, tranquil and quietude).

Brahm is the supreme transcendental Lord of creation, the Supreme Being known as Vibho (one who is omniscient, omnipresent, all-pervading, magnanimous, eternal, almighty, omnipotent, majestic and powerful Lord of all), and Prabhu (the Lord and Master of all that exists) (36).

[Note—¹Though this observation seems most preposterous and incredulous on the face of it, but on close examination we find it to be true. If everything is Brahm, then the person who gets deluded is also Brahm as is the thing that is attractive enough to draw his attention and become an object of his adoration. Beauty is divine, and anything can be called truly beautiful if it has an element of divine consciousness in it, sufficient enough to charm the Atma and attract it towards itself. It is indeed Brahm's face. Therefore, it is not the fault of the observer who falls in love with this beautiful world full of fascination and mystic. The only precaution that should be taken by the Atma is highlighted in the word 'Moha' itself—that is, one must be wary of falling into the trap of attachments to and indulgences in the material charms of the world because they are basically deluding and illusive by nature, lasting only for a short time, because like the world they too are perishable and transient. Anything that is not permanent is not pursued by a wise man because the comfort and pleasure it gives is temporary and has no pith and depth in it; it is not sustainable. But a wise man need not run away from the world for 'true enlightenment' envisions that one is able to remain completely detached from everything even while being surrounded by opulence and grandeur. This is the correct attitude of a spiritually realised person. Refer Canto 4, verse no. 19.

²This creation is not a one-sided picture; the other side also exists. Like coin to be of any value, there must be the other side of it. The two qualities of 'good' and 'bad' act as counter-balancing force of sorts in Nature. They are like the two opposing poles of the magnet which must be present in any piece of lodestone to give it its unique properties which are identified and classified as magnetism. Otherwise that piece of rock material extracted from the bowls of earth as lodestone would be

anything else but a magnet. Likewise, if the creation is to exhibit its unique mysterious qualities and characters, it must have the presence of the two opposing factors of creation—viz. the good and the bad.

After all, too much of sweet is as much unpalatable as too much of salty food, no matter how delicious they might individually be. A judicious combination of the two is what makes one enjoy both the dishes as a satisfying meal. Taken from another angle, the succulence of the sweet dish is enhanced by the presence of the tangy and salty snack. Similarly, the presence of Gunas or good qualities is made more prominent and conspicuous when they are contrasted against the various Doshas in creation.

While we are at the instance of the 'coin', we must realise that a wise man is he who is able to differentiate between what is worth and what is not. Jesus Christ has cited this very instance of the coin to bring home this eclectic spiritual point in the Holy Bible, St. Matthew, 22/19-22 when he says—"Shew me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's. When they had heard these words, they marveled, and left him, and went their way."]

37. This visible world is Brahm personified and so are the Guru (the moral preceptor, guide and teacher) and his Shishya (disciple and student). [Refer Canto 3, verse no. 31.]

Indeed, Brahm has manifested himself as 'Sadaa Shiv'—the eternal, truthful and auspicious Lord of creation*. [Refer Canto 3, verse no. 51; Canto 6, verse no. 64.]

[*This stanza can be read as follows also—Brahm is also known as Sadaa Shiv because he possesses such eclectic and divine virtues as being eternal, truthful and auspicious.]

Brahm was present even prior to this creation coming into being as he is eternal and infinite. Therefore, the divine entity known as Brahm is supreme as it transcends everything in existence, outliving and outlasting it, as well as preceding it.

Brahm is absolutely pure and immaculate, untainted and uncorrupted. It is most auspicious, holy and divine (37).

38. All the living beings in this creation are as much a manifestation of the truthful and blissful Brahm as I am. This is a universal and eternal reality and truth which cannot be refuted.

Verily, everything is Brahm (revealed in that form). In fact, the entire world is a manifestation of Brahm; it is a revelation of the magnificent and fantastic attributes and virtues of Brahm (38).

39. I am myself Brahm personified. There is nothing in existence that is not Brahm. There is no iota of doubt about it.

This pure and immaculate Atma is present in everything in this world that is worthwhile. It is universally and uniformly present everywhere. It is non-dual and entirely pure consciousness that is self enlightened and illuminated (39).

40. Everything is nothing but the Atma which possesses eclectic and divine virtues such as being Nitya (eternal and perpetual) and Nirmal (immaculate, pristine pure and clean, uncorrupt and untainted). It is the Atma that is also present in me, and nothing other than it.

Whatever is seen in this world here is the Atma though it is so microscopic in nature that it cannot be physically verified in tangible form (40).

41. Everything in this world that has a body has the Atma imperceptibly present in it as its atomic ingredient¹. This is the basic truth which is irrefutable and as fundamental to the existence of the world as the presence of the Atom in everything in this world.

So the essential element or fundamental ingredient that should be researched and meditated upon by spiritual aspirants is the Atma (just like a chemistry student looks for the atomic make up of any chemical compound). That which has no atomic Atma² in it is not worthy of any contemplation and deep research (41).

[Note—¹This is a very scientifically sustainable statement. Science has shown that everything that exists consists of atoms and their combination called the molecules. We see the external feature of any substance, say iron or gold or water and firewood, but we can't see their atoms. The fact that these things have a verifiable and visible existence proves that the atom is invariably present in all of them. The same atom has revealed its presence as different things because of the different ways it combines to form molecules that shape the structure of the visible thing. Similarly, the same Atma is present in all the creatures in this world as well as in the plants and other inanimate things, but it is the way it has revealed itself that decides the form and characteristic features of the individual entities in creation.

²This concept of the Atma being like the atom has been elaborately explained in note to verse no. 38 of Canto 4 of this Upanishad.]

42. Brahm is everything and there is nothing that goes beyond its purview. Brahm is eternally and infinitely nothing but 'Chinmaya', i.e. it is the pure conscious ethereal Spirit that is self enlightened, wise and almighty. [Refer Canto 2, verse nos. 24-43.]

This world existing in three forms, known as the 'Triloki' (the terrestrial world, the celestial world, and the nether world) is nothing but Brahm personified.

Brahm is Anand (beatitude and felicity, happiness, joys, pleasures and comforts) personified. In fact, it is more than simple Anand, it is an embodiment of a supreme category of Anand. It is nothing but Anand. [Refer Canto 6, verse nos. 59, 65, 68.] (42).

43. Brahm is nothing but 'Chaitanya' (pure consciousness), and as such it is also 'me or I' (i.e. the spiritual aspirant who has become self-realised and treats his 'self' as the conscious Atma which is this cosmic Spirit residing in his gross body). This Brahm has been visualised to have the name of 'Omkar' (symbolised by the word OM), the ethereal cosmic sound that envelops the entire cosmos which is soaked in its energy. [This all-inclusive and all-incorporating Brahm is the ethereal cosmic Spirit called by the name of Omkar.]

Brahm being all-pervading and all-encompassing in this world, Brahm being the cosmic consciousness that pulsates throughout this creation, and Brahm being revealed as this Atma, it is indeed an irrefutable and unequivocal fact that I too am Brahm personified. Not only that, this entire world is also my manifestation (refer verse no. 45)¹.

Indeed, this realisation has made it possible for me to achieve that stature of existence which is called 'Param Pad', the state of highest self and Brahm realisation². [Refer Canto 6, verse no. 67.] (43).

[Note—¹This is a logical conclusion of what has been said here. First, the entire world has its value and worth because of it having consciousness in it, for who would

like to deal with a lifeless and inane creature which has no conscious factor in its body. This 'consciousness' is universal and uniform, and it exists in the form of the Atma that lives in the body of all living beings just like the atom which is at the core of all existing things in this world. These things have uncountable external features and characteristic qualities, but fundamentally they are manifestations of the numerous magical properties of this atom. Likewise, the same entity known as the Atma lives in all the creatures in this creation without exception, including the person who is making this declaration as mentioned in this verse. Therefore, it is indeed true when it is proclaimed that 'I am the world; this entire world is my manifestation'. Here the word 'my' comes out of the mouth of a wise, enlightened, self-realised and Brahm-realised person, and not from a deceitful imposter and cunning fraudster who is proud of himself that he has conquered the world and it therefore belongs to him; it is his.

²This *Param Pad* is the ultimate citadel of spiritual achievement that any aspirant strives for. This is the culmination of his spiritual quest and the end of his spiritual journey. Briefly, when he has reached this state of existence, he is deemed to have removed and eliminated all distinctions and artificial demarcations that are supposed to exist for an ordinary creature between the 'self' and the supreme Brahm. He has merged his Atma, which is his pure and truthful 'self', with the cosmic Truth known as Brahm. He has realised that 'consciousness' and 'truth' are always and indisputably 'one' and non-dual, and therefore there cannot be any distinction between himself and Brahm. Since the entire existence has its origin in this Brahm, and since his own 'self' is Brahm personified, it follows that there is no distinction between his own self and the rest of the creatures in this creation. This mystical, eclectic and divine realisation of the ultimate and paramount spiritual truth of existence removes all causes of consternations, perplexities and vexations in him that confound all the creatures in this world. Such an enlightened and truly realised person becomes calm, quiet, peaceful, tranquil and serene, for he has found the elixir of eternal beatitude and felicity which leaves nothing more to be sought. That is, he has reached the citadel of spiritual realisation which makes him liberated and delivered from the fetters of ignorance-based delusions that shackle all his other brethren to this world of artificiality and perpetual restlessness. All creatures strive to reach some 'Pad' or acquire some good designation, stature, honour, fame and name for themselves, and this 'Param Pad' is the highest of any designations, statures and honours that is attainable by a creature because it provides him with eternal happiness and peace.

Seen from a different angle, the 'Param Pad' is a stature in which a creature reaches the supreme Lord and merges his own individual Atma with the Atma of the Supreme Being. The word 'Param' means the most exalted, supreme, greatest and the ultimate, while 'Pad' means feet, state, stature, honour, title etc. That is, the creature is honoured with the highest title obtainable in this creation in the form of salvation and emancipation of his soul. It also refers to achieving the goal of being near to his Lord. Param Pad is equivalent to spiritual utopia. It is the most exalted state of 'self-realisation' when nothing more is left to be attained or realised.

This destination is the supreme state which a spiritual aspirant aspires to achieve. It is not any physical place known as 'heaven' as such, but it is a symbolic destination whereby the soul of the individual creature reaches the citadel of spiritualism where the soul becomes one with its primary source, the supreme cosmic Soul, by merging with it. This is its final destination, and is called emancipation and salvation. This is called the 'Kaivalya Mukti'—the liberation and deliverance which is one of its only kind as it is absolute and final emancipation and salvation for the aspirant's soul. There is no falling back or retrogression from this exalted stature.

The devotee reaches the destination which he aspires for. For example, devotees of Vishnu find an abode where that Lord resides, and that abode is called Vaikunth. Those who worship Viraat Purush as a manifestation of the supreme Brahm reach

Brahma Loka. But this abode is a symbolic heaven, for the worshippers of Brahm there is no return to this mundane world as they would have merged their souls with the cosmic Soul known as Brahm. For ascetics this would mean their Pran has emerged from the limiting parameters of the physical gross body to merge with the air or wind element present outside the body and the latter disintegrating into its constituent elements such as the earth, water, fire or energy and sky, leaving no trace of its earlier form.]

44. I (as the pure conscious Atma) am that supreme transcendental Brahm which is beyond the purview and definition of the various Gunas (qualities, virtues and attributes) in creation. I am that Brahm which is supreme and transcendental Divinity¹.

I (as the pure conscious Atma) am that supreme transcendental Brahm; I am the best Guru (moral preceptor and teacher)². [Refer Canto 6, verse no. 51.] (44).

[Note--¹That is, *Brahm* has no definable qualities and it has no attributes. It cannot be restricted to certain definitions and ascertained by certain attributes. It is not measurable and quantifiable in any manner. It cannot be judged by and weighed against some precedent and neither can it be debunked as inconsequential in the absence of any criterion. For, if that happens, Brahm would cease to be called 'supreme and transcendental Divinity'.

²The word *Guru* has two parts—viz. 'Gu' meaning darkness, and 'Ru' meaning light. Hence the combined word indicates a person who can remove the darkness of ignorance of his follower by showing him the light of knowledge; he is the person who is both the moral preceptor as well as the spiritual guide of his disciple. He is supposed to act as a neutral advisor to his ward in all matters temporal and spiritual; the disciple is expected to confide in him his greatest of secrets without the fear of betrayal. He is the one who is expected to have risen above self vested interests and keeps the welfare of the disciple as his main objective. He is the one who has transcended the mundane and has acquired sublime awareness of the supreme Reality, because only those who are themselves aware of anything can hope to tell others about it.

A true Guru is treated as being equivalent to the 'Trinity Gods'—(1) Brahma, the creator, because he creates or helps to take birth good virtues and noble qualities in his disciple; (2) Vishnu, the sustainer, because he nourishes, sustains and helps to inculcate and develop wisdom and enlightenment in his disciple and leads him on the truthful path; and (3) Shiva, the concluder, because he helps to end, conclude and eliminate ignorance and negative traits in his disciple. He is 'God like' because he functions in all these capacities at the same time, besides being exalted in all knowledge, being virtuous, of high moral character and beyond reproach, being a source of unbound spiritual energy, being self realised and enlightened, and being eternal in the sense that what he advises to his disciple, the path he shows, the light that he lights in the dark heart of the creature, makes him immortal. Therefore, a Guru is honoured for the divine virtues that he represents and embodies, that he teaches and implements in his life, for the divinity, for the Lord and for the personification of the great teachings of the scriptures that he exemplifies. It is not his physical body that is of any value for veneration, for the soul and not the body is venerable.

The *Advai Tarak Upanishad*, verse no. 14-18 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition elaborately describes the virtues that a true Guru should possess. These verses are being quoted here for ready reference—

There is a minor Upanishad called *Dwayo-panishad* which describes the chief characteristics of a true Guru. It has only seven Mantras. This Upanishad is being cited here verse by verse to clearly highlight the main features of a Guru:---

'(a) Verse nos.1-2= A person is called a Guru if he is endowed with enlightenment and wisdom making him well versed and skilled in the Vedas, both in their literal

knowledge as well as in the profound wisdom and the ethereal and eclectic metaphysical and spiritual philosophy they contain, who is an ardent devotee and sincere follower of Lord Vishnu, who is free from such negative traits as jealousy, envy and malice, who is well versed and skilled in the various holy and divine Mantras, their usage, their ethereal importance and spiritual significance as well as all other matters related with them, who is sincerity devoted to those Mantras and has firm belief, conviction and faith in them, who seeks the shelter and refuge of those Mantras, who is pure and immaculate, uncorrupt and unpolluted in any form, who is devoted and dedicated to his own Guru, and who is well versed and skilled not only in all the Purans but all other scriptures as well.

(b) Verse no.3= A person is called a Guru who has a comprehensive and holistic knowledge and understanding of all the scriptures, and who not only preaches righteousness, probity and propriety as well as nobility of thoughts and actions but also lives them and implements them in their letter and spirit in his personal life.

(c) Verse no. 4= The letter 'Gu' means darkness, while the letter 'Ru' means that which remove that darkness. Hence, Guru is one who removes the darkness representing ignorance and delusions that are so typically associated with this deluding world.

(d) Verse no.5= A true Guru is equivalent to the supreme and transcendental Brahm; he is the ultimate destination for a seeker; he is a fount of the supreme knowledge and the source of the best of such knowledge; he is deemed to be the best and the greatest asset for a man.

(e) Verse no.6= A Guru is the best thing a wise seeker seeks and searches for, he is the best and the supreme place for seeking refuge and shelter with, and he being a dispenser of the profoundest of wisdom and knowledge is deemed to be a person who is the most important, who has the highest standards of greatness and magnificence, who is most dignified and meritorious, who is most weighty and significant, and who is most distinct and outstanding in all aspects.

(f) Verse no.7= Pronouncing the word 'Guru' even once enables the aspirant to access liberation and deliverance from this entrapping and deluding world. All his efforts are deemed to have been successful by simply saying this powerful word sincerely. Such a man does never come back (enters the cycle of birth and death) in this world again—verily, this is the truth. Those who understand this fact correctly get the desired fruit.'

In the present context, the spiritually enlightened person who is asserting that he is his own Guru is not being haughty and arrogant or egoist, because of the simple fact that he is 'enlightened and wise and self-realised'. Such negative notions of arrogance, haughtiness or self pride are not expected from such a man. What actually he means is the fact that he has achieved the main objective for which one approaches and makes a Guru in the first place, i.e. he has realised the truth about Brahm and his own Atma. He needs no further discourses and guidance. No one can show him this truth better than his own self because self realisation, self witnessing and experiencing something first hand is more convincing and authoritatively ascertained than merely hearing about it from someone else.

Refer also Shukla Yajur Veda's Advai Tarak Upanishad, verse no. 14-18; Shatyayani Upanishad, verse no. 39; Krishna Yajur Veda's Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 5, verse nos. 56-59; Shuk Rahasya Upanishad, verse no. 21.]

45. I (as the pure consciousness) am the support and foundation of all that exists (because anything that is not conscious has no worth in this world).

I (as the pure conscious Atma) am an embodiment of immense Sukh (pleasures, comforts and happiness). [This is because I lack nothing and yearn for nothing as I am wholesome and fulfilled. As such, there is no reason for me getting

restless and feeling deprived of anything due to which I might feel unhappy and miserable.]

The entire infinite and wide world is my form or manifestation (because Brahm has revealed itself as this world, and this Brahm and my Atma are the same pure conscious entity—refer verse no. 43). There is nothing in this wide and vast world which is not my Atma.

Similarly, this Atma of mine is a fountainhead of infinite and measureless Sukh; it is Sukh unbound. [Refer Canto 6, verse no. 48.] (45).

46. There is no destination for a spiritual aspirant other than the realisation of the truth of the pure conscious Atma (refer verse no.43 which calls this as the Param Pad). In fact, the world is an image of this conscious factor known as the Atma (for the simple fact that it ‘lives’ and ‘consciously’ suffers from or enjoys the things present in it).

This Atma is present even in the inconsequential and humble blade of grass or weed. In other words, the blade of grass or stalk of weed are nothing but a form of the Atma (because all that lives in this world has this Atma, the pure conscious spark of life that is present in all life forms, and since the grass and weed are a member of the plant kingdom, they have the Atma in them as much as the huge tree). [Refer also verse no. 50 below.] (46).

47. Nothing is of any consequence in this world except the Atma. This whole world is an image of the Atma; it reveals the magnificent and mystical qualities and virtues of the Atma.

All this is nothing but Brahm. Brahm is the only primary element perceived in this entire world. [Refer Canto 6, verse no. 31.] (47).

48. All the scriptures and the knowledge that they contain are indicative of Brahm; they deal with Brahm; they teach about Brahm—and nothing else.

This mystical divine entity known as Brahm encircles everything in its embrace. Brahm is the only essence that provides Sukh (pleasures, comforts and happiness) to the creature. [Refer Canto 6, verse no. 45.] (48).

49. Brahm is like the eternal sky element called ‘Chidakash’ because it is eternal, fathomless, infinite, unfractionable and imperishable. [Refer Canto 6, verse no. 70.]

Brahm is called ‘Sachidanand’ because it is an embodiment of truthful and eternal bliss and happiness. [Refer Canto 6, verse nos. 1-2, 58, 63, 71.]

Brahm is ‘Avyaya’ because it does not diminish, does not decay, is infinite and has no beginning or end.

There is nothing which is not Brahm. This world devoid of Brahm has no existence and substance. [Refer Canto 6, verse no. 31.] (49).

50. There is nobody except Brahm. There is no reward or fruit except Brahm. Even the humble and inconsequential grass or weed is also Brahm (refer verse no. 46). There is no exalted stature or life time achievement worth its name that does not have Brahm in it¹ (50).

[Note—¹*Brahm* stands for grand, eclectic and divine virtues in creation; it is eternal, infinite and of perpetual value; it is the Absolute Truth and Reality personified; it is the essential ingredient that renders something important and worthwhile. Therefore anything that is of some enduring value is deemed to be Brahm in that form. For example, ‘golden’ jewelry is of value only if it truly has ‘gold’ in it, and not merely some substitute that resembles gold but isn’t gold.]

51. There is no Guru (moral preceptor, guide and teacher) other than the supreme transcendental Brahm, and there is no one like him. [Refer Canto 6, verse no. 44.]

There is no one more endearing than that Brahm (who is the best and most enlightened teacher for all the living beings)¹ (51).

[Note—¹Brahm represents pure consciousness and supreme enlightenment. A wise teacher is also expected to be enlightened and conscious of his moral obligations towards his ward to take care of his long term spiritual welfare and enlightenment as much as Brahm has towards this creation, for the supreme creator takes care of his creation like a loving father and arranges for the necessary things that each individual creature would need for its existence in this world. Except for Brahm, the rest of the creation is very selfish and self-centered.]

52. A wise, erudite and enlightened person should treat his own 'self' as Brahm personified. As such, there is nothing of any worth besides the 'self' (because this 'self' is Brahm, the supreme transcendental Truth and cosmic Consciousness in creation).

Whatever is seen in this world, whatever is heard in this world, is all illusionary and deceptive in nature, and not real like the Truth known as Brahm. [That is, if anything is *not* Brahm then it cannot be true.] (52).

53. Similarly, whatever is enjoyed or suffered are also illusive and deceptive in nature.

Likewise, the concept of being a 'doer of deeds' is as much a delusion as the concept of the 'actual deed done' and the different interpretations about its cause¹.

Similarly, there is no distinction between two types of Gunas (qualities and virtues) as far as the Atma is concerned (because it shows an exemplary degree of equanimity and fortitude), and neither is there any sense of taste in the Atma (because taste is a function of the taste buds located in the organ known as the tongue of the gross body, and not of the Atma which does not taste anything and neither does it have any organ of its own like the ones possessed by the gross body) (53).

[Note—¹This is because the actual conscious being that can do something is the Atma which is the true identity of the creature, and this Atma remains neutral and non-involved in anything done by the gross body in which it lives. It is at best a neutral observer and just dispassionately watches what the body does. This is the enlightened view of a wise person. But it is not always so every time. What actually happens is that the person, under the influence of ignorance and delusions, thinks that he is doing the deed which is actually being done by his physical gross body and not the Atma. Therefore, the notion of doing the deed because of this or that reason is as erroneous and misplaced as the illusive concept of being a doer of any deed.]

54. There is no fundamental difference or distinction between any given two creatures having separate bodies. This is because both have the same supreme transcendental Lord (known as Brahm who) residing in all the creatures (as their individual Atma) as their 'truthful self', though their bodies are different in form and look.

This eclectic and holistic view of Divinity fills the enlightened person with profound happiness and bliss¹.

Extended further, this unity and universality as well as supremacy of the final 'truth' about one dignified Principal Divinity that is the ultimate Truth in this whole world establishes that there is no dichotomy between two Kaals (periods of time, era and circumstances), Desh (country and place) and Vastu (material things)².

Similarly, there is no difference between victory and defeat³ (54).

[Note—¹This is because all causes for disharmony, ill-will, jealousy and animosity are removed at once when a person begins to see everyone with eyes of equality and equanimity. There would be no enemy and no competitor from whom to fear and strive to protect one's self interest from being violated. This would result in universal brotherhood and creation of a fraternity of loving people who would love others as much as they would love themselves. This is one of the great commandants of Jesus Christ—St. Mark, 12/31 which exhorts one to love one's neighbour as one would love one's own self. We observe here that more than anything else, the philosophy of Advaita Vedanta is of the greatest practical application in today's world torn asunder by strife, malice, jealousy etc., with man suspecting another of plotting against him.

²This is because the factor of 'truth' will always remain the same no matter when it is applied or recalled. For instance, if anything has happened in a particular way say a century back, then it would not change even if we re-write and twist the facts of history to suit our vested interests. We can at most distort history but we cannot erase the truth about that happening a century ago. All empirical principles of science and mathematics are universally applicable in all planes of time, era and circumstances. Even as modern science relies on 'truth', metaphysical science too relies on 'truth' albeit called 'spiritual truth' instead of 'material truth'.

³Victory and defeat are obtained by the efforts done by the body or those made by the mind. As far as the Atma is concerned, both are irrelevant because it is an ethereal Spirit that neither does anything nor expects to reap any benefit from such action. Besides this, victory is obtained against an enemy by defeating him. When all are alike for the enlightened person, there is no question of his having to fight anyone to obtain victory over him or suffering a defeat at his hands.]

55. Indeed there is no distinction or difference between any two things in this world when one has developed an eclectic and holistic view about the supreme transcendental Brahm as being all-pervading, all-encompassing, all-incorporating and omnipresent in creation, and that whatever exists in this world, from the minutes to the grandest, is a manifestation of this single, non-dual and unequivocally truthful divinity known as Brahm.

With this ethereal and holistic view of Divinity one realises that all the concepts that are associated with physical existence of the body of the creature, such as the 'Antahakaran' (i.e. the mind and heart along with their natural qualities of thinking, having emotions and sentiments etc.) and the Indriyas (sense organs of the body), are all non-truths as far as the creature's true self (the Atma or pure consciousness) is concerned (55).

56. Once the falsehood of the gross, perishable and vulnerable body vis-à-vis the truthful, eternal and ethereal Atma is clear, all other things which work in close coordination with each other and which together make up this gross body, and are then also responsible for its existence and maintenance, are also deemed to be falsehoods.

Thus, the Pran (vital winds that sustain the body), the Panch Kosha¹ (the five so-called sheaths which surround the Atma), and the five patron Gods called the Panch Devas (Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer and protector, Shiva the concluder, Aditya the Sun God, and Ganesh the son of Shiva and the God who is worshipped before all other Gods in the Hindu pantheon of Gods), are all falsehoods and non-existent (56).

[Note—¹The concept of *Panch Kosha* has been described in Canto 4, verse no. 74-75 and Canto 5, verse no. 103.]

57. The six ‘Vikars’ or faults associated with this existence which are like the various enemies that the creature has¹, the concept of six seasons² and the six tastes³—all of them are illusive and imaginary in nature (57).

[Note—¹The six *Vikars* are the shortcomings or faults that are like the *enemies* of the creature. They are the problems associated with this gross world that has a physical origin, takes a birth and ultimately ends or dies. Naturally they are not applicable to the supreme Lord who does not take birth and does not die. These so-called ‘Vikars’ are the following—(1) problems associated with birth, (2) problems associated with growth, (3) problems associated with consequences of deeds done and actions taken by a creature in this world, (4) problems associated with gradual decay and decline of the body and its functions, (5) problems associated with old age and its attendant horrors, and (6) problems associated with the ultimate destruction and end of everything that relates to the creature. One will observe that the life of a creature is a continuous graph of sorrows, sufferings and pains of one or the other kind. It is only when the creature realises the truth of existence and who he really is that he begins to disassociate himself from the body and the world, and thus is able to break free from this seemingly interminable cycle of horrors. Refer *Mudgal Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse no. 6 of Rig Veda tradition as well as *Adhyatma Ramayan* of Veda Vyas, Lanka Kand, Canto 3, verse no. 29.

According to the *Varaha Upanishad*, canto 1 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, there are *six urmis* or faults associated with a creature. They are the following—Ashanaaye (hunger), Pipasa (thirst), Shoka (grief and sorrows), Moha (delusions), Jara (old age) and Mritu (death)—refer also *Mudgal Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse no. 7 of Rig Veda tradition.

There also *other six faults* that are considered as *enemies* of a man—Kaam (worldly passions, lust, desires and yearning), Krodh (anger, indignation and wrathfulness), Lobh (greed and rapacity), Moha (ignorance based delusions, worldly infatuations, attractions and attachments), Mada (egoism, arrogance, haughtiness and hypocrisy) and Matsarya (envy, jealousy, malice and ill-will)—refer *Mudgal Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse no. 4 of Rig Veda tradition.

²The *six seasons* are the following—winter (Nov.-Dec.), late winter or the season of snowfall (Jan.-Feb.), spring (March-April), summer (May-June), rainy (July-August) and autumn or fall (Sept.-Oct.).

³The *six tastes* are the following flavours—sweet, salty, sour, bitter, pungent or hot, and astringent. Sometimes acidic (vinegar) and bland are also regarded as separate category of tastes. Refer *Garbho-panishad*, verse no. 1 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

58. I (the pure conscious Atma, the true self of the creature) am nothing but ‘Sachiddaanand’, i.e. am an embodiment and image of beatitude and felicity that is eternal, truthful and infinite. [Refer Canto 6, verse nos. 1-2, 49, 63.]

I do not have any birth (as I am eternal and imperishable). I am also not this world or a part of it (because this world takes a birth and comes to an end). [Refer Canto 6, verse nos. 63, 71.]

Indeed, I am that Atma which is the supreme Truth personified. Everything else visible in this deluding world of diversities and myriad confusions has no existence and truth in them (58).

59. I (the pure conscious Atma, the true self of the creature) am an image of truthful bliss; I am an image of truth *and* bliss. I am image of eternal consciousness and enlightenment besides embodying bliss.

Indeed, I am an embodiment of supreme bliss and happiness. I am the most exalted and the Supreme Being personified. [Refer Canto 6, verse nos. 42, 65, 68.] (59).

60. I (the pure conscious Atma, the true self of the creature) am an image and fountainhead of complete Gyan, i.e. knowledge that is eternal, ethereal and divine, knowledge that is enlightening and liberating¹.

When the light of Gyan is lit in my heart, the latter (heart) is illuminated with the divine light of consciousness where no darkness representing delusions and misconceptions can ever hope to survive. This fills the heart with immense contentedness and blissfulness. It effuses out of my being and forms a halo of a divine glow around me. As a result, I become an embodiment of light myself. [That is, this light of 'Gyan' completely lights up my inner and outer self, and it radiates out of my heart like the light coming out of the wick of a lighted lamp.]

I represent all the hues and shades of thoughts and emotions that exist in this creation² (60).

[Note—¹Gyan is the truthful knowledge of what constitutes the absolute, eternal, universal, incontrovertible and irrefutable Reality and Truth in this creation. 'Gyan' is truthful knowledge about the reality; knowledge in all its sublime connotations; knowledge in all its glorious forms; a comprehensive knowledge which does not leave anything to be known; knowledge that can help the seeker obtain liberation and deliverance for his soul from the fetters have been shackling it to ignorance and delusions.

Therefore, Gyan in terms of metaphysics is spiritual awareness and enlightenment which makes a man have an access to that knowledge about the great Truth of existence that is eternal, ethereal and divine in nature. This knowledge and awareness leaves nothing more to be learnt and pursued by a spiritual aspirant. It is the culmination of his journey of quest of the Truth about himself and about the rest of the creation.

²This is because thoughts and emotions arise in something that is conscious and alive, and not in something that is inert and lifeless. The Atma is the conscious factor in the creature's body, and therefore all thoughts and emotions that the creature possesses is because of the presence of this Atma in its body.]

61. I am always enlightened and conscious, and therefore I have a truthful existence. [I am not false and illusive.] Similarly, you too are an embodiment of the supreme transcendental Brahm. You too are an embodiment of eternal enlightenment and knowledge as well as of beatitude and felicity (61).

62. I am of an eternal and infinite form. I am like the eternal and infinite sky which cannot be measured. I am the divine Being who is eternally happy and contented.

I am the Atma, the pure consciousness, and therefore I am not false and illusive. I am known and honoured by the title of 'Kutastha' because I am the one who occupies an exalted place or possess a high stature in existence; I am unchanging, unalterable and immutable; I am subtle and sublime; I am hidden and secret; I am steady, constant and immovable. Being such an exalted being, I am the great Guru¹, the supreme One who removes all darkness of ignorance and delusions by the virtue of his self-originating illumination that takes the form of the light of enlightenment which lights up the entire world for the creature (62).

[Note—¹The concept of Guru has been explained in detail in note of verse no. 44 of this Canto no. 6. The term has been referred repeatedly in this Upanishad, for instance in Canto 2, verse no. 52, and Canto 5, verse nos. 1, 58 etc.]

63. I (the pure conscious Atma, the true self of the creature) am nothing but 'Sachiddaanand', i.e. am an embodiment and image of beatitude and felicity that is eternal, truthful and infinite. [Refer Canto 6, verse nos. 1-2, 49, 58.]

I do not have any birth (as I am eternal and imperishable). I am also not this world or a part of it (because this world takes a birth and comes to an end). [Refer Canto 6, verse nos. 29, 58.]

The concept of Kaal (ever changing time and circumstances; death of the present life and end of one era) does not apply to me. [This is because I am steady and unchanging; because I am eternal and imperishable. Refer Canto 6, verse no. 35; Canto 1, verse no. 24; Canto 4, verse no. 69.]

This artificial world of delusions also does not exist for all practical purposes for me as it is a creation of Maya (delusions, deceptions and falsehoods). [Refer Canto 5, verse no. 33.] (63).

64. I (the pure conscious and enlightened Atma as a manifestation of the ethereal Spirit and the Supreme Being), in my cosmic form, am the Lord known as Hari (Vishnu, the sustainer and protector of creation). Similarly, I am a personification of Sadaa Shiva (the eternal Lord who is known for his enlightenment, wisdom, truthfulness, sense of dispassion and detachment towards everything worldly and perishable etc.). [Refer Canto 3, verse no. 51; Canto 6, verse no. 37.]

Indeed, I am nothing but pure and unadulterated consciousness and enlightenment. I possess all the holy, divine and eclectic virtues in creation; I personify them (64).

65. I am non-dual and an embodiment of Anand (blissfulness). [Or, I am an embodiment of beatitude and felicity that has no parallel, that is unique and without a second. Refer Canto 6, verse nos. 59, 68.]

I am a fountainhead of pure consciousness and enlightenment.

Verily, there is Brahm everywhere; there is nothing but eternal and infinite Brahm everywhere. Everything is Brahm; there is nothing that is not Brahm (65).

[Note—It should be clear that this statement is being made by a man who is deemed to be self realised and one who has experienced and witnessed this mysterious 'truth' of creation first hand. Though on the face of it there appears to be dichotomy in the two statements about this world—one saying that it is false, and other saying that it is true because it is Brahm—but on close analysis we find that both are correct in their own spheres.

The first statement that the world is 'false' is true because it is made up of gross and artificial things that take a birth and therefore are bound to come to an end. Anything that comes to an end is never an eternal and infinite Truth because anything with these attributes of being 'eternal and infinity' must not die.

Similarly the second statement is also true because if anything exists and shows signs of life, if it thinks and exhibits emotions, then it must have consciousness in it, as lifeless things do not show any signs of life and neither do they think or have emotions. In this case, the wise man is not referring to the gross physical world consisting of the perishable body and the deeds done by it when he says that this world is Brahm, but he is referring to the hidden consciousness, the pure consciousness, the immaculate Atma concealed inside that gross body which is being called as Brahm, and which indeed it is.]

66. Brahm is present everywhere; everything is Brahm. Brahm is eternal and universal consciousness. [Refer Canto 6, verse nos. 4, 31; Canto 3, verse nos. 60-74; Canto 1, verse no. 17.]

I am a personification of that all-pervading and all-encompassing ever-present Brahm, and therefore I am the one, as pure conscious Atma, who resides in the bosom of all living beings.

This subtle and sublime form of mine as the omnipresent Atma is a witness to all and everything in this world (and therefore nothing is hidden from me) (66).

[Note—This is not merely loud-mouthed bragging and hypocrisy. In ancient times, sages and seers were known to possess mystical powers that enabled them to learn the inner feelings and thoughts of others. This power to read the mind of others and know their thoughts and emotions are still possessed by some mystics in this modern age, but it has become a rarity in this age of skepticism and cynicism.]

67. The supreme transcendental Lord of creation is like the fount of splendorous light, a source from which the glow of eternal divinity effuses and radiates out in every direction to illuminate this creation. That supreme Lord (known as Brahm) is the highest citadel and the final destination for all creatures where they yearn and strive to go. It is the ultimate destination and resting place for the soul where it can find its final peace and rest. This is called the Param Pad. [Refer Canto 6, verse no. 43.]

This is the final conclusion of all the Vedas; it is determined by all the scriptures. I, as the Atma which is an embodiment of that supreme transcendental Lord and pure conscious ethereal Spirit, am ‘that’ destination¹ (67).

[Note—¹The emphasise here is on ‘self realisation’. When the enlightened person makes this assertion, he knows that he is talking about the supreme transcendental Brahm who is ‘non-dual’ and present inside his own bosom as his Atma. For such a believer in the philosophy of non-duality, there is no such thing as a heaven located somewhere high in the sky. It is located inside his own self where the Atma lives.]

68. I (the pure conscious Atma) am a personification of the ecstasy and bliss obtained by doing Yoga (meditation and contemplation).

I am an embodiment of the grandest forms of Anand (beatitude and felicity; ecstasy and exhilaration). [Refer Canto 6, verse nos. 42, 59, 65, 72.]

I am a fountainhead of a divine light representing comprehensive knowledge of the Truth that shine in me as eternal source of wisdom and enlightenment. I am an embodiment of Vigyan (knowledge that can be empirically proved and logically and intelligently applied). [This concept of the Atma being Vigyan personified and what is Vigyan itself is explained in Canto 2, verse no. 31 and the note appended to it.] (68).

69. I (the pure conscious Atma) am like the ethereal divine glow that is witnessed in the highest stage of meditation, the stage known as Turiya. In fact, I am a personification of that light known as Divinity. But I am not to be limited to this exclusive domain of Turiya because I am present in other states of existence also.

I am eternal and imperishable. I am truthful. I am Vasudeo (Lord Vishnu), the Lord who is imperishable, who does not grow old, and who is eternal (69).

70. I (the pure conscious Atma) am a personification of Brahm who is like the ‘Chidakash’—the sky which is eternal and infinite, which is pure and uncorrupt, which is ethereal and uniform. [Refer Canto 6, verse no. 49.]

I am Brahm which is ‘Nitya’—perpetual, eternal and ever-present. I am Brahm which is ‘Niranjan’—the supreme One having no defects, faults, taints,

blemishes, shortcomings and scars of any kind; one who is absolutely immaculate and pristine pure; an epithet applied to Lord Vishnu, the sustainer and protector of creation. one whose sublime, subtle, esoteric and mystical form is so microscopic and diffused that it cannot be seen by the naked eyes of the physical gross body, but which can only be perceived by the eye of wisdom, erudition and enlightenment. [Refer Canto 3, verse no. 42.]

I am that Brahm which is 'Shudh'—pure, uncorrupt, untarnished and immaculate. I am that Brahm which is 'Buddha'—wise, realised, awakened and enlightened. I am always 'Mukta'—i.e. I am eternally liberated and emancipated. I do not have a name and physical form (because I am an ethereal and disembodied Spirit) (70).

[Note—In other words, I am that enlightened being who possesses all these divine and eclectic virtues in him as his integral character-determining qualities.]

71. I (the pure conscious Atma, the true self of the creature) am nothing but 'Sachiddeenand', i.e. am an embodiment and image of beatitude and felicity that is eternal, truthful and infinite. [Refer Canto 6, verse nos. 1-2, 58, 63, 72.]

I do not have any birth (as I am eternal and imperishable). I am also not this world or a part of it (because this world takes a birth and comes to an end). [Refer Canto 6, verse nos. 58, 63.]

Truth is the only entity that is not false; all the rest that is 'non-truth' is obviously falsehood, deceptive and illusive. The world has no truthful existence; it has no reality¹. Therefore, all the different Sankalps² that a creature makes vis-à-vis this world are also false and deceptive in nature (71).

[Note—¹The *world* is an imaginative creation of the creative mind. Anything based on imagination and fantasy is not true. The genesis of creation also asserts that the creator had 'decided' to create this visible world inhabited by 'mortal' creatures, and all decisions are taken by the mind. Once the mind was programmed to imagine the type of world that the creator envisaged to create, the maverick and all-powerful mind, with this brief from the creator, set off to work and set in motion its own expert faculty of imaginative thinking and creative craftsmanship to craft, virtually out of nothing, this artificial but most charming and fascinating world that we see around us. Then it filled it with creatures who were designated the title of 'mortal' because the creator knew that since this world is only imaginative it is bound to come to an end sooner or later; the world had no substance and pith in it, and was only like a mirage in the hot desert or a city of dreams created by an expert magician, a city that can vanish in a flash.

On the other hand, the Atma, which is the subject matter of this Upanishad, is not imaginative, because it is eternal Consciousness, the Absolute Truth and ethereal cosmic Spirit. It is not gross and subject to decay and perishability. The world presents a sharp contrast to this Atma because the latter is gross, transient and perishable.

²That is, the various *Sankalps*, or ambitions, desires and aspirations that a creature has, and his decision, his volition, his firm determination, the strong vows and resolutions that he makes in order to be successful in fulfilling them are all deluding for him because the basic premise that this world is not the truth precludes any scope of getting success in getting long-lasting peace and comfort by making any such Sankalps about anything in that is related to this artificial and transient world.

Refer Canto 3, verse no. 67; Canto 5, verse nos. 2, 5, 16, 63, 98 etc.]

72. I (the pure conscious Atma) am that Brahm who is the only¹ embodiment of eternal and perpetual 'Anand' (beatitude and felicity; ecstasy and exhilaration; happiness and joys).

I am 'Anant' (without an end; eternal and infinite). I am 'Avyaya' (That which does not diminish, which does not decay, which is infinite and which has no beginning or end).

I am 'Shaant' (peaceful, tranquil, calm, serene and quiet). I have a non-dual existence, having only one ethereal form which has no name and any physical gross form (which can be felt and seen in conventional terms) (72).

[Note--¹In other words, if one were to search for the real source of Anand then one need not go anywhere except Brahm because the latter is the only point where eternal and imperishable bliss and happiness can be found. If one says that he has found Anand in some other thing of this world, and given that there might be some other source of bliss and happiness other than Brahm in this world, then it is an erroneous conception of a deluded mind that is hallucinating under misconceptions and misplaced understanding of the real meaning of Anand. The bliss, pleasures, happiness and comforts that are derived from the material things of the world are temporary, deluding and like a snare spread by a bird catcher to catch the bird. They are not the eternal and pristine pure Anand which is of top notch quality and which is an accoutrement of spiritual liberation, emancipation and deliverance. This 'false Anand' which is derived from the world is as illusive and deluding as the world itself; it is misleading and like a mirage seen in a desert; it is but a copycat of the original and can never replace the ecstasy of eternal bliss obtained by Brahm-realisation.]

73. If anything is said to exist other than 'I or me' (as the pure consciousness and the ethereal Spirit known as the Atma, the 'truthful self'), then all such existential states and things are false and deluding like the mirage seen in a hot desert.

Is anyone ever scared by threatening words of a man who is himself in captivity and tied firmly in shackles?¹ (73).

[Note--¹Obviously, the threats of a captive man are made by him out of frustration and they do not have any substance in them; they are vain words; they are inconsequential and should be laughed away. There is no cause of fear from any threats from a man who is held in bondage as he is unable to give effect to his threats. Likewise, there is no real substance and truth in any of the things said to be true and real in this world by a person who is himself under delusions and ignorant of the truth, for this man is also a captive of ignorance and delusions. To follow the advice given by such a man is like taking the threats of a captive man seriously. They are hollow and inconsequential, and therefore should be neglected outright.]

74. The colossus elephant is never killed when attacked by the humble rabbit even if the latter tries to goad the former with the rudimentary vestiges of its horns.

Similarly, the water in the distant mirage in the hot sand of the desert never quenches anyone's thirst (74).

75. No one is killed or harmed by the vestige of the horn present on the head of a man¹. Likewise, no real world exists in the land of Gandharvas² (75).

[Note—¹The *man* and the *rabbit* do not have prominent horns like the cows or other members of the animal kingdom. So if they think that they can harm anyone by attacking their enemies by emulating the other horned animals, they are being stupid.

²The *Gandharvas* are mentioned in Yajur Veda, 18/38. The word refers to their special characteristic of being very merry and joyous, and fond of sweet fragrances (Jaimini Upanishad Brahmin, 3/5/6/4). They are very lustful, lascivious, passionate and promiscuous; they love being in the company of females, such as celestial

damsels called Apsaraas (Shatpath Brahmin, 9/4/1/4; 3/2/4/3). They have been assigned the duty of protection of Som, the divine drink of the Gods and the liquid that is sanctified and offered to the sacred fire during fire sacrifices (Shatpath Brahmin, 3/6/2/9).

Amongst the Vedas, they find their name appearing in Yajur Veda 18/38 and Atharva Veda 2/2.

They are said to be the sons of Kashyap Prajaapati and his wife Arishta. Their chief is called 'Chitra Rath'. The Apsaraas are said to be their wives. Some of the Gandharvas are the following—Tumbru, Haa-haa, Huu-huu, Vishvaa-vasu, Chitrasena, Vidyaa-dhar, Paraa-vasu, and Viraadha. They are controlled by Varun.

The Gandharvas have two categories according to the Upanishads and Brahmins—viz. the 'Dev-Gandharvas' and 'Manushya-Gandharvas'. The former are the entertainers of the Gods and live in the heaven, while the latter live on earth and are regarded as professional singers and dancers. The 'Dev' category of Gandharvas have a long life equivalent to the life of Gods and regarded as 'immortal' in a relative sense when compared to their human or 'Manushya' counterparts who have a very short life-span and therefore called mortal.

According to Taittiriya Aaranyaka, (i, 9, 3), there are eleven sub-classes of Gandharvas. But according to Agni Puran, the Gandharvas have twelve sub-classes, and they are Abhrajya, Andhaari, Rambhaari, Suryavarchaa, Kridhu, Hasta, Suhasta, Swun/Swan, Murdahwaan, Mahaamanaa, Vishwaa-vasu, and Krishaanu.

The Gandharvas are celestial performers of dance and music. Even in the world, those who adopt dancing and singing as their profession are called Gandharvas. They are always flamboyantly dressed, wear a make up that creates an illusion of beauty and charm, and create a fascinating magical set for their dance and music performances. They live a life that is colourful and flamboyant externally, their dwellings are also equally well-decorated, charming and colourful, creating an illusion of well being and prosperity, but this is not the reality as they are regarded as being of a lowly category in the hierarchy of celestial beings in the heaven or even amongst other men in this world, and are usually treated as creatures of a low moral such as whores and pimps. The stages or platforms they create while presenting their skills are very illusive and deceptive like the world of dreams created on stage by a magician. They are short-term and last as long as the play lasts, for soon afterwards they are dismantled and tucked away for storage. In short, what these Gandharvas present on the face of it is far away from the reality, and should never be taken at its face value. If one believes in a Gandharva and keeps his company then it is certain that he would fall from grace and be abhorred by the rest of the civilised and cultured society for keeping bad company, of being pervert and of a low moral.

They are celestial musicians who belong to a class of lower rung semi-Gods who lived in the company of celestial damsels, called Apsaraas, who danced for the entertainment of the Gods, who guarded the ambrosia of eternity and bliss, called Amrit, who were experts in treating various diseases, who were able to exercise mystical control over women and held them under their spell and charm, who sometimes tormented humans in the guise of some evil spirit, and who were great experts in the art and skill of playing music of all kinds. The word has other connotations also—it refers to those Gods who had the face of a horse or a deer; that Atma which has left one body and acquired another one; a tribe whose are professional singers and whose girls are professional prostitutes; the second husband of a widow who has remarried.

The Gandharvas are mythological musicians of the Gods. They live in decorated cities and also deck themselves up in all finery like stage players in a theatre company. They conjure up fascinating scenes to entertain the Gods. Therefore, they are used as a metaphor to describe anything that is not real but looks very charming and attractive from the outside nevertheless because they create magic spell of unimaginable beauty when they perform in the heaven. All their creation are

temporary and last only till the time the theatre is being played; as soon as the show is over, they wind up everything and vanish from sight. So, philosophically, this body and the world are compared to them and their cities because of the similarity of attractiveness of the illusions created and the transience of both.

The word also refers to those bards, minstrels and people who are professional singers. They flock to an exalted person of the stature of the one who has attained enlightenment by realising the Atma, and they sing his glories and achievements. This helps to spread his fame far and wide in all the corners of the world because these singers go everywhere and sing hymns highlighting the glories and achievements of such exalted people from one generation to another. For example, the great poet saints of India have spread the glories of the Lord by the means of singing devotional hymns called 'Bhajans' in the honour of their patron deity. Similarly, royal bards and minstrels employed by great kings had composed verses honouring and lauding their patron king.]

76. If the sky is really blue as it appears to be, then this world would be true¹! Similarly, if there is real silver in the shimmering of the oyster shell, then there would be truth in this world². Is it possible to make real-time silvery jewelry from this shimmering oyster shell? (76).

[Note—¹Everyone knows that the sky is basically colourless and the bluish hue in it is due to the scattering of sunlight in the atmosphere of the earth. That is why the outer space beyond the earth's atmosphere appears to be completely dark and void. So if anyone thinks that the basically colourless sky has any colour, blue or otherwise, he is ignorant of the fact. Similarly, if any one says that this world is true because he can see it and feel it and witness it first hand, then he is also ignorant of the real truth.

²The oyster shell looks glazed from the inside when put out in the sunlight. It appears to be coated with a thin layer of silver foil. But this is an illusion as there is no silver in an oyster shell. Likewise, this world is not what it appears to be. Visuals are often misleading as proved by these two citations here.]

77. The erroneous belief that a harmless length of rope is a snake does not make the rope bite anyone. The world is also as imaginary as this snake in the rope. Similarly, a polished and brilliantly shining golden arrow that glints in the rays of the sun does not spew fire that can burn anything though its glint might resemble the spark from a burning fire. The world is also as imaginary as the presence of fire in this arrow (77).

[Note—This verse can be read as follows also—"Even as a harmless length of rope imagined to be a snake does not bite, and an ordinary arrow of gold does not spew fire, this world too does not exist.".]

78. If there is even a remote possibility that sweetened rice can be grown in the rocky soil of the barren stretch of Vindhya mountainous region (which is an incredulous thing to even imagine because rice does not grow on dry and hardened rocks), then this world might be true! Similarly, if there is even a remote possibility that the wet stem of the plantain tree can be used to light a fire that can be used to cook food (which is again an impossible thing), then there is a possibility that this world may be true! (78).

[Note—This verse can be read as follows also—"Even as sweet rice cannot be grown in a rocky and barren region such as the one called the 'Vindhaya', and the soft, damp and moist stem of the plantain tree cannot be used as firewood to light a fire to cook meals, this world also cannot be imagined to be true".]

79. If there is even a remote possibility that an infant girl child can properly cook food (which is highly hilarious and incredulous to even think about), then this world could

be true! Similarly, if there is even a remote possibility that darkness can be removed by the picture of a lighted lamp, then this world can have a chance of being true! (79).

[Note—This verse can be read as follows also—“Even as an infant girl child cannot cook food, and darkness cannot be removed by the picture of a lighted lamp hanging on the wall, this world also cannot be imagined to be true”.]

80. If there is even a remote possibility that a man who has died a month back can be revived or brought back to life, then this word might become true! Similarly, if there is even a remote possibility that milk can be extracted from curd or yogurt (which is impossible), then this world might be called true! (80).

[Note—This verse can be read as follows also—“Even as a man who had died a month back cannot be brought back to life and milk extracted from curd or yogurt, this world also cannot be imagined to be true”.]

81. If there is even a remote possibility that the milk that has been taken out of a cow’s udder can be put back into it, then this world might be called true! Similarly, if there is even a remote possibility that a dust storm might arise from the ocean, then this world might be called true! (81).

[Note—This verse can be read as follows also—“Even as it is impossible to put the milk back into a cow’s udder and a dust storm to arise from an ocean, this world also cannot be imagined to be true”.]

82. If there is even a remote possibility that an elephant can be tied by the hair present on the body of a humble tortoise, then it might be possible to imagine that the world exists! Similarly, if there is even a remote possibility that Mt. Meru (the great and biggest mountain where Gods live) can be girdled and shackled by the stem of a lotus flower, then one can imagine that the world might be true! (82).

[Note—This verse can be read as follows also—“Even as an elephant cannot be tied by the minute hairs on the body of a humble tortoise, and Mt. Meru cannot be girdled and tied by the stem of a lotus flower, this world also cannot be imagined to be true”.]

83. If there is even a remote possibility that the mighty ocean can be tied by its waves, then it might be possible to imagine that the world exists! Similarly, if there is even a remote possibility that frigid conditions prevail under a ferociously burning fire, then one can imagine that the world might be true! (83).

[Note—This verse can be read as follows also—“Even as it is impossible to tie the ocean with its waves and frigid conditions to exist underneath a ferocious fire, this world also cannot be imagined to be true”.]

84. If there is even a remote possibility that the leaping flames of a ferociously burning fire are soothing and comforting (which is simply impossible), then this world might be true! Similarly, if there is even a remote possibility that a lotus flower blooms in such a fire (which is again an impossible thing), then there is a possibility that this world may be true! (84).

[Note—This verse can be read as follows also—“Even as a leaping flame of a ferociously burning fire cannot be soothing, and equally preposterous is to think that a lotus flower can grow and bloom in it, this world also cannot be imagined to be true”.]

85. If there is even a remote possibility that one can actually see a mountain of Indra Neel Mani (which is a mystical blue gem worn by Indra, the king of Gods) which is an incredulous thing to even imagine, then this world might be true! Similarly, if there

is even a remote possibility that the greatest mountain called Mt. Meru can be uprooted from its location and re-established in the iris of the eye which is again an impossible proposition, then there is a possibility that this world may be true! (85).

[Note—This verse can be read as follows also—“Even as a mountain of blue gems known as Indra Neel Mani do not exist, and equally preposterous is to think that Mt. Meru can be uprooted and transplanted in the iris of one’s eye, this world also cannot be imagined to be true”.]

86. If there is even a remote possibility that a bumble bee can gobble up Mt. Meru (which is an incredulous thing to even imagine), then this world might be true! Similarly, if there is even a remote possibility that a mosquito might kill a lion (which is again an impossible proposition to imagine), then there is a possibility that this world may be true! (86).

[Note—This verse can be read as follows also—“Even as a bumble bee cannot eat the great mountain called Meru, and the mosquito cannot kill a lion, this world also cannot be imagined to be true”.]

87. If there is even a remote possibility that the three worlds called Triloki¹ can sink in the hollow created by scooping out a little part of a tiny dust particle (which is an incredulous thing to even imagine), then this world might be true! Similarly, if there is even a remote possibility that a fire made from a blade of grass can be kept alight for eternity (which is again a preposterous proposition to imagine), then there is a possibility that this world may be true! (87).

[Note—This verse can be read as follows also—“Even as the three worlds called Triloki cannot be accommodated in the hollow scooped out from a dust particle, and a sustainable fire cannot be lit from a single stalk of weed or grass, this world also cannot be imagined to be true”.

The three worlds are the terrestrial, nether and heavenly.]

88. If there is even a remote possibility that the world seen in a dream can actually be seen in the waking state (which is an incredulous thing to even imagine), then this world might be true! Similarly, if there is even a remote possibility that the currents of a river are static (which is again a preposterous proposition to imagine), then there is a possibility that this world may be true! (88).

[Note—This verse can be read as follows also—“Even as the world of dreams have no sustainable and tangible existence in the waking world, and the currents of a swiftly moving river and its rapids cannot be made hemmed in and made immobile, this world also cannot be imagined to be true”.]

89. If there is even a remote possibility that a hungry man would quench his hunger by eating fire (which is an incredulous thing to even imagine), then this world might be true! Similarly, if there is even a remote possibility that a blind man can judge the quality of a precious gem (which is again a preposterous proposition to imagine), then there is a possibility that this world may be true! (89).

[Note—This verse can be read as follows also—“Even as a hungry man would never even attempt to eat fire to satisfy his hunger (because this is ridiculous and absurd), and a blind man can never be able to judge the quality and value of a gem no matter how hard he tries, this world also cannot be imagined to be true”.]

90. If there is even a remote possibility that a sexually neutral man, i.e. a eunuch, can ever hope to enjoy sexual union with a woman (which is an incredulous thing to even imagine), then this world might be true! Similarly, if there is even a remote possibility

that a chariot can be yoked to the horns of a rabbit (which is again a preposterous proposition because the rabbit does not have a horn), then there is a possibility that this world may be true! (90).

[Note—This verse can be read as follows also—“Even as a sexually impotent man cannot enjoy sex, and a chariot cannot be tied to the non-existent horns of a rabbit, this world also cannot be imagined to be true”.]

91. If there is even a remote possibility that a newly born girl child can be sexually enjoyed (which is an incredulous, pervert and savage thing to even imagine), then this world might be true! Similarly, if there is even a remote possibility that a poor slave woman can enjoy the pleasures and satisfaction of pregnancy (which is again a preposterous proposition because she would not be allowed to rest and get proper nourishment needed in such situations), then there is a possibility that this world may be true! (91).

[Note—This verse can be read as follows also—“Even as a newly born girl cannot be sexually enjoyed and a slave woman cannot enjoy her pregnancy, this world cannot be imagined to be true”.]

92. If there is even a remote possibility that the crow can walk majestically like a swan (which is an incredulous thing to even imagine), then this world might be true! Similarly, if there is even a remote possibility that a donkey would fight a lion and win (which is again a preposterous proposition to imagine), then there is a possibility that this world may be true! (92).

[Note—This verse can be read as follows also—“Even as a crow cannot walk majestically as a swan, and a donkey fight with a lion and win, this world also cannot be imagined to be true”.]

93. If there is even a remote possibility that a donkey can walk as majestically as the elephant (which is an incredulous thing to even imagine), then this world might be true! Similarly, if there is even a remote possibility that the full moon become as brilliant and fiery as the sun (which is again a preposterous proposition to imagine), then there is a possibility that this world may be true! (93).

[Note—This verse can be read as follows also—“Even as the donkey cannot walk with a magnificent gait with which an elephant does, and a full moon cannot be fiery and dazzlingly brilliant as the sun, this world also cannot be imagined to be true”.]

94. If there is even a remote possibility that Rahu can be sighted along with the moon and the sun¹ (which is an incredulous thing to even imagine), then this world might be true! Similarly, if there is even a remote possibility that the roasted seed can produce a new sprout (which is again a preposterous proposition to imagine), then there is a possibility that this world may be true! (94).

[Note--¹No one can see the Rahu, the mythical severed head of the demon which is believed to gobble up the moon and the sun during the respective eclipses. As soon as the mythical Rahu sees these two gods he gobbles them immediately, so it is impossible that they cohabit peacefully. Besides this, Rahu represents a dark shadow while the brilliantly lit disc of the moon and the sun symbolise light. Darkness and light cannot live together. Hence, if there was a possibility to see this Rahu along with the seeing of the sun and the moon then there would have been a possibility of this world as being true!

Similarly, a roasted seed cannot produce sprouts, and likewise this world cannot have an existence.]

95. If there is even a remote possibility that a pauper can enjoy the pleasures and comforts that are enjoyed by a rich man (which is an incredulous thing to even imagine), then this world might be true! Similarly, if there is even a remote possibility that a dog can win a fight with a lion (which is again a preposterous proposition to imagine), then there is a possibility that this world may be true! (95).

[Note—This verse can be read as follows also—“Even as a pauper cannot have the comforts and pleasures enjoyed by a rich man, and a dog cannot fight with a lion and win, this world also cannot be imagined to be true”.]

96. If there is even a remote possibility that a wise man’s heart (and mind) becomes overcome with ignorance and delusions (which is an incredulous thing to even imagine), then this world might be true! Similarly, if there is even a remote possibility that a dog can drink the whole ocean (which is again a preposterous proposition to imagine), then there is a possibility that this world may be true! (96).

[Note—This verse can be read as follows also—“Even as a wise man cannot be overcome with ignorance and delusions and led astray by them, and a dog cannot drink the ocean entirely, this world also cannot be imagined to be true”.]

97. If there is even a remote possibility that the sky falls upon a man and kills him (which is an incredulous thing to even imagine), then this world might be true! Similarly, if there is even a remote possibility that a flower falls down upon this earth from the sky and its fragrance spreads far and wide (which is again a preposterous proposition to imagine), then there is a possibility that this world may be true! (97).

[Note—This verse can be read as follows also—“Even as it is impossible that the sky would fall down and kill a man, and a flower would descend upon the earth from the heavens and fill its corners with its fragrance, this world also cannot be imagined to be true”.]

98. If there is even a remote possibility that the sky moves (which is an incredulous thing to even imagine), then this world might be true! Similarly, if there is even a remote possibility that a broken mirror or one which has only a blank frame can ever produce an image (which is again a preposterous proposition to imagine), then there is a possibility that this world may be true! (98).

[Note—This verse can be read as follows also—“Even as the sky can never move, and the blank frame of a mirror or a broken mirror can never reflect an image, this world also cannot be imagined to be true”.]

99. If there is even a remote possibility that the world can be accommodated in the abdomen of a goat (which is an incredulous thing to even imagine), then this world might be true! Similarly, if there is even a remote possibility that this vast world could be lodged in a man’s abdomen (which is again a preposterous proposition to imagine), then there is a possibility that this world may be true¹!

In fact, such incredibly fallacious and horribly erroneous conceptions about the world and things seen in it arise because of lack of knowledge about the reality and the fundamental truth in creation. Such absurd misconceptions arise due to confusions as to what is the ‘real and actual truth’ which is one and irrefutable, and what is an ‘apparent truth’ which is misleading like seeing water in a mirage, and which is not the reality.

The dichotomy and confusion created by the notion of duality and non-duality is misplaced and totally unwarranted because ‘truth’ can be one and not two (99).

[Note—¹This stanza can be read as follows also—“Even as the vast world cannot be accommodated in a goat’s or a man’s abdomen, this world also cannot be imagined to be true”.]

100. Such sense of confusion between what is true and what is not, the confusion that creates differences of opinion and dichotomy is due to the presence of delusions created by ignorance, a concept called the prevalence of ‘Maya’ in this world. So a wise man should have one steady belief in the supremacy of Brahm that is only ‘one’ (non-dual).

The delusory concept that this body exists as my true self (instead of my Atma, the pure consciousness, as being my true self) is the root cause of all miseries, torments, grief and sorrows from which all the creatures suffer in this world (because the world would exist only when the sense organs of perceptions in the body would perceive it and then enable the mind to process this information to become convinced about its existence).

So to overcome such painful delusion one must be convinced that there is only one Brahm and nothing else, and that Brahm is I or me (as my Atma, my pure conscious self, my ‘true self’, my ‘truthful indentity’) (100).

101. The firm belief that ‘I am Brahm personified’ is potent enough to rupture and untie all the knots of misleading concepts that tie the heart into a tangle of delusions. Once one is firmly convinced about this axiomatic maxim propounded by the scriptures, all doubts and confusions are automatically dispelled (101).

102. The unreal gross world and equally unreal gross body are non-truths, while the Atma, the pure consciousness, is like the real priceless gem. These two, the world and the body, are like thieves who are out to cheat the simple-hearted man of his precious gem. So a wise man be on his guard and strive to protect this gem from these thieves¹.

Brahm is the only embodiment of eternal and perpetual Anand (beatitude and felicity; bliss and ecstasy). [Refer Canto 6, verse nos. 1-2, 58, 63, 71-72.]

It is manifested as the true ‘self’ of the creature (as its Atma) (102).

[Note—The Atma is compared to a priceless gem because it is the only worthwhile thing as far as the man is concerned. The Atma would give him eternal peace and bliss, whereas the other two entities, the body and the world, would be only a cause of his endless miseries. For example, the body is subject to numerous problems right from birth, such as various diseases, hunger, thirst, the pains of growing up and getting old, and finally dying. Similarly, the world creates its own hoard of problems for the creature once it jumps into its ocean of uncertainties—such as endless desires and ambitions, greed and lust, hopes and expectations, and such other things that never seem to come to an end. Then there are fears from enemies and thieves, grief of separation from one’s dear ones, never ending chain of material needs and the necessity of protecting them once they are successfully attained, the desire to excel and achieve success, the strivings and their accompanying blues of frustrations and depressions at failures or highs of exultations and joys at success etc.—in short the never-ending buffeting affects of the world which keep the creature tossing helplessly and haplessly in its deep troughs and high crests.]

103. The absolute truth about this eclectic, unique, mystical, holy, divine, supreme and transcendental entity known as Brahm can be rationally deduced with the help of all the logics, arguments and illustrations as cited above as well as by studying and delving deep into the scriptures.

This Brahm is all-prevailing and omnipresent in all the different worlds of every conceivable name and form, of every denomination. In fact, all the names that these various worlds have, along with their resident creatures and other ingredients or components are all the various names of one single Divinity known as Brahm. [This is the basic philosophy of Advaita Vedanta.] (103).

104. When one is convinced that he is indeed Brahm, all notions of 'Ahankar' (sense of false pride, ego, arrogance and haughtiness) vanish immediately. [This is because such negative ideas associated with the gross body cannot exist with something which is pure and holy, which is sublime and subtle, such as the divine and ethereal entity known as Brahm.]

When this realisation dawns upon the mental horizon of the spiritual aspirant, the world ceases to have any importance and significance. The world of endless diversities and dichotomies dissolve into nothingness, and only one truthful form of Brahm remains just like a flower falls off the hand of a sleeping man without his even being aware of it¹ (104).

[Note—¹A man holds a flower in his hand and goes to sleep, but as soon as he falls asleep this flower drops off his hand as his body loses all awareness of this flower and the man is unable to resist its falling. Similarly, when one trains ones self to become oblivious of the existence of this world even while living in it, this world would cease to exist for him for all practical purposes. He will no longer have to make any conscious effort to forget or get rid of the world; it would drop off him by its own accord even without his being aware of it.]

105. A wise and enlightened man should be aware of the fact that there is no truth and substance in the notion of the existence of a physical body, and hence no real existence of deeds (because deeds are done by the physical body and when there is no physical body there is no question of any deed being done by it). Therefore, only Brahm remains (as the pure conscious and truthful Atma which is the ethereal, all-pervading, universal and eternal Spirit).

As a result of this conviction, it is established that there is no existence of any entity known as a mortal creature, and therefore of any deed done by them (as all deeds are done by the body, and without the body there is no question of any deed being done by the creature)¹.

Again, since there is no 'body', the four states of its existence also do not arise² (105).

[Note—¹This is because all creatures are recognised by the virtue of their possessing a gross body and the deeds done by them. A wise man does not recognise the existence of any such gross body because he sees beyond the covering of the body to recognise the concealed Atma in that body, the Atma which is the same in all living creatures. This Atma is immortal as compared to the perishable body. Since the existence of the gross body is already discounted, the existence of deed is also discounted along with it.

²There are two connotations of these four states of existence of the body. (1) The first interpretation refers to the four stages in the life of a man, such as birth, adolescence, adulthood and old age. (2) The second interpretation refers to the four basic states of existence in which all creatures have their consciousness, such as the waking state, the dreaming state, the deep sleep state, and the Turiya state.]

106. Brahm is established by all the three methods employed to establish the veracity of anything—such as personally witnessing and experiencing it, hearing about it from

someone else, and reading about it in the scriptures. All these three methods establish beyond doubt that the only truthful existence in this world is of Brahm.

Therefore, one should abandon getting involved in anything other than pursuing this eclectic Truth; one should stop getting distracted by numerous paths that only create confusion and vexation, and instead remain firmly established in one Absolute Truth in existence, and that is known as Brahm (106).

107. One should not doubt the eclectic truth of the maxim 'I am Brahm personified'; 'I am that Brahm who is consciousness personified'. 'I am nothing but an image of truthfulness and of eternal bliss and happiness'. One should be certain about this truthful statement and never abandon it (107).

108. This profound Upanishad propounded and enunciated by Lord Shiva who is its chief exponent should not be told or taught to unworthy subjects (disciples or students) who is an apostate, a non-believer and a heretic, to those who are ungrateful and deceitful, to those who are pervert, corrupt and evil at heart, to those who are generally sinful (because they would only mock it, ridicule it, deride it, instead of attempting to understanding its great truth having enormous import on one's spiritual well being) (108).

109. The knowledge of this Upanishad should be given to someone who is devoted to his Guru (teacher and moral preceptor), to someone who is of pure and uncorrupt heart and mind, and to someone who is generally of higher spiritual inclinations.

Before someone is initiated into its secrets, he should be examined as to his eligibility, competency, aptitude and proficiency to be able to acquire this grand knowledge based on general eligibility criteria fixed for such knowledge. It should be not hurried through, but taught and understood gradually over a period of, say, one or six months or even a full year (depending upon the competency and intelligence of the student) (109).

110. One should practice and study this Upanishad to the exclusion of all other texts (because it is like the citadel of philosophy revolving around Brahm and the Atma). This Tejobindu Upanishad can provide immense spiritual happiness and bliss to the wise aspirant and spiritual seeker (110).

111. It is so potent and effective that after studying it properly and understanding its meaning correctly, if its tenets are applied even once in practice by any spiritual seeker who aspires to become Brahm-realised, then he is indeed successful in it. Such a wise and enlightened aspirant not only becomes an image of Brahm himself but everything in existence becomes Brahm for him. Indeed, this is the great and truthful teaching of this Upanishad. Amen! (111).

Thus ends Canto 6

-----Shanti Paath-----

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Chapter 15

Dhyan Bindu Upanishad/Dhyanbindu-panishad

The Dhyan Bindu Upanishad deals with two important concepts of metaphysics—viz. OM and Yoga. It analyses the various components of the divine Mantra OM which is the word representation of the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm, and then goes on to describe how it symbolically stands for the entire creation right from its conception, through its various stages of evolution and development, until its final dissolution (verse nos. 1-19). It then advises that Yoga is the best means of attaining the exalted stature of spiritual enlightenment and experiencing the eclectic bliss and beatitude obtainable by self and Brahm realisation. The different components of Yoga are described in this context (verse no. 20-93). This leads the spiritual aspirant to the citadel of self-realisation when he can witness the presence of the cosmic Consciousness within his own self and obtain Mukti, or spiritual liberation and deliverance (verse nos. 94-106).

To enable this to happen, it is necessary to have diligence, singularity of purpose, steadfastness, persistence, consistence, concentration and focus. These are the qualities which give this Upanishad its name *Dhyan Bindu*. The word 'Dhyan' means to focus one's attention on a single target without getting distracted, and 'Bindu' means a point upon which the aspirant focuses his attention—much like an archer who steadily sees the target to strike the bull's eye with his arrow (verse no. 14-15). This Upanishad therefore extols the importance of 'Dhyan' as a means of self and Brahm realisation. Dhyan is a metaphor for Yoga or meditation and contemplation. It literally refers to the concentration of the stupendous powers of the faculties of the mind to deeply contemplate and fixedly ponder on the great spiritual truths of existence as envisioned by the scriptures to unravel their enigmatic secrets. This is done by fixing the powerful forces of the mind which are aided by the physical contribution of the body in the form of various meditative exercises upon a spot called the 'Bindu', literally the point source of spiritual energy located in the heart as the 'Atma or soul' of the creature, as well as in the symbolic triangle formed at the spot in the forehead between the two eyebrows and the root of the nose. It is from here that the great mystical secrets of existence and creation are known.

This Upanishad prescribes the use of various Yoga techniques to contemplate and meditate upon the various aspects of spiritualism with the objective of unfolding the magnificent treasure of spiritual energy lying hidden inside one's own self and untapped till now. Yoga helps to unleash this astounding mystical power and help the aspirant to witness the cosmic Consciousness within his self as his Atma, leading to self and Brahm realisation, and to the awakening of the universal powers of the Spirit. He experiences profound bliss and ecstasy when he successfully reaches his spiritual goal.

While dealing with Yoga, it describes its different concepts such as Pranayam (breath control), Aasans and Mudras of Yoga (sitting postures), Shadanga Yoga (the following of the six-fold path for spiritual enlightenment and salvation), the various Chakras (subtle energy centers in the body), Prans (vital winds), Hans Vidya (acquisition of truthful knowledge pertaining to universal Spirit that resides in the individual creature's heart in the form of a symbolic Swan or Hans), Kundalini (the coiled dynamic but subtle energy center located at the base of the spine), and Naad

(the all-pervading cosmic background cosmic vibrations or sound represented by the word OM).

The eternal metaphysical question ‘why does the immaculate and uncorrupt Atma appear to be corrupted and tainted while it lives in a gross body of the creature and interacts with the world’ has been explained beautifully in verse nos. 93/1-93/15.

Some of the other relevant Upanishads of the Krishna Yajur Veda are Amrit Naad, Tejobindu, Brahm Vidya, Brahm Bindu, Yogshikha, Yogtattva, Yogkundalini etc.

-----Shanti Paath-----

ॐ सह नावतु । सह नौ भुनक्तु । सह वीर्यं करवावहै । तेजसि नावधीतमस्तु । मा विद्विषावहै ।
-----ॐ शान्तिः । शान्तिः । शान्तिः ।!!!

The meaning of this Shanti Paath is given in appendix no. 1.

1. Even if one has accumulated so much sins (over numerous lives) that they resemble a huge mountain extending to many miles, it is still possible to destroy them and overcome their horrendous consequences by following the path of ‘Dhyan Yoga’¹ (1).

[Note—¹The word *Dhyan* literally means ‘to think or to cogitate’. It is profound and abstract meditation that revolves around reflection and thoughts that are focused on the Divinity said to be concealed inside the bosom of all the creatures as their pure consciousness that in turn is the supreme cosmic power in creation known as Brahm. Usually the energy of this cosmic Consciousness is lying latent and unused in the own body of the creature simply because it is in a dormant form and un-ignited much like the fire lying dormant in the firewood or coal and needing some prodding to leap back into life with all its glorious potentials and splendour. Dhyan envisages the concentration of the stupendous powers of the faculties of the mind to deeply contemplate and fixedly ponder on the great spiritual truths of creation as envisioned by the scriptures to unravel their enigmatic secrets. This is done by fixing the powerful forces of the mind, which is aided by the physical contribution of the body in this auspicious endeavour in the form of various meditative exercises, onto a spot called the ‘Bindu’, literally the point source of spiritual energy located in the heart as the ‘Atma or soul’ of the creature, as also in the centre of the eyebrows as ‘awareness and enlightenment’, from where the great mystical dynamic powers in creation spring out and spread into the outside world. It envisions the use of various Yoga techniques to contemplate and meditate upon the various aspects of spiritualism with the objective of unfolding the magnificent treasure of spiritual enlightenment and unleashing of the astounding mystical powers that are inherently present in the Atma but were hitherto concealed in it, leading to self and Brahm realisation as well as to the awakening of the universal powers and potentials of the Spirit.

Dhyan means both contemplation as well as meditation. The word also means ‘attention; focus’. So this word is generally understood in common parlance to be similar to contemplation and meditation, concentration and focusing of the conscious mind. It covers both the terms in its ambit.

The appropriate word for contemplation in Sanskrit would be ‘Manan and Chintan’ which will roughly mean ‘deep thought, reflection, pondering and application of mind’. The Upanishads stress on this ‘Chintan-manan’ aspect of the mind-intellect when it talks about ‘Dhyan’. Greatest of scientific discoveries were

made more by intuition than anything else. That is why intuition is closely related to the so-called 'sixth sense' in a man, i.e. a state when the intuitive man knows what is the correct path to choose from a variety of options, and more often than not, he is correct. We can say that this 'intuition' is the guidance provided by the subtle soul/Atma of the creature. Not everybody is equally intuitive by nature; this is because some persons, by virtue of their past actions and deeds have a thicker layer of Vasanas and Vrittis surrounding their Atma while others have a thinner layer so that the voice coming out of the Atma is easily heard in the latter case while it is muzzled and suppressed in the former case.

The great exponent of Yoga, sage Patanjali, in his magnum opus 'Yog sutra' has described 'Dhyan' as concentration. Dhyan is that state in which the inner mind tries to see the reality behind things. This 'thinking' process links it with contemplation while concentration function links it with meditation. According to Agni Puran, contemplation with a calm mind is Dhyan while Garud Puran has defined it as concentration on the Brahm. Dhyan, therefore, leads to enlightenment. Woodworth, in his book 'Psychology', writes that the mind concentrates on one impulse at a time and neglects others. So, Dhyan in this context means 'to become alert and activated for doing a work or seeing an object exclusively'. Dhyan is momentary in the beginning, but it becomes permanent later on with practice. Sidney Smith defines Dhyan as 'to forget everything else except the main objective'. Charles Dickens views Dhyan as 'useful, harmless, definite and a beneficial process of the mind'. According to Bergansa, 'suppression of external distractions is essential for the deepening expansion of Dhyan'. Edgar Casey says that 'Dhyan brings to the fore the latent powers of creativity in a person. This creativity improves and enriches his physical, mental and spiritual aspects'. John White in his renowned work 'The meeting of science and spirit' has enumerated many benefits of Dhyan— promotion of physical health, reduction of tension, anxiety and aggressiveness, it leads to self realisation and self improvement and development. He further says that the benefit of meditation are the following— feeling of tranquility, freedom, reduction of tiredness and depression, relief from pains, increase in positive traits such as sympathy and empathy for others, believe in divinity and purity of self etc. Michael Murphy and Steven Donovan, in their research work titled 'The physical and psychological effects of meditation' have mentioned that meditation/Dhyan helps to regulate and control electrical and chemical activity of the brain, the rhythm of the heart, regulates blood pressure, the skin's ability to resist infection and it regulates general metabolism.

The great philosopher sage Sankaracharya has explained that the many Vedic rituals such as sacrifices had been transformed as mental concepts for contemplation and meditation by Chandogya Upanishad because any defect in the performance of a ritual according to the Vedas, however small and inconsequential, could devalue and derail the whole process. Further, elaborate rituals required huge preparation and expenditure. So he prescribed that meditation was far better, safer and surer means of attaining the same benefits that elaborate sacrifices offered. Contemplation and meditation are equally efficient in spiritual pursuit of the aspirant. Nevertheless, the former (contemplation) has intellect and mind as its main focus while the latter (meditation) concentrates on the mind and body to be effective. Sacrifices, as compared to them, are merely physical rituals.

As is evident, the chariot moves in the proper direction when all the horses are controlled simultaneously. So a holistic and an all-inclusive, well synchronised and homogenous approach is needed by a seeker/aspirant to attain success in his endeavour to get liberation and deliverance from the horrible torments agitating him as well as to attain emancipation and salvation for its soul from this world.

The concept of Dhyan has been described in detail in Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 7, section 6 and 18 of the Sam Veda tradition. Refer also to Tejobindu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 36 which is Chapter 14 of this volume.]

2. The primary monosyllable word OM represents and incorporates in its ambit the entire gamut of creation—right from its conception and initial stages, to its unfolding and its final conclusion¹. Beyond it is the ‘Naad’² (the cosmic background vibrations in ether that resembles the sound made by the distant rumbling of clouds or running of a train). This Naad is visualised as a crescent-shaped moon or concave bowl. The focal point of this crescent-shaped Naad is known as the ‘Bindu’³. This is the point or the Bindu where the practitioner of Yoga can hear the cosmic ethereal sound (because it is here that the sound waves originating in the cosmos are focused). This reverberating cosmic sound resonates through the entire being of the aspirant when it is heard by him (during the practice of Yoga or meditation and contemplation), and at a certain point of his practice this resonance reaches such a crescendo that the practitioner’s entire being is drowned in its vibrations so much so that he hears nothing else; his entire being is completely submerged and overwhelmed by it⁴.

This is the abstract stage of ‘no sound’ (because he hears nothing else except this Naad and therefore stays in a state of void as far as the hearing of the numerous sounds that have their origin in this gross world are concerned). This is the state of supreme bliss which is obtained when one rises above the mundane and reaches the citadel of spiritual enlightenment⁵ (2).

[Note—¹The concept of OM : Refer also Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 1, 6. The symbol of this word OM resembles the vowel ‘Ooo’ or ‘Uo’ (pronounced as ‘noose’) of the Sanskrit language, with a crescent-shaped moon or a shallow bowl shaped sign on its top such that the hollow end points above. This sign is called the ²Naad because it represents the bowl of the cosmos in which the cosmic ether was present. It was in this bowl-shaped container that the primordial cosmic reactions took place leading to the cosmic explosion which provided the energy and created the raw materials from which the rest of the vast visible cosmos evolved and got moulded. Further, a bowl with parabolic shape is able to concentrate beams of sound at a point, called the focal point, where all the energy in the generated sound is concentrated. It would be so great that it might be ear-rupturing if one is not careful. This phenomenon is used to construct music halls with properly controlled acoustics so that echo and resonances do not occur. It is to be noted that in some buildings built to specific acoustic criterions, if one sits at the focal point in it he would be clearly able to hear what is being said even at a distant point of the building.

From the Yoga point of view, the focal point where all the ethereal cosmic sound energy is concentrated is represented by the ³Bindu or the dot or the point which is said to be located at the tri-junction formed in the forehead at the midpoint between the eyebrows and the root of the nose. It is here that the practitioner of Yoga focuses his attention to obtain the deep insight into the secrets of creation and existence because it is here that he accesses great mystical powers and potentials.

Iconographically, this Bindu is depicted as a ‘dot’ placed on the crescent-shaped or concave sign of Naad which is located on the head of the symbol of OM in such a way that it dangles in mid air just at the geometrical focal point of this concave surface to indicate the ‘focal point of cosmic energy’. The symbolic depiction of this Bindu, Naad and OM is the following sign—ॐ.

An example from modern life would easily help to understand this phenomenon. The ‘satellite dish antenna’ which is seen on the roof top of every modern home resembles this Naad and Bindu apparatus. The parabolic surface of the dish antenna is the crescent shaped bowl on the top of OM, and the electronic device called the SMPS held at the focal point of this antenna dish to collect the electronic waves transmitted by some remote satellite or television broadcasting station and collected by the parabolic dish to be focused or concentrated at this point is equivalent to the Bindu placed on OM. The set-top box or the electronic receiver in this setup is the

meditator's brain itself which intercepts and then interprets the electronic signals and converts them into different pictures of the world that the individual sees just like the TV monitor that depicts the images that are collected by the dish antenna.

⁴How the cosmic sound of Naad sniffs out all other sounds and virtually drowns the person doing Dhyan Yoga, or concentrating his attention during meditation and contemplation can be experienced by even a layman. When one closes one's ears with the fingers, one hears a deep roaring sound in the ears. This sound resembles the distant roar of the ocean or the rumbling of the cloud or the trundling of the train. No other sound emanating from the outside world is audible now. This is what is meant in this verse here. When the practitioner of Yoga repeats the Mantra OM and focuses his attention on the sound components of this divine word, a stage is reached when the cosmic Naad represented by OM so much resonates in his head that it eliminates all other sounds, and the practitioner's nerves begin to vibrate with its resonance just like the tuning fork or the strings of a musical instrument that begin to vibrate when they are struck. This reverberating sound kind of massages the nerves and makes them numb to all other sounds as well as impulses. This is the state of blissfulness and ecstasy because the aspirant feels not only calmed down but also titillated. This makes him oblivious of all pain and worries of this mundane life; all the torments of the world are forgotten and dumped. This is also like a tired man who is sleeping soundly when he is completely immune to all sounds and all thoughts that were ruffling his senses while he was awake, making him rested and rejuvenated when he wakes up from his sleep.

⁵That is, all his sensory perceptions are dulled and numbed to the extent that he hears nothing. This is not some hypothetical imagination of the fertile mind, as even modern science has established that the ear of different animal species can hear different sounds depending upon their wave lengths and frequencies. Sound outside certain fixed acoustic limits is not heard by humans but can be heard by other animals, say for example dogs, cats, bats and birds. In the present case, the reverberations of Naad make all the sensory nerves in the brain numb to the extent that they become oblivious to all sorts of impulses impinging on the mind's sense receptors.

Yoga Upanishad assert that the ascetic is able to hear the Naad when his Kundalini is activated and the vital winds forces of life present inside the body are controlled. At the same time as experiencing the dripping of nectar of extreme bliss and ecstasy, called the Bindu, the Yoga practitioner would also hear the Naad which is a subtle roar of the vibration present in the cosmic ether that is now reverberating in his entire inner being. This happens because the body has the subtle sky element present inside it as much as the presence of this element outside of it. This Naad resembles a roar of the ocean, or the rumbling of clouds, or a train trundling away in a distance. In fact, Naad more closely resembles the roar of a fiercely burning fire—which is symbolic of the fact that the subtle fire element which was hitherto dormant and only smoldering inside the body of the practitioner has now been kindled and activated by the practice of Yoga and its attendant activation of the Kundalini by stoking it with the powerful vital winds such as Pran, Apan, Samaan, Vyan and Udaan. Thus, the cosmic dynamic energy that is inherently present in the body of all living beings, but unfortunately had become dormant and inactive, is now re-ignited into its finest form. The Naad is therefore the sound of the raging fire element present inside the body. So when a practitioner of Yoga hears the Naad he feels certain that his Kundalini as well as the latent energy of his body has been activated and the internal fire is burning vigorously. The Varaaha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 5, verse no. 52 mentions how this Naad is heard and the dripping of Bindu experienced by the practitioner of Yoga when his Kundalini is activated. Refer also Mandal Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, Brahmin 2, section 2, verse no. 2. The Hanso-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda

tradition, in its verse nos. 16-17 describes the sound emanating from this Naad, while its verse nos. 18-20 describes its effect on the body.

The word *Bindu* literally means a drop of some liquid, for instance a drop of nectar. At an advanced stage of Yoga when the practitioner is able to activate the Kundalini, control his vital winds and successfully implement other aids of Yoga such as correctly and persistently doing various Asanas, Mudras and Bandhas for a prolonged period, he would automatically experience rewards inherent to the practice of Yoga. Therefore, he would experience extreme bliss and ecstasy that would appear to drip upon his inner self and overwhelm him. His mind and heart would be submerged in enjoying this nectar that would drip drop by drop like honey effusing from a ripe and full honeycomb. This concept of Bindu in association with Naad has been used to name a special Upanishad called the 'Naad Bindu' Upanishad. Other Upanishads also deal with this subject, e.g. Amrit Bindu and Amrit Naad Upanishads etc.

There are other Upanishads which describe the concept of Naad in detail, such as for example Yogchudamani of Sam Veda, Brahm Vidya and Ekakchar of Krishna Yajur Veda amongst others.]

3. This apparently self-created cosmic sound is called 'Anaahat'¹ (so called because it was generated on its own without any cause such as two entities striking one another which is the usual cause of generation of sound in this world; it resembles the distant rumbling of clouds or a train trundling along on its track).

There is an entity which transcends this plane and exists beyond it, and it is on its inspiration that this Anaahat sound is generated in the ether of the cosmos. 'That' supreme, self-existent, non-describable and transcendental Authority is known as Brahm. When the ascetic (i.e. the practitioner of meditation and contemplation) is able to have access to this Brahm, the ultimate frontier of spiritual endeavours so to say, nothing remains to be known, nothing remains to be accessed (3).

[Note--¹ The word *Anahat Naad* refers to the apparently self-created cosmic sound called 'Naad'. It is called 'Anahat' because it was generated on its own without any apparent cause such as striking of two entities with one another which is the usual cause of generation of sound in this world. It resembles the distant rumbling of clouds or a train trundling along on its track. The *Naad Bindu Upanishad* of the Rig Veda tradition describes this Naad in great detail.

From the point of view of genesis according to the Tantra Shastra which believes that everything in existence originated from Shiva and Shakti (the cosmic male and female elements), a very interesting depiction is given as to how the cosmic Naad came into being and how the rest of creation was revealed from it. Its basic scene is as follows-- According to the philosophy of Tantra Shastra dedicated to the worship of divinity in the form of Shiva and Shakti, the process of creation took the following initial steps. Before anything came into being, Brahm, the supreme consciousness and the ultimate truth of creation, known as Shiva, was established in his own radiant effulgence or self-illumination symbolising his splendid glory, majesty and divinity. Hence he was called 'Prakash', literally meaning light. When he decided to deliberate and actually started the process of deliberation in order to start the process of creation, there was a subtle 'spandan' or a slight throb or imperceptible movement which transformed into a vibration. The waves generated by this initial vibration developed in the cosmic ether and gradually coalesced with each other to give rise to higher waves of higher amplitudes. This produced the cosmic sound called the Naad. Since the creation was conceived in the bowl of the cosmic ether, the energy of the initial sound was focused at a central point, called the focal point or the dot or 'Bindu'. This Bindu contained the combined powers of both the male Shiva and the female Shakti like a dicotyledonous seed which produced the two separate entities called Shiva and Shakti. The union of these two resulted in the unfolding of the rest

of the creation. Thus it will be observed that whatever exists in this creation can be traced back to this primeval Naad. Hence, the latter is called 'Shabda Brahm', or the Brahm as sound. Therefore it is very natural to assume that all Mantras dedicated to any divine entity and consisting of the sound element (because Mantra consist of letters and words, and are chanted or repeated to make them effective) has its origin in this Shabda Brahm and gets its powers and energy from this Shabda Brahm. In other words, the Manta contains in itself the essential meaning, form and spirit of the deity whose Mantra it is and which is being worshipped and invoked. Constant repetition of the Mantra generates so much energy in due course of time that the deity being worshipped is revealed. This is because the sound has great powers and energy as is evident when reverberation of sound waves and the resonance created by them are so powerful and forceful that they can shatter sheet glass in windows when an explosion occurs near a building.

Thus we observe that the Naad is the ethereal background reverberating sound energy in Nature which is said to be the primary source of energy that provided the vital spark to set off the chain reaction in the primordial cosmic gel from which the rest of the creation eventually evolved. The Naad has been envisioned in the form of waves in the cosmic ether, the waves which overlapped and coalesced with each other to generate sufficient energy that produces sound which traveled in the sky and was heard by ancient sages and seers who devised the word OM to capture its fundamental tones and notes in the constituent letters or syllables of this OM. Since the primordial cosmic gel was a neutral and static entity, this energy of sound waves was the first to create some sort of activity in it—like subtly and imperceptibly stirring it from within. This energy multiplies itself manifold and in due course of time the different elements separated from one another, the heavier ones settling at the bottom and the lighter ones going upwards to float on the surface. This is how basically the earth and other elements such as the water and air took up their places in creation, with the heavier earth solidifying at the lower level and the lighter water floating on its outer surface and the air going still higher into the space of the sky. The fire element however remained trapped in the bowls of the earth as the world gradually crystallized into its present shape.

Since the Atma is the only conscious factor in creation showing basic elements of the existence of conscious life in any of its myriad forms, and the Naad is also the first sign of creative primary subtle activity in the cosmos that ultimately led to the unfolding of this incomprehensibly vast and miraculous creation, it naturally follows that the Atma, the fundamental essence of life, or the soul of all that exists as truthful life forms in Nature, and the Naad, the primary source from which the entire creation is said to have evolved, are synonymous with each other. This fact has been endorsed by Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 5, verse 3 which says that the Atma is synonymous with the Naad.]

4. If the tip of the hair is split into one hundred thousand parts (then one such part would be called the Jiva—the living being in the cosmic scheme of things), if one such part is then again split into one hundred thousand parts (then one such resultant part would be equivalent to the symbolic dimension of the Ishwar or the Lord of creation who is subtler, lighter and finer than the creature who is much grosser, heavier and denser than Ishwar), and if one such part is further split into fifty thousand parts then a situation is reached when no further divisions are feasible and no measurements can be made of the resultant entity. It is the finest of the fine, the most micro-fine entity in existence, and most microscopic of all those things so fine and microscopic that they cannot be measured or qualified. This entity is the symbolic form and subtle existential nature of the ultimate supreme Authority in creation which has no quantifiable attributes and definable qualities that can ever taint its immaculate

nature and form. In other words, it is metaphorically fine and pure even at the atomic and the sub-atomic levels also; nothing can corrupt it; nothing can taint it (4).

5-6. Even as sweet fragrance is an integral part of the flower, butter is inherently present in pure and un-skimmed milk, oil is imperceptibly present in seeds, and gold is present in the ore of the gold mines located in the deep bosom of the earth, though none of these entities are visible to the naked eyes, the existence of the Atma (pure consciousness) in all living beings too is an unequivocal and irrefutable truth which cannot be denied though this Atma is not visible to the naked eye (like the gross body which is visible).

Those who are of a stable mind and intellect, being wise, erudite and enlightened about the truthful essence of Brahm (i.e. who understand that whatever spiritually important or valuable entity that exist in this creation is nothing but consciousness, that this consciousness is Brahm personified, and that it permeates uniformly and universally in the entire creation so much so that if it is removed from the latter, nothing of substance is left behind), realise that this Atma is like the concealed thread which holds the beads of this world-like rosary or garland together in their place and prevents their scattering about¹.

Thus, the wise ascetic realises the universality of the Atma and its omnipresent and all-pervading nature much like that of Brahm (i.e. he treats the Atma with the same spiritual value as that possessed by Brahm)² (5-6).

[Note--¹That is, had there been no consciousness in this world, there would have been no signs of life on this planet. Earth without life would be a barren stretch of land. There are uncountable number of species of living beings—both mobile such as the members of the animal kingdom, and the immobile such as the member of the plant kingdom. No two members or samples have identical bodies or genes. But the common denominator that binds them together is the factor of 'life'. All living beings are so called because they have 'life' which is a metaphor for Pran and consciousness. This universal and all-pervading factor is called Brahm.

But merely being alive does not make the creature a 'true personification' of Brahm because the latter has certain eclectic virtues characteristic to it—such as being noble, auspicious, righteous, wise, sagacious, enlightened and all-knowing. So being 'conscientious', inter alia, is also necessary to be fully and truly a personification of Brahm. Had the creatures no sense of 'conscience' in them, the fabric of morality would have fallen apart and become tattered; all the forms of noble and civilized way of life would cease to exist, and the entire world would become one big forest filled with wild animals that have no conscience in them though each one of them is alive and have a soul.

²A wise person sees the hidden Atma or pure consciousness that prevails uniformly and universally in everything living as the true manifestation of Brahm rather than seeing Brahm only in the external façade of this world. This highly eclectic, most enlightened and metaphysically evolved view of 'what is Brahm' would also address the doubts that one might have in one's mind when he considers the doctrine expounded in the Upanishads that says on the one hand that this world is falsehood and deluding, while saying on the other hand that it is a manifestation of Brahm. Does this mean that Brahm is false and deluding? Or does it mean that this statement that the entire world is a manifestation of Brahm is itself wrong? None of it—for a wise man sees Brahm not in the external features of the world but in the Atma that lives in this world. The external body of the world is the habitat of the Atma just like a man has a house to live in. For all practical purposes, the address of the house becomes the man's location and it helps to identify him in a cluster of similar houses; it becomes his de facto identity. The house is identified with the person living inside it—we say that this house is John's or Smith's. Similarly, the

world becomes one with Brahm because the latter is a resident of this world as the Atma; this world was conceived and built by Brahm, and it belongs to him and no body else.

A Brahm-realised man finds a firm foothold and gets established in this knowledge when he realises this fundamental truth. Then he would not have to search Brahm anywhere else, and neither would he be misled by fake identities going by the name of Brahm, for then he would be wise enough to expose such imposters. When one has found what he is searching or has set out to achieve, it is obvious that he would find peace and rest of mind.

This phrase ‘finding firm foothold and getting established’ can be understood in another way also. When one puts his foot on some new ground—such as the man’s landing on the surface of the moon—he would feel the ground under his feet, whether it is solid and hard enough to support him, or whether it is slippery and soft like swampy bog that would just swallow him up if he puts his entire weight on it. So, when the spiritual aspirant has had firm knowledge of Brahm and the Atma, he becomes rest assured that he has indeed found the ultimate Truth of existence, and this is ‘solid ground’ upon which he can rest and find his final peace. In other words, when a wise and enlightened man has witnessed the presence of the pure consciousness upon successful completion of Yoga as described in the verses of this Upanishad, he would have found his peace and bliss that is permanent and eternal. This is metaphorically said by asserting that he has found a firm foothold and got established.]

7. Even as oil is imperceptibly but integrally present in the oil-bearing seeds of the sesame plant, and fragrance or aroma are inseparable part of the flower, the Atma is also present in an inexplicable but unequivocal form in the body of all living creatures in this creation as their pure consciousness which prevails inside this body as well as the cosmic Spirit that prevails outside their bodies. This Atma is the same both inside as well as outside the gross body, and it is the true identity of all living creatures¹ (7).

[Note—¹This concept can be easily visualised by imagining a clay pitcher filled with water and dipped in an ocean. It is obvious that the water inside the body of the pitcher and outside of it is the same. The Atma present inside the gross body of the creature is like the water inside the pitcher, and the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm is like the ocean present outside the pitcher. Suppose the clay pitcher is broken while it is still submerged in the ocean water—what would happen? The water inside the pitcher would imperceptibly and automatically merge with the water of the ocean even without leaving a trace and with no fuss. In fact, it is not even possible to keep these two waters separate once the pitcher is broken. This is what is called ‘Kaivalya Mukti’ in the language of Yoga (verse no. 103-106 of the present Dhyani Bindu Upanishad; and Paingalo-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, in its Canto 4, verse nos. 7 and 15 for instance), or ‘Videha Mukti’ in the metaphysical parlance (e.g. Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 33-81; Sarwasaro-panishad, verse no. 2; Akchu Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 32-40). It envisages that the spiritual aspirant would be able to shed his mortal gross body and merge his ‘self’, which is the pure conscious Atma, with the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm that is present everywhere in existence.]

8. Just like a huge tree has a physical gross form which is most vibrant and colourful, being liberally endowed with green branches of various sizes and shapes, and laden with tender green leaves, beautiful aromatic flowers and succulent ripe fruits, but its shadow is only a silhouette of this magnificent tree, being a lifeless, colourless and dull neutral outline of the original tree and having none of its vibrant and colourful charms, the Atma is also present like the shadow (of the original cosmic

Consciousness) cast across the length and width of this creation. Again, even as the shadow does not distinguish between the object over which it falls, the Atma too has no preferences for its existence in any particular form of the body of the creature¹ (8).

[Note--¹That is, even as the shadow uniformly falls upon the ground below the tree, whether it is smooth or rough, whether it is dry or wet, whether a holy man is meditating in its cover or someone is planning a crime sitting under the tree, whether there are chirping birds or colourful flowers or fragrant fruits on the tree or not, the Atma is universally and uniformly present in the creation notwithstanding the auspiciousness or otherwise of the latter. Even as the shadow is not at all affected, influenced or tainted by the nature of the ground or the object upon which it falls, the Atma too remains completely immune to any of the tainting affects or degrading influences of this materialistic and deluding world in which it lives.]

9-13. [Verse nos. 9-13 describe the different mystical interpretations of the three letters that constitute the divine ethereal word OM to emphasise the point that everything in existence has its origin in one single-point source of cosmic proportions, and it is known as Brahm or Pranav. It is from this Brahm that this vast, multifarious and colourful creation has sprouted, unfolded and spread out like the petals of a lotus flower or the rays of the sun radiating out from one single source. When the time comes, they would converge into that one single point from which they had branched out in the beginning. The Brahm Vidya Upanishad expounds upon the various metaphysical connotations of the different components of the ethereal word OM in its verse nos. 2-12. It is Chapter 16 of this volume.]

The supreme transcendental Divinity known as Brahm is represented by the monosyllabic ethereal word OM. This Brahm has always been the aim (destination; objective) of all those who seek emancipation and salvation for themselves. OM is the all-encompassing and all-incorporating monosyllabic word representing that Brahm. [In other words, the profound glory and astounding greatness of Brahm can be metaphorically understood if one understands the divine sublimity and greatness, the mystical meaning and the magnificent spiritual import of this single ethereal word OM.]

The first letter 'A' of the divine, ethereal, cosmic word OM is deemed to include and encompass in its reach and import the earth, the fire, the Rig Veda, the Vyahriti 'Bhu' (which is the first primary word pronounced by the creator Brahma at the beginning of creation), and Brahma himself. They form an integral and inseparable part of OM representing the supreme transcendental Brahm, the cosmic Divinity in creation, just like the letter 'A' without which the word OM cannot be existent. The letter 'A' represents the basis of creation, the foundation of creation. At the time of conclusion of the creation, these five primary aspects of creation (viz. earth, fire, Rig Veda, Bhu and Brahma) would withdraw and take rest in the first component of OM. [In other words, the letter 'A' of the three-lettered word OM represents the 'initiation and unfolding of the creation' as all these entities listed in this paragraph are the symbolic bricks upon which the entire edifice of this visible conscious world have been founded.]

The second letter 'U' of the divine, ethereal, cosmic word OM is deemed to include and encompass in its reach and import the Antariksha (the sky above the surface of the earth), the Yajur Veda, the wind or air element, the Vyahriti 'Bhuvaha' (which is the second primary word pronounced by the creator Brahma at the beginning of creation), and the sustainer and protector of creation, Lord Vishnu. They form an integral and inseparable part of OM representing the supreme transcendental Brahm, the cosmic Divinity in creation, just like the letter 'U' without which the word

OM cannot be existent. The letter 'U' represents the middle part of the creation, viz. its development, growth and spread. At the time of conclusion of the creation, these five primary aspects of creation (viz. sky, air, Yajur Veda, Bhuvaha and Vishnu) would withdraw and take rest in the second component of OM. [In other words, the letter 'U' of the three-lettered word OM represents the 'development, growth and spread of creation' earlier initiated by the letter A. This is because when we pronounce the letter 'U' we cup our lips to resemble the shape of the electric loudspeaker or a sound amplifier which is a metaphoric way of announcing that life has indeed come into being and it is spreading its wings. This letter 'U' virtually proclaims to the world that the supreme creator has already launched the world in the form of the letter 'A', and it is now evolving and developing continuously. Since the entire creation has the genes of Brahm in it in the form of the Atma or pure consciousness, it follows that 'U' announces that the Lord is living here amongst us and no one need to search him anywhere else but in 'U'. There is an interesting twist to this symbolism. When the letter 'U' is pronounced, it indicates the spiritual aspirant himself because it is similar in sound to the word 'you'—i.e. Brahm is 'you'! Incidentally, this is also one of the great sayings of the Vedas—'Twam-Brahmasi'—thou art Brahm (refer Paingalo-panishad, 3/2 of the Shukla Yajur Veda).

The third letter 'M' of the divine, ethereal, cosmic word OM is deemed to include and encompass in its reach and import the Du-loka (the heavens; the deep recesses of the cosmos), the Sun, the Sam Veda, the Vyahriti 'Swaha' (which is the third primary word pronounced by the creator Brahma at the beginning of creation), and the concluder of creation known as Maheshwar (i.e. Lord Shiva, the great Ishwar or Lord). They form an integral and inseparable part of OM representing the supreme transcendental Brahm, the cosmic Divinity in creation, just like the letter 'M' without which the word OM cannot be existent. The letter 'M' represents the concluding part of the creation when what had emerged at the beginning of creation and is symbolically represented by the letter 'A', had then subsequently evolved, developed and spread in the form of this myriad colourful world as represented by the word 'U', would eventually come to rest as represented by this third letter 'M'. At the time of conclusion of the creation, these five primary aspects of creation (viz. heavens or the vast fathomless cosmos, the splendourous and bright sun, the Sam Veda, Swaha and even the Lord of this concluding phase of creation, i.e. Lord Shiva or Maheshwar) would withdraw and take rest in the third component of OM. [In other words, the letter 'M' of the three-lettered word OM represents the 'conclusion and final rest of creation' whose earlier initiation is represented by the letter A, and development by the letter U. This is because when we pronounce the letter M, we have to close our mouth, and this is indicative of 'taking rest and withdrawing one's external existence within one's own self'. The letter 'M' symbolises silence because we have to close our mouth (lips) when we pronounce it. So, if the word OM represents the entire gamut of creation starting from its very beginning that is represented by the letter 'A' which can only be pronounced by opening the mouth symbolising life as only living beings speak and not dead entities, followed by its growth and spread as indicated by the second letter 'U', then it is very obvious that its conclusion or end would be best depicted by 'M' and no other letter because 'M' is the only letter which requires the closing of the mouth symbolising death or end.]

The first letter 'A' is symbolically of a yellow colour and represents the predominance of the 'Raja Guna' in this creation. The second letter 'U' is symbolically of a white or grey hue and represents the predominance of 'Sata Guna'

in this creation. Finally, the third letter 'M' is symbolically of a dark colour and represents the predominance of the 'Tama Guna' in predominance¹.

In this way, the divine, ethereal and sublime word OM has eight parts or facets², four legs³, three eyes⁴, and five patron deities or Gods called the Devtas⁵ (9-13).

[Note—¹The three Gunas are the basic characteristics present in this creation in various proportions that decide the character traits and qualities of all the creatures in existence. *Raja Guna* is the quality and virtue that favours creation, and therefore the letter 'A' has been depicted to have this Guna. The colour yellow is the symbolic colour for any auspicious and constructive activity such as the initiation of the cosmos and the exercise of creation of the tangible, visible and colourful world. Yellow is the colour of fire and energy which were needed to kick-start the cosmic process of creation.

Similarly, the *Sata Guna* is considered as the best of all qualities which enable the creature to perform his duties in a selfless and non-attached manner. Its representative colour is white. White is the colour of the sunlight from which all other shades of colour, viz. violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange and red have come into being. White is the colour of purity and immaculacy of the highest degree, and it indicates non-involvement and selflessness. In other words, once the creation has come into being, it is expected that the creature should perform all his destined duties diligently and faithfully, but remain totally detached from them and emotionally non-involved with them. This would ensure that he remains as pure as the colour 'white' which is the colour of purity and immaculacy. The creature, in order to retain his pristine pure form as the pure conscious Soul representing the supreme Brahm, should remain as untainted, untarnished and without a speck on his character as the pristine pure colour 'white'.

The third quality is *Tama Guna* which is the lowest form of these three Gunas in creation, and it a symbol of ignorance and darkness. It represents 'sleep' in the sense that during sleep a man is unaware of what is happening outside, i.e. he remains ignorant and oblivious of everything happening around him though he might be physically present in that place. In other words, a man with a predominance of Tama Guna would not know what actually the truth is behind the façade of falsehood and delusions. Since ignorance of the reality is tantamount to 'darkness', the colour of Tama Guna is also dark. In the present context it means that when the creature dies, he thinks that his 'life has come to an end', which is a misnomer and not the reality. The life of the soul never comes to an end, and the soul is the true 'self' of the creature, and not his body which has died. Besides this, at the time of this apparent 'death', what actually has happened is that all the elements of creation have simply retracted into their primary source, the supreme Brahm, from where they would re-emerge at the appropriate time. This creation and its life is like a pendulum or a bouncing ball—for it continues to oscillate to and fro unless it is purposefully stopped. This is exactly the aim of spiritual endeavour—to first make the creature wisened about the facts and then telling him how to stop this oscillation of taking a birth and dying only to be reborn again, and stop getting entangled in worldly delusions and its horrific consequences.

This cycle of birth and death is metaphorically depicted by repeating the Mantra OM wherein the mouth has to be repeatedly opened and closed. The final emancipation and salvation is symbolised by being silent when the aspirant is so engrossed in meditation that he is not even aware that he has to repeat the Mantra—i.e. when his mouth is closed for good after the last time he had pronounced OM. This is the eclectic state of Samadhi or the Turiya state; it is tantamount to being freed from the fetters that shackle a creature to this world of material objects. When this becomes permanent, it is the Turiyateet state. It is marked by complete internal silence just like the one that prevails in the deep recesses of the cosmos. It is then that

the entire being of the spiritual aspirant is filled with the vibrations of Naad because the latter fills the space of the cosmos where there is no other noise, where there is profound and deep silence. This is the successful culmination of Yoga when the dissolution of the consciousness is complete. Refer Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 15, 22, and verse nos. 103-106 of the present Dhyana Bindu Upanishad.

²The *eight parts or facets of OM* are the following—the letters A, U, M, Naad, Bindu, Kalaa, Kalaa-teet and Param.

Now let us briefly examine what each of these facets mean. The metaphysical importance and spiritual significance of the three letters A, U and M have been explained in verse no. 9-13 above, while the concept of Naad and Bindu have already been explained in detail in verse no. 2 and its note earlier in this Upanishad.

The word ‘Kalaa’ means the various subtle qualities that are present in all the creatures of the visible creation in varying proportions. There are variously said to be sixteen, eight, five or three in number, and collectively determine the behavioral patterns and thought processes of all the creatures. Brahm is said to have sixty four Kalaas that encompass all imaginable connotations of the existential world. The word also relates to the changing shapes of the moon and is used in the context of OM to indicate the changing frequencies and tone of sound that resonates in the cosmos, starting from a low level to rise and reach a crescendo and then gradually subsiding to a low murmur and finally stopping altogether, only to remerge after some time—the symbolic representation of the evolution and conclusion of the creation.

Now let us examine these Kalaas in all their possible nuances. (a) *The 16 Kalaas of a man*—In the context of the man, the word Kalaa represents the special qualities, art, craft, skills, expertise, attributes etc. that one must possess if he were to successfully reach his target in life. These different qualities and virtues present in a man symbolically make him perfect; they represent his various strengths and potentials, and they are said to be sixteen in number corresponding to and symbolised by the sixteen phases of the moon. Since a man is an exact replica of the ‘Viraat Purush’, who in turn is a subtle manifestation of the sublime Brahm, these sixteen qualities or attributes of a man refer to the sixteen qualities of Brahm himself that made him the Lord of creation. The presence of all these divine attributes makes a man complete and very powerful. Hence, these sixteen Kalaas represent all the magnificent good qualities that are present in this creation which enable a man to overcome all adversities, hurdles and ill circumstances. Since Brahm is the creature’s only sincere well wisher and succour in times of distress and dismay, and since Brahm possesses all the exemplary qualities grouped under the single word Kalaa, a man who is blessed with them is regarded as being equivalent to Brahm. Or in other words, he personifies Brahm with all his dignified virtues that are needed by a man to complete and get across the cycle of birth and death without hurdles.

These sixteen Kalaas of creation that are present in a man refer to the sixteen elements or primary components that form the basis of a man’s very existence and his nature and temperament. These are the fundamental building blocks of his subtle and gross body, its characteristic qualities as well as the world surrounding him and how the man lives in and interacts with it.

These sixteen Kalaas or aspects of creation are the following—(i) Shraddha (faith, believe, conviction, reverence, respect, devotion), (ii) Pran (life; the very essence of creation; the vibrations of life; the rhythm and essential functions pertaining to life), (iii) Akash (the all-pervading, all-encompassing sky or space element), (iv) Vayu (wind, air element), (v) Tej (energy, splendour, radiance, glory, might, majesty and fire element), (vi) Apaha (water element which is the all-important ingredient for life), (vii) Prithivi (earth element which is the base or foundation for all mortal creation), (viii) Indriya (the organs of the body, both the organs of perception as well as of action), (ix) Mana (the mind and heart complex and their stupendous potentials), (x) Anna (food, the element without which life is simply not imaginable because it provides it with the basic nourishment and energy), (xi)

Virya (semen, sperms, standing for courage, valour, potency, vitality and prowess), (xii) Tapa (austerity and penance, tolerance of hardship as a means of penitence, forbearance as well as carrying out strict religious vows in order to purify one's self) (xiii) Mantra (the key or formula to achieve success in any enterprise; it also refers to the ability to give good advice; the power to contemplate and think, concentrate and focus, and then logically arrive at a conclusion), (xiv) Karma (taking actions and doing deeds), (xv) Loka (worldly interactions, conduct and behaviour), and (xvi) Naam (good name, fame, reputation, honour and glory). Reference—Chandogya Upanishad, 6/7/1-6 of Sam Veda tradition.

In simple terms it means that a person's total composite personality, his characteristic attributes and individuality, his vitality and stamina, his prowess, powers and strength, his drive and vigour et al can be divided into sixteen parts.

The Kalisantarana Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 2 says that these sixteen Kalaas are like sheaths or veils covering the Atma or 'self' of the man, and he can realise this glorious divinity residing in his bosom only when these Kalaas which are like impediments or hurdles in self and Brahm realisation are removed. When this Upanishad describes them as 'hurdles or impediments' in realising the glory of the 'self' it implies that although all these sixteen qualities are related to achieving glory and majesty in the world, they have nothing to do with 'self-realisation' and 'Brahm-realisation' which is possible only by abandoning everything related to this world as well as the body both in its gross part and its subtle part.

(b) *The 8 Kalaas of a man*—The eight Kalaa of a man are the eight characteristic features by which all men are classified in this world. All men are classified into one or the other type depending on one or more of these eight attributes. These eight apparent criterions used for classification of all humans are the following—his name, caste, complexion, birth or family, race, nationality, Ashram (one of the four phases in life, such as Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vanaprastha and Sanyas), and Varna (class of society such as Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra and Nishad or Chandal). [Ref. Saraswati Rahasya Upanishad, verse no. 25 of Krishna Yajur Veda.]

(c) *The 5 Kalaas of a man*—From the metaphysical point of view, the five Kalaas in a man are the following sheaths that surround his Atma or pure consciousness—the Anna Maye Kosh or the food sheath, the Pran Maye Kosh or the vital wind or air sheath, the Mano Maye Kosh or the mental sheath, the Vigyan Maye Kosh or the intellect sheath, and the Anand Maye Kosh or the bliss sheath. These sheaths cover the Atma and determine the Atma's temperament, nature, inclinations and behavioral patterns in this world.

(d) *The 5 Kalaas of Pran*—There is another connotation of the phrase five Kalaas of a man in the context of the word Pran. Hence, there are *five Kalaas of the Pran*. The Pran is the vital wind or air element that sustains life in a man. The chief form of this air element that sustains life in the body is called 'Pran', and the term is usually applied to the breath. But besides this, there are four other types of main Prans such as Apaana, Samaana, Udaana and Vyana. These are the names given to the vital wind in order to distinguish between the various functions or roles that it performs inside the body in order to study this air or wind element in a comprehensive way just like we classify any given subject into various streams to facilitate study and analysis. Therefore, hypothetically, the Pran is divided into five main Kalaas. Thus, there is the main Pran and its four Kalaas as follows—(i) The 'Pran' is the wind element which, as breath, is exhaled as well as inhaled and is responsible for infusing and sustaining life in the body; it is considered the chief wind in the whole setup because without life no other wind would be of any significance to the creature. (ii) The 'Apaana' is the wind that passes down the intestines and is responsible for digestion of the food taken by the creature and its excretion through the anus and urinary organs (kidneys). (iii) The 'Samaana' is the wind that is responsible for equal distribution of nourishment throughout the body, as well as in circulation of blood. (iv) The 'Udaana' is the wind that helps the body to rise and move about, it also helps the body to expel toxic waste

gases in the body through the nostrils and mouth in the form of exhalation and cough. (v) And finally the 'Vyan' is the wind that helps in maintaining equilibrium and pressure within the body, and it also controls the functioning of the other winds.

(e) *The 3 Kalaas of a man*—Besides the above, some humans are said to possess three other special qualities which make certain people very unique and different from others. These are the following:—(i) *Atishaayani Kalaa*—this enables a person to successfully accomplish certain tasks very quickly and in a very short period of time which would be unthinkable to be completed even in the entire lifetime by an ordinary man. Such people are born prodigies and are said to be gifted with certain eclectic qualities and characters that are not normal. For example, the Adi Shankacharya, the great philosopher and exponent of Advaitya Vedanta and the person who had written matchless and unbeatable commentaries on the principle Upanishads besides establishing the four great pilgrim sites in the four corners of India, had completed in a young age of just ten-twelve years what would take an entire life to do. (ii) *Viprinaamini Kalaa*—this entitles the man to acquire the eight mystical powers called the Siddhis (such as Anima, Garima, Mahima, Laghima, Praapti, Praakramye, Ishwatwa and Vashistha) and show magical powers to become small or big, light or heavy, or even enter the body of another person or assume any shape or form he wants. (iii) *Sankaamini Kalaa*—this enables a person to transfer and install his own stupendous divine and mystical powers in another person and the second person can perform deeds that he would not be able to do himself and is even stunned at his own achievements. We have the example of this in Swami Vivekanand in whom his Guru revered Ramkrishna had established some divine spark which enabled the great swami to leave an indelible mark on the pages of history and religion by his landmark achievements and conquering the world by his speeches in America where he established the foundation of Vedanta.

(f) *The 8 Kalaas of the Gods*—The eight Kalaas of the Gods and their incarnations or manifestations—Since there are said to be a total of sixteen Kalaas and the ordinary man can possess the maximum of these five Kalaas with those who are especially gifted having an additional three as narrated above (bringing the total Kalaas possessed by human beings to $5 + 3 = 8$), the remaining eight ($16 - 8$) belong to the Gods or their incarnations or manifestations. These are the following—(i) *Prabhvi*—this is that magical and divine power possessed by the entity that enables it to make possible things that are impossible. For example we have the manifestation of Lord Narsingh (half man and half lion incarnation of Lord Vishnu from a stone pillar to protect his devotee Prahalad from being killed by his own demon father). (ii) *Kunthini*—this enables the entity to neutralize the any of the effects of the five elements of creation, including their bad effects. For example we have Lord Shiva who drunk the horrible poison called Halaahal that emerged as a result of the churning of the ocean without letting that corroding and very potent poison from harming him. (iii) *Vikaasini Kalaa*—the ability to develop, grow, expand or increase to any size, in any form and in any way one wishes. For example we have Lord Vaaman, the dwarf mendicant, who had measured the entire world in his three steps. (iv) *Maryaadini*—this is the character, attribute or quality which forces the God-head to observe and exhibit exemplary virtues of righteousness, probity and propriety inspite of his ability of doing anything it wants. It virtually ties him down or restricts him to following a strict and exemplary code of conduct that he successfully implements; these codes are difficult even for the Gods to implement. For example we have Lord Ram who led an exemplary life of righteousness, auspiciousness, probity and propriety as well as observe all the character traits and attributes that are so common with all the human beings inspite of the fact that he was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, the almighty, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent and all-incorporating Viraat Purush who is a manifestation of the Supreme Being. (v) *Sanghridini*—this enables the God-head to supersede or overrule the laws of Nature and perform miracles that even defy its laws. For example, Lord Krishna had created

flowers and fruits even without season. (vi) Aalhaadini Kalaa—this enables one to physically remain away but spiritually be constantly near one's object of devotion or contemplation and serve him or her. This is the way Radha was able to enchant Lord Krishna in spite of not remaining with him at all times. (vii) Paripurna—this word itself implies something that is wholesome and complete in all respects. It can therefore exhibit all the sixteen qualities or Kalaas in one go, or is the entity that embodies all these qualities in its self. Amongst the incarnations of Lord Vishnu, Ram and Krishna are said to be Paripurna. The supreme Brahm is 'Paripurna' because nothing is missing from him; it is wholesome and complete. And finally, (viii) Swarupaa-wasthiti—this means the ability to withdraw or collect all the Kalaas exhibited by an entity and revert to its original and primary form when it is so wished by it. For example, at the end of the Dwapar Yuga, Lord Krishna had withdrawn all his Kalaas into himself before bringing to close his sojourn on this earth.

(g) The *Kalaas in other creatures*—Now we come to other creatures who are neither humans nor Gods. The living world consists of both the animals as well as the plants. The basic life forms have one or two Kalaas to start with, and then it progresses to the level of humans and Gods having five and more Kalaas. The creatures in the living world have been classified into four categories and their respective Kalaas are as follows—(i) Udbhij—these are those life forms that are born from seeds, such as members of the plant kingdom. These have only one Kalaa called Anna Maye Kalaa. In other words, they depend on food and become food for others higher up in the evolutionary ladder. (ii) Swadej—they are those which are born from dampness and sweat, such as fungi, algae, bacteria, germs, mosquito, lice, flies etc. They have two Kalaas, viz. Anna Maye and Pran Maye. That is, they are formed from food, they live for food and they die as food. Besides this, they also exhibit signs of life, e.g. the mosquito and lice have life like any other member of the animal kingdom. (iii) Andaj—they are placed higher up in the evolutionary ladder, and are born from eggs, whether inside the mother's womb or outside. Such birds as pigeon, sparrow, parrot, peacock etc. come under this category. They have three Kalaas which are Anna Maye, Pran Maye and Mano-maye. The last Kalaa refers to the fact that such creatures have a mind and heart which enables them to think, albeit in a primitive level. (iv) Jaraayuj—these are the creatures that are born as embryo that develops inside the mother's womb. Under this class come the animals such as horses, cows, dogs, elephants etc. They have four Kalaas, such as Anna Maye, Pran Maye, Mano-maye and Vigyan Maye. The last Kalaa refers to their ability to have a higher level of thinking ability called intelligence. The human being comes under this last category with the added benefit of having five Kalaas. Besides the four Kalaas mentioned above in other creatures of this category, the man has the fifth one and it called the Anand Maye Kosh. It is only possessed by a man and not by other creatures in the sense that the man can realise the true meaning of the terms 'bliss and happiness that is eternal and substantial' by the virtue of his attaining higher level of intelligence and his ability to delve into the secrets of the concept of truth itself and then realising that kind of happiness and bliss that is not superficial and which is not limited to enjoyment of the sensual pleasures of the body and the material comforts of the world, but which has a holistic and all-inclusive dimension that incorporates the spirit or the soul.

(h) The *16 Kalaas of the Moon*—This refers to each of the sixteenth part of the moon's diameter/disc, or one of the various phases of the moon. The moon waxes and wanes in a fourteen day phase—each day it is different from the other. Thus we have fourteen Kalaas of the moon. Added to this is the full moon and the dark moon—i.e. two more Kalaas. Therefore the total Kalaas of the moon are $14 + 2 = 16$. These fourteen Kalaas have the following names—Amritaa, Maanadaa, Pushaa, Tushti, Pushti, Rati, Dhriti, Shashini, Chandrika, Kanti, Jyotsnaa, Sri, Pritirangaa, Purnaa and Swarajaa.

That is why lord Krishna is said to belong to the Moon race because he possessed sixteen Kalaas. The symbolism is very stark.

(i) *The 12 Kalaas of the Sun*—This refers to each of the twelfth part in which the sun's diameter/disc has been divided. They are called 'Dwaadash Aditya', meaning the twelve forms in which the Sun God is known. They are the following—Tapini, Taapini, Dhumraa, Jwaalini, Ruchi, Shushumna, Bhogadaa, Vishwaa, Bodhini, Dhaarini and Kshamaa.

That is why lord Ram was said to belong to the Solar race because he had twelve Kalaas possessed by the Sun. There is an obvious parallel here.

(j) *Other forms of Kalaas*—Other connotations of the word are the following:-- (i) the division of time equivalent to about eight seconds; (ii) one degree out of the three hundred and sixty degrees. So when this term 'Kalaa' is applied to that supreme Truth, also known as the supreme Brahm which is complete and wholesome, it implies that what is being referred to is but only one or more fraction of the whole, and therefore this one or more fraction cannot be a complete definition of the whole. At the best, it can give a rough idea of the principal, but not the exact idea of what constitute *Brahm*. This Brahm is an entity so wholesome and grand, so majestic, so magnificent, so stupendous and astounding that it transcends the definitions or parameters set by this particular word. That Truth or Brahm is beyond their reach and dimension; these various connotations of the word cannot either be applied to that Truth or Brahm nor can they define it in its entirety in any way.

(k) *The 64 Kalaas of Brahm*—It is said that the complete Brahm has sixty four Kalaas. If these are divided into four quarters or quadrants or aspects or symbolic legs of Brahm, three-fourths is in the realm of the unknown (heaven) and only one-fourth is in the form of the visible creation (world). Therefore, if Brahm is a complete cycle of sixty four Kalaas, then the known physical world has $64/4 = 16$ Kalaas. It is a quadrant of Brahm. (Rig Veda, 10/90/4).

It is said that Brahm has four 'Paads' or legs which symbolise the four corners of creation. That is, Brahm surrounds this entire creation from all sides. Out of these four legs, the visible world represents one. The rest of the creation stands for the remaining three legs. According to another theory, Brahm is said to have sixty four Kalaas or aspects or levels. Out of these, the known world is represents Brahm's sixteen Kalaas, i.e. this world is only one fourth aspect of the entire Brahm—a fact metaphorically depicted by saying that Brahm can measure this world in one step. The rest is the invisible macrocosmic aspect of Brahm which is beyond imagination and comprehension. This is obvious because if one fourth is so difficult to understand, one can easily understand the astounding nature and stupendity of the remaining three fourths.

(l) *The Kalaa in the context of OM*—In the geometrical symbol of Brahm which is pronounced as 'OM', these three Naad, Bindu and Kalaa appear as a crescent moon or a shallow bowl with a dot at the center placed on the top of the symbol for OM. This Naad is like a big trough and represents the cosmic bowl or crucible in which the primary cosmic gel was placed to initiate the process of creation. The Bindu appears to indicate the pin-point source of heat, radiation or any other activating source placed just above this crucible to inject sufficient energy in to the primary fluid and activate it. It acts like a source of energy directed at the crucible (Naad) set off the chain reaction that would ultimately culminate in the creation. The Kalaa which refers to the various phases of the moon would indicate the different stages through which the entire process passed from the initial stages of creation to its complete closure. But even as the parents of a child do not undergo any apparent change while the embryo develops in the mother's womb, the Supreme Being remained the same all the while the creation developed and unfolded in the cosmic womb represented by Mother Nature. Another example to explain is the moon's disc which appears to change every single day but all know that it remains the same, and the apparent

change in its shape is only due to the angle with which its lighted or dark surface is viewed from the earth.

Next facet of OM is called *Kalaa-teet*—i.e. the entity that is beyond the ambit of the concept of Kalaa; that is beyond the tangible and the visible spectrum of creation. The word ‘Kalaa’ has been defined above, and ‘Teet’ is used as a suffix to indicate something that is beyond its meaning or ambit; something that surpasses it. So if Kalaa means the world whose attributes and characteristics are changeable, for instance the changing shape of the moon every night which is called the moon’s Kalaa, then something that is non-changeable, something that is immutable and steady, something that cannot be seen to change would be called Kalaa-teet. If Kalaa is regarded as the visible world in which the creature lives, then Kalaa-teet would mean the invisible world which is far beyond the inhabited world. Similarly, if Kalaa refers to the characteristics and qualities of the creature which are clearly exhibited by him, then Kalaa-teet would mean his hidden traits, temperaments, nature and thoughts.

The word Kalaa-teet in the present context of OM implies the macrocosmic aspects of creation which are not immediately visible and verifiable by the sensory organs of the body but are nevertheless true and existent. It refers to the vast invisible world beyond the known visible world where we live and which comes under the ambit of the word Kalaa as described above. The realm of Kalaa-teet is beyond the purview of this known world. It is like the Turiyateet state of Yoga which is the transcendental state of extreme blissfulness which surpasses and is superior to the Turiya state which is a preliminary state before Turiyateet state is reached.

Finally, there is the eighth component called the ‘Param’—literally that which is supreme and ultimate, that which is Absolute and beyond which there is nothing; that which encircles even the outer periphery of creation. This Param is known as Brahm. In a sense it has no boundaries and definitions. It is the equivalent to the final dissolution of the creation into nothing from where there is no return. It represents the supreme transcendental Brahm as opposed to the creature and the visible creation which are metaphorically represented by word ‘Kalaa’, and the vast fathomless cosmos which is represented by the word ‘Kalaa-teet’.

The eight facets or parts of OM also represent the four states of consciousness in which the entire creation consisting of the microcosmic world at the individual level and the vast fathomless world of the cosmos at the macrocosmic level exists. These four states at each level of existence multiplied by the two levels of existences (micro and macro) gives the figure of eight ($4 \times 2 = 8$). The four states are described below in the paragraph ‘four limbs of OM’.

³The *four limbs of OM* are the four states in which the consciousness exists in this creation. They are the following—the waking state or Jagrat state of consciousness, the dreaming state or Swapna state of consciousness, the deep sleep state or Sushupta state of consciousness, and the Turiya state of consciousness which is the transcendental state of existence.

⁴The *three eyes of OM* symbolically refer to so-called ‘Triad’ of creation—(a) such as the Trinity Gods named Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer and protector, and Shiva the concluder; (b) the three states of mortal creation at the micro level—the gross body of the individual creature called the waker or Vishwa, the subtle body of the individual creature called the dreamer or Taijas, and the causal body of the individual creature called the deep sleeper or Pragna; (c) the three states of immortal creation at the macro level—the sum total of all the gross bodies in creation called the cosmic waker or Viraat Purush, the sum total of all the subtle bodies in creation called the cosmic dreamer or Hiranyagarbha, and the sum total of all the causal bodies in creation called the cosmic deep sleeper or Ishwar; (d) the three Gunas called Sata (the noblest quality in the creation), Raja (the medium quality) and Tama (the meanest quality that a creature can possess); (e) the three Shaktis or powers and potentials that drive the world on—such as Gyan Shakti or the power of

knowledge, Ichha Shakti or the driving power of desires and ambitions, and Kriya Shakti or the ability and strength to carry out actions and do desired deeds; (f) the three planes of time—such as the past, the present and the future; (g) the three worlds—such as the terrestrial world where earth-bound creatures live, the sky where those who fly live, and the heavens where the Spirits and Gods live.

⁵The *five patron deities or Gods of OM* are the following—Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer and protector, Shiva the concluder, Ishwar the supreme Lord or the Viraat Purush who is above them and from whom these Trinity Gods have come into being, and the eternal transcendental Lord known as Brahm who is supreme and shines like the celestial Sun upon the entire pyramidal structure of the creation, illuminating it.

The five Gods according to another version are the following—Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra (the angry form of Shiva responsible for conclusion of creation), Ishwar (the Viraat all-pervading macrocosmic body of the supreme Lord), and Sadaa Shiva (the eternal Truth that is absolute, calm, neutral and auspicious, that outlives all other Gods and from which they are all created in the beginning of creation.)

14-15. A person who is not well versed in the various aspects of OM, both at the level of this mortal, tangible, visible and perceptible creation represented by the individual creature as well as the immortal, invisible, intangible, supreme and transcendental level represented by the cosmic Brahm, is not fit to be called a Brahmin. [Since the word ‘Brahmin’ refers to someone who is well acquainted with the profundity, divinity and glory of Brahm with all its mystical hues and shades of meanings, a person who is not enlightened about it has no right to be called a Brahmin.]

It is said that the Pranav or the ethereal word OM is like the symbolic spiritual bow, the Atma of the creature which is its pure conscious self is the arrow, and the target is Brahm. [That is, the main aim of employing the word OM in meditation and other spiritual endeavours is to obtain access to the transcendental Divinity known as Brahm which is the ultimate resting place for the soul of the creature. The Atma of the creature is his true ‘self’. So this stanza means that a wise Brahmin is one who employs the divine Mantra OM to enable his Atma to reach its spiritual target of Brahm-realisation just like the arrow shot by an expert archer reaches and hits the bull’s eye of the target. A man is called truly Brahmin if he has that expertise when his ‘self’ has been realised by him and he has become worthy to be identified with Brahm from whom he has derived his name of a Brahmin.]

One should not be lackadaisical or careless in pursuing one’s objective, and should be diligent and focused in aiming this arrow at the target. [That is, the spiritual aspirant should practice meditation with full attention and interest, without letting himself be distracted by any other extraneous considerations. It is only then that he would taste success just like the archer is able to pierce the object with his arrow when he fixes his sight and attention steadily on it. Diligence, steadfastness, singularity of purpose, devotion, resilience, persistence, consistency and commitment are the basic requirements in obtaining success in every field, whether it is spiritual or otherwise. These eclectic virtues act as the spur that encourages, aids and propels the aspirant to reach his goal without losing steam midway, faltering, wavering and falling on the way side before the aim is fulfilled.]

As a result of this effort, when the supreme and ultimate aim is reached, i.e. when the spiritual aspirant has reached his target of Brahm realisation (which entails realisation of the true nature of his own pure conscious ‘self’ called the Atma which in turn is Brahm personified in his own bosom), he is able to obtain freedom from having to perform so many auspicious deeds and take so many righteous actions (such

as doing fire sacrifices, making charities and giving alms to the poor, studying the scriptures and doing meditation and contemplation etc. as part of the comprehensive efforts that a wise and sagacious man makes in order to reach the goal of realisation of the ultimate spiritual Truth which would give him eternal peace and bliss). [In other words, when the creature has reached the pinnacle of spiritual attainment, he finds such a huge and fathomless ocean of bliss, ecstasy, happiness, contentedness and peace that he does not need to make any more efforts in this direction. The aim of all meditation and contemplation, all auspicious deeds and righteous actions, is to obtain liberation for the soul from the endless cycle of delusions, grief, miseries and pains, and when that objective is fulfilled by Brahm realisation or Truth realisation, these mediums or tools become redundant. In the instance of the bow used to shoot the arrow at the target as cited in this verse above, once the arrow has been successfully shot and it has hit the target, the bow is no longer needed. Similarly, once self and Brahm realisation has been successfully done, once the creature has found his eternal peace and bliss that he had been searching for generations, once he has found his soul's emancipation and salvation, he would no longer need the Mantra OM, or for that matter any other means such as Yoga etc. as prescribed in the scriptures for this purpose.] (14-15).

16. It is from OM that all the divine Gods have come into existence; it is from OM that all forms of sound, audible or inaudible, in creation have emerged; and it is from OM that the entire creation and all its varied forms, both the animate as well as the inanimate forms, have sprung forth (16).

17. The divine word OM has three constituent parts called its Matras. The first is the 'Hrisva' Matra which literally means something that is little, small, light, miniscule, and of minimum attributes. It symbolically stands for the letter 'A' which is the first vowel of the Sanskrit language and the basic sound in creation. It is also the first subtle sound from which the word OM has been envisioned to evolve. [It is like the sound made while pronouncing the word with the silent A—as in 'ahoy', *abhor*, *abase* etc.] It has the symbolic mystical ability to destroy all sins and misdeeds.

The long sound of the second letter of OM, i.e. the sound of 'U' or 'Ooo' (as in *owl*, *awning*, *autumn* etc.) represents the eternal bountiful treasury of divine assets and good fortunes that are easily made available to the spiritual aspirant. [This is a metaphoric way of saying that when one has realised the truthfulness of Brahm and the divinity of his own pure conscious Atma, the world in front of his eyes no longer remains one that is perishable and a cause of sorrows, miseries, pains and entrapments. On the other hand, he begins to see it in the light of Brahm-realisation as a vibrant manifestation of the cosmic Consciousness in all its radiant and brilliant colours and variations. The world becomes one big treasury of bliss and happiness when seen from the eyes of wisdom and enlightenment. The aspirant realises that it is in this very life that he can realise the supreme Truth by means of meditation and contemplation, by studying the scriptures and doing auspicious deeds, and in due course attaining the double benefit of enjoying the comforts and pleasures of this materialistic world and at the same time achieving the bliss of self-realisation and Brahm-realisation. He begins to see the world in a positive light rather than from a negative angle. He finds the world friendly, brotherly and kind as well as full of charm, colour, interest, hope, life and energy, instead of seeing it as his enemy, being suspicious and skeptical of everything in it, and treating it as the root cause of his physical sufferings. This positive attitude is kindled in an enlightened man because he

sees this world as a manifestation of Brahm and not as a manifestation of Maya or delusions. Every coin has two sides; it depends upon how one looks at it. Such a wise man serves the supreme Lord when he serves the world, and not to serve his self interest.]

Finally, the last word 'M' is the half-syllable because it is said while the mouth is being finally closed after completing the pronunciation of the word OM (as when the mouth is closed after having said the word *mum*, *autumn*, *rum*). [The actual full letter of the Sanskrit consonant is 'Ma', and it is pronounced with an open mouth as 'M' in *mother*. This is not the case of its pronunciation in OM when the mouth is closed immediately upon its saying as done when one pronounces the word '*rum*' for instance. So it is a 'half consonant' or 'half sound' of the letter M.] It symbolises the attainment of 'Moksha', literally liberation and deliverance from the gross deluding world symbolised by this perishable body and illusionary activities in search of that illusive happiness and peace. [This is because after death, the creature finds eternal freedom from all the horrendous troubles and unending miseries and sorrows that he had been subjected to while alive in this world. No matter how hard he tried, he was not able to break free from the shackles of miseries and horrors of this world which kept his peace of mind and bliss of soul at bay. He was buffeted by the agonies of the body as well as the unending cycle of sorrows and worldly delusions which hit him in regular waves much like tides in a heaving ocean, sweeping him off his feet and carrying him along in their wake. The world never lets him rest in peace. But upon self and Brahm realisation he finds eternal rest and peace symbolised by the closing of the mouth after complete pronunciation of the word OM. This is a metaphoric way of saying that the cycle of birth and death has finally come to an end for a creature who has realised the supreme Truth of Brahm, for now he turns inwards during deep meditation and contemplation on the supreme transcendental Divinity residing in his own bosom as his pure consciousness or Atma, and becomes completely silent and totally oblivious of what is happening around him in the gross world of material sense objects. Thus, all those inputs of the world which had hitherto been causing disturbances to his peace of mind and heart cease to have any impact upon him, leading to his eternal peace and happiness, his complete beatitude and felicity. Refer Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 15, 22.] (17).

[Note—The concept of using OM as a medium of doing meditation has been expounded in a number of Upanishads, for instance Amrit Naad Upanishad, verse nos. 18, 21; Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse nos. 71-81 etc.

18. The cosmic Naad or the background sound that prevails in the entire cosmos is not audible to the ear of the ordinary creature. This sound is a continuous one much like the unbroken stream of oil flowing on an even surface. This sound resembles the prolonged reverberating sound that resonates when a huge metal bell is struck hard (18).

[Note—The various shades of sound heard when Naad is experienced by an attained ascetic has been described in a number of Upanishads—viz. Naad Bindu of Rig Veda, Yogchudamani of Sam Veda, Hanso-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Brahm Vidya, Amrit Naad and Ekakchar of Krishna Yajur Veda amongst others.]

19. A wise practitioner of Yoga should meditate upon the supreme Divinity known as Brahm, the Lord of the entire creation, who is represented by the eternal word OM. This eternal Divinity is symbolically represented by the thumb shaped pricarp (called the 'Karnikaa') of the lotus-like heart of the practitioner. It is self-illuminated and radiant like the erect filament of light of a lighted lamp (19).

[Note—There are other Upanishads also which affirm that the size of this subtle Atma or consciousness present inside the bosom of all the living beings measures about the size of the thumb. Some of these are Kathavalli Upanishad, 2/1/12, which is Chapter 1, and Shwetashwatar Upanishad, 3/13, which is Chapter 5 of this volume.]

20-21. [It should be noted that verse nos. 20-106 are exclusively dedicated to the philosophy and practice of Yoga. Some of the other Upanishads that should be consulted while reading these verses are the following—Yog Chudamani of the Sam Veda tradition; Hanso-panishad, Trishikhi Brahmin and Mandal Brahmin of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition; Tejobindu, Yogshikha, Yogtattva, Yogkundalini, Amrit Naad and Varaaha Upanishads of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

The practitioner of Yoga should draw in air (breath) through the Ida Naadi (i.e. through the left nostril)¹ and fill the abdomen with it². [That is, he should withhold the inhaled air inside the body for a fixed period of time.] Meanwhile, he should contemplate upon and fix his attention upon the divine symbol of OM representing the supreme transcendental Brahm in his bosom (as described in earlier verses).

The three steps of Pranayam (breath control exercise undertaken in Yoga) are called 'Purak' (inhaling wind or breath), 'Khumbak' (holding the inhaled breath inside the body for a certain time so as to fill the abdomen with it), and 'Rechak' (exhaling breath slowly, so that the withheld wind is completely let out of the body). These three phases of Pranayam have three patron Gods, and they are Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer and protector, and Shiva the annihilator or concluder respectively³ (20-21).

[Note—¹The process of inhaling is called 'Purak'.

²The process of holding breath inside the body is called 'Khumbak'.

³The symbolism is obvious here. Drawing in of fresh air inside the body during the process of Purak is tantamount to infusing fresh lease of new life into the body, a work assigned to the creator Brahm. When the body holds this oxygen-rich air during the Khumbak phase, it draws nourishment from it in order to sustain itself and its tissues, the function which falls in the domain of Vishnu. Finally, when breath is exhaled during the Rechak phase of Pranayam it symbolises the expulsion of the life-giving Pran or the vital wind from the gross body, thereby symbolising its death.]

22. The inner-self should be symbolically made the lower end of the 'Arani' (the wooden drill used to light the sacred fire by vigorous rubbing of two pieces of firewood, one at the top and the other at the bottom of this drill during fire sacrifices in ancient times) and the OM (represented by the sound made during the process of inhalation and exhalation) as the upper end, while deep meditation and contemplation is to be treated as the vigorous rubbing of the two ends in order to ignite the flame of self-realisation which is like igniting the sacred fire of the religious sacrifice. The 'light' of knowledge and wisdom that emanates from the 'flame' of enlightenment ignited by the energy generated during deep meditation and contemplation helps the aspirant to 'witness', to 'perceive' and 'experience' the presence of the pure conscious Atma or the truthful 'self' residing in his own bosom as a representative of the supreme transcendental Brahm. This is called 'self-realisation'—i.e. becoming aware of one's true 'self' as pure enlightened Consciousness personified (22).

23. A wise and expert ascetic should meditate upon all the subtle shades of vibrations generated by meditating upon the ethereal and divine word OM (i.e. by mentally humming this ethereal word and concentrating his mind and fixing his attention on the

different shades of notes and tones of sound emanating from this divine word OM while it is being hummed during the entire process of Pranayam) till the time the inhaled wind is completely exhaled during the Rechak phase of Pranayam (23).

[Note—The practitioner of Yoga should use the Mantra OM while doing Pranayam, a fact reiterated in a number of Upanishads, for instance Amrit Naad, verse nos. 18, 21 amongst many such Upanishads. The entire process of Pranayam involves three basic steps—viz. inhalation of breath called the Purak phase, the retaining of breath inside the body for a period of prescribed time called the Kumbhak phase, and the exhalation of the impurity-laden air during the Rechak phase. OM is used as a Mantra to help concentrate the mind in this entire process. When OM is repeated deeply in the mind, it produces vibrations that resonate in the head (see verse no. 102), and these vibrations also help soothe the nerves by gently massaging them, thereby not only giving them rest but also enabling the practitioner to experience extreme bliss and ecstasy when his nerves are titillated. The nerves are numbed simultaneously, thereby alleviating pain and tension in them, which in turn calms down the brain and the restlessness body. During Pranayam, the heart's action is slowed down because of reduced degree of physical activity, breathing becomes easy and regular along with the slowing down of the general metabolic activity of the body. This general calming effect of the Mantra on the nerves helps the practitioner to concentrate his attention on the Naad which is a subtle sound and can be heard only when all extraneous sounds are eliminated. To witness the truth of this statement one needs to plug the ear with the finger when all the sounds emanating from the external world are blocked out and one can hear a subtle roar in the ear.]

24. Those who experience and witness the presence of the supreme transcendental Consciousness in the form of a divine 'Hans'¹ (Swan) that resides in the inner-self of the living being feel spiritually fulfilled and are deemed to be realised and successful in their spiritual endeavour. This Hans is as splendid and radiant as millions of suns taken together. [This is because the consciousness that is present inside the subtle heart of the creature is like the celestial sun that shines brilliantly in the sky above the earth.]

This metaphoric 'Hans' is a mysterious and enigmatic entity. It shows movement on the one hand and remains unmoving on the other hand² (24).

[Note—¹The word *Hans* metaphorically refers to the bird Swan. This bird is considered the most pure, clean, wise, erudite and clever among the birds. It is believed that it eat pearls and picks them up from amongst an assortment of gems, which symbolically means it picks up and accepts only the best amid the variety of things available to it in the form of an assortment of various qualities and virtues that define the character of all individual creatures in this world. It is also reputed to drink the purest form of milk, leaving aside the water content of an adulterated form of this nourishing liquid. It is also the vehicle of Goddess Saraswati, the patron Goddess of knowledge, wisdom, intelligence, speech and learning. Hence, the reference to a swan while describing a creature conscious of the vital wind or Pran passing through him means the basic, inherent and intrinsic tendency of that wisened and intelligent creature is to be the best, most pure and divine, wise, awakened and enlightened, adroit, clever and sagacious like the swan, and pick all the goodness and forsake all that is bad in this world. Saraswati rides on a swan, symbolising the creature's inborn enlightenment and excellence of his mental caliber. Symbolically, Saraswati resides in his Pran because it rides on the swan, i.e. in his heart, throat and mind—that is, his heart has purity of emotions, he speaks well of all, and his words are sought after by all as priceless gems of wisdom, and his mind is intelligent, discerning and noble.

The alphabet 'Ha' of the word 'Hans' is sounded by the vibration of the exhaled wind passing through the vocal cords present in the throat or the wind pipe which

connects to the nose, while the alphabet 'Sa' is sounded by the root of the tongue which opens into the mouth when the breath is inhaled. Both the nose and the mouth open in the same cavity called the throat. Hence, the inter relationship between 'Ha' and 'Sa' is evident. The main objective of this Upanishad is to make the Yogi (a person who follows its tenets of meditation) aware that he is like the divine swan, but he was unaware of his divinity and sublimity, his exalted stature, till that was pointed out to him in this verse. So he must become one like a 'swan', remind himself constantly that he is like a swan, and he must do not do anything or act in anyway which is not befitting his exalted and superior status which is equivalent to a wise swan.

Refer (a) Krishna Yajur Veda—Shwetashwatar Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 6; Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 3-4; Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 61-65; Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse nos. 20-28, 61-64, 78-79; Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 131-132, Canto 2, verse nos. 9-11, and Canto 6, verse no. 20, 52-54. (b) Shukla Yajur Veda—Hansopanishad is exclusively dedicated to explain the concept of the pure conscious Atma by way of using the metaphor of a Hans. (c) Sam Veda—Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 82-83.

During the twenty-four hour period covering a single day and night, a person inhales and exhales, or breathes, roughly twenty-one thousand times because each cycle of inhalation and exhalation is equivalent to saying one Mantra 'Hans' consisting of the two syllables 'Ha and Sa'. Refer verse nos. 61-65.

²The Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 93 clearly asserts that the 'Hans' is a metaphor for Pran. So when it is said in the present verse that Hans shows movement for instance, it refers to the movement in the form of the vital winds such as Pran (breath) which comes in and goes out of the body, the Apaana wind that moves down the intestines and helps the movement of food in the intestines, the Udaana wind that helps the body to rise etc. The proof of their movement lies in the fact that all the different functions of the body, including external movements such as walking, holding, speaking, eating and excreting etc. that are done by a man while awake are controlled by these winds, but when the man sleeps the external activities cease, making it appear that the vital winds are not moving. When a man is asleep, his vital winds are now moving inside his Naadis or nerves and veins in the form of his Pran or the vital life-giving factor called consciousness. But these winds present inside the body do not appear to move a bit; they do not show any vivid sign of movement at all; no one can observe the movement of the Udaana wind, the Vyana wind or the Samaana wind and even the Apaana wind that are present inside the body of the creature. Even in the outside world, no one can actually see the wind or air move from one place to another; their movement is deduced indirectly when we observe the movement of leaves for example on a tree. Thus, this Hans in the form of the Pran shows movement on the one hand, and remains immobile on the other hand.]

25. The Mana (mind) is the cause of creation, sustenance, development, enhancement and the ultimate conclusion of this deluding world of material sense objects, a world which inherently possesses the three 'Gunas' (the qualities of Sata, Raja and Tama) as the basic characteristic qualities that are present in all the creatures living in this world in various proportions, determining each individual's personality, behavioural patterns and character, and which is also marked by the rhythmic cycle of birth, growth and death.

When the cause of all this (i.e. the triangular world having the three apexes of birth, growth and death) is eliminated, i.e. when the Mana is abolished or made redundant so as to remove the very cause of this world coming into existence in the first place, the spiritual aspirant is able to free himself from the distorted and restrictive views of existence created by this triangular world having the three Gunas

as its three sides and the three phases of birth, growth and death as its three apexes, and see beyond it¹. It is then that the unrestricted and undistorted divine view of the supreme state of divine existence is discernible to and perceivable by him, and this is called the glorious world of Lord Vishnu (who is also known as the Viraat Purush), thereby indicating the macrocosmic view of creation which is much beyond the selfish and myopic view of the world centered around the individual creature (25).

[Note—¹This reminds one of the glass prism through one sees anything. The view seen directly would be very different from what is seen through this prism. Even the ordinary sunlight gets refracted and breaks up into seven colours when it passes through the prism. Similarly, the actual view of the world gets distorted when one sees it with biased mind and tainted intellect. So when one attempts to see the truth about something as ethereal and sublime through the prism of the mind and intellect that has already been corrupted by the influences of the deluding world of artificiality, it is but natural that the truth would elude him. That is why a man who has not attuned his mind-intellect apparatus sufficiently enough to peer deeply into and behind the façade of this world would be easily flummoxed when he reads in the scriptures that this world is a manifestation of the supreme transcendental Brahm. He begins to wonder whether Brahm is also as false and illusive as the world which he sees, or are the scriptures wrong in what they say of Brahm. The reality is that he is seeing Brahm with a prism that would never allow the reality to be observed by him. This fact has been beautifully brought out in verse nos. 93/1-93/15 below which describes how the Atma sees the world with various colours when it looks at it through the differently coloured petals of the symbolic lotus present in the heart where this Atma lives.]

26. The subtle heart is envisioned as a divine Lotus having a stem with eight sepals and thirty two petals. Inside its enclosure or the core (symbolised by the thallus) is present the Sun, and within the Sun is present the Moon (26).

[Note—The base of the flower from which the petals and sepals of the flower spring out, i.e. the thalamus, is like a golden sac symbolising the Sun, and the nectar present in this sac is indicated by the Moon because of its cool and soothing characteristics. The Moon is regarded in the Purans as the celestial pitcher of Amrit, the ambrosia of the Gods.]

27. In the center of this symbolic Moon located here is present the fire element representing the subtle spiritual energy of the pure consciousness that is said to reside in the subtle heart. At the core of this fire element are the intangible eclectic virtues of brilliance, radiance and splendour that are inherent to any form of 'light' emanating from any source (which in this case is the 'consciousness' located here). In the center of this fire endowed with the brilliance of a splendorous light is located the 'divine seat', called the 'Peeth', which is embellished with gems and priceless jewels of various shapes and colours (27).

[Note—The ovary of the flower compared to the Moon is supposed to harbour the fire element signifying the presence of the spark of life in a latent form in the ovule, and the microspore inside this ovule is the so-called symbolic seat where the actual 'life of the lotus plant' is ensconced in the representative form of Lord Vishnu. This is because Vishnu is regarded as a manifestation of Brahm at the cosmic level of existence and is synonymous with the Viraat Purush who is the invisible, all-pervading and all-encompassing macrocosmic gross body of Brahm. Vishnu is thus the Supreme Being personified, and it is from his navel as the primary creator that Brahma, the secondary creator of the visible world, was born atop a divine lotus that emerged from the navel of Vishnu at the very beginning of creation.

It ought to be noted here that we are dealing with three levels of creation here—the subtle level represented by the ovary, the subtler level symbolised by the ovule, and subtlest level indicated by the ‘divine spark of life present inside this ovule’.]

28. Seated on this exalted divine seat or ‘Peeth’ is Lord Vasudeo (i.e. Lord Vishnu, so called because he is the Lord of all the ‘Vasus’ which represent the physical wealth and priceless assets needed to sustain life in this creation as well as their patron Gods¹). Vasudeo is honoured by the epithet of ‘Niranjan’ (because he is one having no defects, faults, taints, blemishes, shortcomings and scars of any kind; one who is absolutely immaculate and pristine pure; an epithet applied to Lord Vishnu, the sustainer and protector of creation. one whose sublime, subtle, esoteric and mystical form is so microscopic and diffused that it cannot be seen by the naked eyes of the physical gross body, but which can only be perceived by the eye of wisdom, erudition and enlightenment). The Lord is especially adorned by the Srivatsa², the Kaustav Mani (the special jewel worn by Vishnu) and the Mukta Mani (pearls in the form of garland) that the Lord wears on his chest (28).

[Note--¹The eight *Vasus* are the patron Gods who provide succour and a dwelling place for the whole creation. They symbolise those primary necessities of life without which existence is not possible. They are— (i) Kuber (the God of wealth and prosperity), (ii) the Sun God (who provides energy and food) and his rays and radiance (i.e. sunlight and the energy that it provides), (iii) Shiva (the concluder or annihilator of the creation), (iv) Vishnu (the sustainer), (v) the Water God (called Varun), (vi) the Fire God (called Agni), (vii) any body of water such as a pond, a river etc., and (viii) holy and pious people (who give advice and guidance to the creatures of the creation). According to Brihad Aranyak Upanishad 3/9/3, the Vasus are the following—Fire, Earth, Air, Antariksha (the space of the solar system), Aditya (Sun), Duloka (heavens), the Moon, and the Nakshatras (the stars and the planets).

²*Srivatsa*— this is the mark of the foot of sage Bhrigu which he had caste on the chest of Vishnu ones when he got annoyed upon the Lord. The Lord is so enamoured of his devotees that instead of taking umbrage at this disrespect shown by the sage and punishing him for his misdemeanor, he had blessed the sage that his footprint would always remain on his chest as one of the jewels worn by Lord Vishnu. However, Laxmi was so angry at the temerity of sage Brighu that she cursed that henceforth she, in the form of wealth and material abundance, would always shun a Brahmin; it is believed that this is the reason why Brahmins, who are otherwise of a high birth, are always serving others in the society who are junior to them by birth for their monetary and material needs.]

29. The spiritual aspirant should meditate, with due persistence, steadfastness, devotion and humility, upon the glorious, splendorous and divine form of Lord Vishnu whose dazzling radiance is equivalent to millions of moons, and whose immaculate purity resembles the immaculacy and purity of untainted, transparent and colourless crystal (29).

30. One should concentrate his mind and meditate upon this glorious divine form of the four-armed Lord Vishnu (the sustainer and protector of creation), who resembles the flower of the linseed plant called ‘Atasi’, honorably seated on an exalted divine seat located in the navel¹ while inhaling air during the process of Purak phase of doing Pranayam² (30).

[Note—¹The *navel* is the point in the body where the placenta is attached to the embryo, enabling the latter to draw its nourishment from the mother’s body. Lord Vishnu is the sustainer and nourisher of creation, so his seat at the site of the navel is

a symbolism of this biological fact. Besides this, the navel is the site of the 'Nabhi Chakra' and below it is the 'Kanda' which is the center from where all the Naadis (nerves) in the body branch out. These Naadis carry consciousness and life throughout the length and breadth of the body which is a microcosm of the entire creation. This Nabhi Chakra is also said to be the abode of the Sun God which is a symbolic representation of the fact that the sun is the eternal cosmic source of light, heat and energy without which life on this earth is unimaginable.

²*Purak* is the phase of Pranayam when breath is inhaled through the nostrils. The word literally means 'to fill, to supply, to replenish'. During this phase, fresh life-giving air element is drawn inside the body. This air is then allowed to remain inside the body for a given period of time during the second phase called 'Kumbhak' which literally means a 'pitcher or hollow pot'. This phase is mentioned below in verse no. 31 below. Finally, the air is expelled during the exhalation phase called 'Rechak' which means 'to clean, to purge, to eliminate'. This phase is mentioned in verse no. 32 below. These three phases are an integral part of Yoga and all the Upanishads that deal with Yoga describe them in one context or the other.]

31. Similarly, during the next phase which entails the holding of the inhaled air inside the body, called the phase of Kumbhak, one should concentrate his mind and meditate upon the divine and glorious form of the four-headed Lord Brahma (the creator), whose countenance is fair but with a slight hint of pink, as being seated on the symbolic divine seat located in the subtle heart (in the sublime form of pure consciousness) (31).

[Note—The heart is the place where emotions and sentiments have their seat. It is the heart which makes a man emotionally and sentimentally attached to this world, loving it and longing for it with his heart, yearning for its sensual pleasures and longing for its material comforts. It is the heart which makes a man feel sentimental in certain situations, making him either hate or love something or someone. All sentimental notions and emotive impulses gush out from his heart and not from his mind-intellect which are more realistic and analytical by nature. The heart is the seat of emotions and sentiments. So when the Mana or the mind is under the command of the heart, the former is said to be emotive as well. In fact, as mentioned in verse no. 25, the Mana or the emotive mind is at the root of this vast colourful world of imaginary mirages that trap the unwary and innocent creature in their ever-spreading tentacles. Since the creator Brahm is said to have had in his heart a desire to create a wonderful world of magnificent charm and astounding diversity before he actually made a determined bid to implement his desires and give them a concrete shape using the instrument of the intellectual, analytical and discerning mind, it is safely assumed that the world's original or primary place of origin was in the heart of Brahm.

In other words, the heart came into the picture even before the mind was involved. The heart decided that it should create a colourful and charming world to play with, and then influenced the mind to see how this goal can be achieved in a systematic and planned manner. Then when the intellect warned the creature that he is allowing himself to get trapped by his own creation, the heart overruled its advice and kept the creature entangled in the world. It is only once in a while that wisdom dawns on the mental horizon of some isolated fortunate creature who would pay heed to the heed of the intellect and rein in the natural impulses of the heart so as to divert the efforts of the mind to search the truth and reality of existence. This is the general picture at the level of the individual creature.

Now to come back to our above verse, once the creation came into being, Brahma started to love it naturally in the same manner as a father naturally loves his offspring no matter how stupid or wild or good-for-nothing he or she is. The emotions of love and endearment have their seat in the heart, and the world exists only as long as the man is emotionally and sentimentally attached to it, for as soon as his heart feels

detached towards the world the latter has no charms left for the man. We love anything with the heart and not the mind. When a couple wish to start a family, the primary requirement is the involvement of the heart—i.e. the factors of love, passion, lust and belonging come into play immediately. Then when the offspring materializes, the parents begin to love him more than any other possession they have. In short, the heart and the world are intricately and inexplicably related to each other.

This fact is celebrated here in this verse by saying that Brahma has his seat in the heart. As has already been pointed out in verse no. 20-21 and note of verse no. 30 earlier, the Purak phase of Pranayam refers to the air being drawn in to fill the abdomen with it air. This is a metaphoric way of saying that the practitioner of meditation has accepted the cosmic responsibility of creation and the fact that he is a personification of the cosmic creator known as Brahma, the four-headed God of creation. Since Brahma is the creator of the visible world and the creatures who would inhabit this earth, the person who accepts Brahma in his heart also symbolically accepts the fact that he is the creator of this world. Seating this Brahma in the heart is like giving permanence to this belief. This fact is symbolised by the Kumbhak phase of Pranayam when the air is withheld in the body for a prolonged time. In metaphysical terms it means that he has accepted that this world in which he finds himself trapped is one of his own creation, and therefore he is the only one who can bring an end to it. This latter fact is metaphorically represented by the Rechak phase of Pranayam.]

32. Finally, while exhaling air during the concluding phase called Rechak, the aspirant should meditate upon and fix his mind upon the three-eyed Lord Shiva (the concluder) who is honorably seated on an exalted divine seat located in the forehead (between the eyebrows). Lord Shiva has a white (fair) complexion resembling the colour of crystal or quartz. [Crystal or quartz appear to be white in colour though they are colourless and do not have any inherent colour of their own but only reflect the colour of the sunlight which is white, indicating Lord Shiva's purity of thoughts and his inherent auspiciousness and uncorrupted nature because this 'white' colour is symbol of such eclectic virtues as purity, auspiciousness, divinity and holiness. This colour of his complexion is made physically possible because he smears the ash of the fire sacrifice all over his body.]

Lord Shiva is honoured by the epithet of 'Nishkal', i.e. one who is without a spot and taint or faults and shortcomings of any kind, who is stable and unwavering or is unchanging and steady under all circumstances and periods of time.

Lord Shiva is the vanquisher and destroyer of all sins and misdeeds along with their horrendous consequences for the creature (32).

[Note—*Lord Shiva* is the most enlightened, wise and self-realised omnipotent great Lord of creation who is able to provide the creature, who meditates properly upon the supreme Truth, with liberation from the bondages of ignorance and delusions, along with delivering his soul from this world of an endless cycle of birth and death by blessing it with emancipation and salvation. The Rechak phase of Pranayam relates to the exhalation of contaminated breath which has collected all the gaseous and other lighter impurities of the body while the breath was withheld inside during the Kumbhak phase. The Rechak phase is a metaphoric representation of the fact that the spiritual aspirant has collected all spiritual impurities that were present inside his inner self and has expelled them while doing Rechak. Thus, Yoga and especially Pranayam helps him to wash his inner self clean of all sorts of darkening soot of his character during the symbolic phase of Rechak, then imbibing auspicious and noble virtues during the Purak phase, and finally endeavouring to retain these good virtues during the Kumbhak phase. This entire process is tantamount to his becoming sinless and uncorrupted like Lord Shiva.

Shiva remains in a perpetual state of Yoga or doing meditation and contemplation as compared to Lord Vishnu and Brahma. This is because the latter two Gods are neck-deep involved in the creation and then the sustenance of the world; they have no time to reflect on the entanglements that this world have created for them. On the other hand, Shiva is totally detached and dispassionate by nature, so he finds time to shun the world and remain engrossed in the bliss obtained by meditation and contemplation. That is why Shiva is regarded as the patron God of ascetics and wise persons. That is also why he is regarded as the 'Maheshwar'—the 'Great' God.

Shiva is also regarded as the patron Lord of death and is said to reside in the cremation ground where he witnesses constant death all around him, and has therefore realised the futility of pursuing this illusive world. He has seen kings and paupers die and leave everything behind. So nothing of the material world can be exciting and attractive for him. He has realised that everything in this world is perishable and transient, and therefore to pursue them is as stupid an enterprise as running for water seeing a mirage in a hot desert. This wisdom of the futility of worldly charms and the perishability of the world itself makes Shiva most detached from the world and sincerely renounce it. Being totally detached from and disillusioned with all the charms of this fascinating world, he prefers to remain in seclusion of snow-capped mountains or caves where he can practice the worship of the Self in a constant state of meditation and contemplation called the state of Samadhi (a trance-like state of utter bliss and tranquility) without getting distracted by the deluding impulses of the material world.

That is why Shiva's symbolic abode is said to be in the forehead because the head is the site of wisdom, erudition, knowledge and enlightenment as compared to the heart which is inclined to be sentimental and emotional. The brain is located in the head of which the forehead is like the front of the computer monitor or the bonnet of the car. It is the head that makes the creature realise the 'truth and reality' by analyzing and interpreting facts in the proper perspective.

'Death' in the metaphysical context would mean getting rid of the world and involvement with it just like a dead person who is not concerned with what is happening around him. Mere physical presence without any involvement, or being a neutral observer, or even doing deeds without expecting any result or benefit from them are all tantamount to being 'dead' in this world as far as the Atma or soul is concerned. Therefore, a wise and self-realised man is virtually 'dead' even though he has a body and goes about his normal duties in this world.

When a self-realised person develops this eclectic state of mind and realises the eternal 'Truth' of existence, when he has understood that he is not an ordinary creature but a personification of Brahm in as much as the Trinity Gods Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva have their symbolic abode inside his own body as asserted in verse nos. 28-32 herein above, he is bound to undergo a profound psychological change for the better. He acknowledges the fact that he is a living personification of the Brahm, and therefore he must think and behave accordingly.

Since Rechak phase of Pranayam is symbolic of the exit of all forces of life from the body in the form of exhaled air, it is a metaphor for death of all evil tendencies and the cause of awakening of enlightenment in the aspirant much like the constant observation of death has awakened profound renunciation in Lord Shiva.

On the other hand, Vishnu has Laxmi as his consort, and this Goddess presides over material wealth and prosperity which can only entangle and not free the creature from worries. Similarly, Brahma is the forefather and so he is worried about the welfare of his progeny, the creation and its inhabitants. It is such an irony that though he is accompanied by Saraswati, the patron Goddess of knowledge, he still never feels as detached from this creation as Shiva is. So, whereas Brahma represents the first phase of life when the creature is born as an infant, and Vishnu stands for his growth and development, Shiva symbolises his last phase or old age when he has had enough of the world and seeks liberation and deliverance from its torments.]

33. Lord Shiva is symbolically enshrined in the divine Lotus present in the subtle heart of the creature. This Lotus resembles the plantain tree in as much as its stalk is bent like an inverted U at the top and the blossoming lotus flower is at the end of this stalk, its face pointing downwards. It is visualised that Lord Shiva, who is an embodiment of all the Vedas, resides here (33).

[Note—Lord Shiva is an embodiment of the Vedas because he is the wisest of all the Gods, and even wiser than Brahma, the creator of the Vedas. This is because Brahma has the notion of love and endearment for the world in his heart, being its creator and father, but Shiva is completely immune to such emotional involvements, remaining detached from and dispassionate towards the world. The Vedas also endeavour to inculcate the sense of profound dispassion towards this deluding world in the heart of the spiritual aspirant, and therefore Shiva is deemed to have really understood the essence and meaning of the teaching of these great scriptures as compared to Brahm, though the latter is the one from whom the Vedas were created like other elements of creation.

The posture mentioned here is the one obtained when one is deeply engaged in meditation when the neck is bent forward and the head is tilted downwards so that the chin touches the upper end of the breast bone below the Adam's apple. This happens in an advanced stage of Yoga when the practitioner is so lost in his thoughts of the 'self' that he is not even aware that his head is not erect and is drooping.]

34. While meditating, the aspirant should concentrate his attention on the divine Lotus symbolically located in the subtle heart. This Lotus has a hundred sepals, a hundred leaves and a hundred opened and blossoming petals. This Lotus enshrines the Sun, the Moon and the Fire element in this sequence (see verse no.26-27), and the aspirant should meditate respectively upon them in this order (34).

35. [Now, this verse describes how one can be made aware of these three entities, the Sun, the Moon and the Fire, while meditating upon this symbolic Lotus in his heart.]

In order to be enlightened about the presence of these entities in the symbolic divine Lotus¹ of the heart, the aspirant should first visualise in his mind during meditation that the flower is slowly developing and opening up in his heart. Then he should accept the 'Beej Akchars' or seed Mantras of these divine Gods (i.e. the basic letter or syllable that is regarded as the specific basic Mantra of these divine entities of creation, viz. the Sun, the Moon and Fire) and establish them in this Lotus² (35).

[Note—¹In the Upanishads, the lotus flower is invariably used to symbolise the heart because it is here that the pure consciousness known as the Atma resides. Lotus is a metaphor for purity, holiness, divinity and auspiciousness because of the physical fact that inspite of being born in a dirty pond it remains clean itself and not a drop of dirty water sticks to its petals.

²This is like cross fertilization of the female flower with the pollen grains from the male flower by the help of the bee or other insects. The Beej Mantras are like the pollen grains coming in from the anther of creation, and they represent the various divine forces of Brahm. The transplanting of these divine characteristics and auspicious virtues of Brahm in one's own heart is metaphorically said in the way of this cross fertilization of the flower by the pollen grains. When they fertilise the egg present in the symbolic divine Lotus present in the heart of the aspirant—a process only possible when the flower is fully grown up and in its prime beauty and blooming with all its colourful charms symbolising the maturity of thoughts of the spiritual aspirant—it is then that the eclectic virtues characteristic of Brahm are realised by the practitioner of Yoga in his own heart.]

36. A person who is aware of the presence of the supreme transcendental Being, the Supreme Being, in all the three places¹, the three paths², the three forms of Brahm³, the three Akchars or letters⁴, the three Maatraas⁵, as well as in the 'Ardha Maatraa' or the half-syllable⁶—such a person is the one who is deemed to be truthfully wise, erudite and enlightened about the fundamental tenets of the Vedas and the essence of their teachings (in the form of the great sayings called the Mahavakyas or the great sayings and other maxims and axioms of the scriptures. [Refer verse nos. 16-17 above.] (36).

[Note—¹The *three places* where Brahm resides are the three states in which consciousness exists, viz. the waking state, the dreaming state, and the deep sleep states of consciousness. The three places also refer to the three worlds called Triloki—viz. the terrestrial world represented by the word 'Bhu', the sky above the earth represented by the word 'Bhuvaha', and the heavens represented by the word 'Swaha'. Besides these interpretations, the three places refer to the three planes of time—viz. the past, the present and the future. The word in its broader perspective would involve the 'triad of the entire creation' because everything that exists is nothing but a manifestation of on single non-dual cosmic Truth known as Brahm. This is because of the simple fact that the creation 'does exist; it is seen, witnessed, lived in, and is verifiable and tangible', and not some hypothetical conjecture based on the figment of imagination.

The 'triad of creation' has been enumerated in note to verse no. 7, Canto 1 of Shwetashwatar Upanishad which is Chapter 5 of this volume.

²The *three paths* are the following—the two extreme paths, one that leads to his pomp, reputation, glory and fame, and the other that causes just the opposite to happen, leading to his ill-fame, ignominy and degradation, and the third path is the median one of moderation that is regarded as auspicious and well thought of. It is marked by the virtues of detachment, dispassion and non-involvement. According to some versions, these three paths are represented by the three aspects of the fire sacrifice by which the Supreme Being is worshipped, viz. 'Dhum' or the aspect of the fire sacrifice when there is smoke and much sputtering and crackling of the firewood before it catches fire properly, 'Archi' or the aspect of the fire sacrifice when the flames are burning brightly and brilliantly, and 'Agati' or the concluding part of the sacrifice when some firewood or other offerings remain half-burnt or incompletely burnt, leading to either smoldering pieces of leftover offerings, or the residue of the extinguished fire in the form of still-smouldering pieces of charcoal and ambers. Refer also to verse no. 93/12-93/15 which describes the three paths that the Atma takes from the metaphysical point of view.

³The *three forms of Brahm* are the following—the 'Vishwa' representing the gross form of the visible world in which the individual creature lives in his waking state of consciousness, the 'Viraat Purush' representing the gross form of the invisible cosmic parent body in its cosmic plane of waking state from which all the individual creatures of this world have come into being, and 'Brahm or Ishwar' which that entity from which even this Viraat has evolved. Another interpretation of these three forms of Brahm is its manifestation as the Trinity Gods consisting of Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer and protector, and Shiva the concluder.

⁴The *three letters* are the three letters of OM, i.e. A, U and M. These three letters cover in their ambit the entire gamut of creation, viz. 'A' covers birth, 'U' covers growth and development, and 'M' indicated death or conclusion.

⁵The *three Maatraas* of Brahm are represented by the three phases in which this creation has evolved as a fraction of Brahm. These are called 'Hrisva' or the small beginning indicating the primary forms of life such as algae and fungi, the 'Dirgha' or the most evolved and widespread form such as the higher species of animals and the highest rung occupied by the humans, and 'Plut' symbolising the rudimentary forms left after the creation come to the end, or the conclusion of the creation itself. If these

are applied to the divine word OM standing for Brahm, then the letter 'A' stands for Hrisva, the letter 'U' for Dirgha, and the letter 'M' for Plut.

⁶The *half-syllable* stands for the incomplete sound of M pronounced at the fag end of saying OM when the mouth is closed as in the word '*sum*', thereby denying the letter 'M' to be pronounced with its full glory with an open mouth as in the word '*mouth*'.]

37. A person is said to be well versed in the essential tenets and teachings of the Vedas when he becomes acquainted with (i.e. when he witnesses and experiences first hand) the supreme Divinity and the Absolute Truth of existence. It is known as the cosmic Consciousness represented by the ethereal word OM. The sound of OM resembles the reverberations caused by the resonating sound emanating from a large bell, a sound which is in a continuous stream of vibrations much like the uninterrupted stream of oil flowing down a smooth surface¹, and which lies beyond the restrictions imposed by the physical characteristics of the symbol of OM having a Bindu, Naad and Kalaa (here referring to the sign of 'Chandra Bindu'—the crescent-shaped moon with the dot on top—placed above the symbol of OM. [That is, when the spiritual aspirant is able to experience the vibrations of ether in his meditative state, the center of his brain which receives sensory perceptions from the external world is overtaken by the resonance of sound that prevails in the cosmic ether so much so that none of the impulses of the external world are able to disturb his inner peace and tranquility. He remains in a state of perpetual bliss and ecstasy because his mind becomes oblivious to the turmoil in the surrounding world. This rare and unique state of existence that is witnessed by seasoned ascetics is tantamount to having witnessed the supreme conscious 'Self' that is beyond the purview of the mundane world, and is immune to all delusions and the entrapping web that this world casts.] (37).

[Note—¹The 'smooth surface' here refers to the cosmic ether in which the Naad has had its origin in the form of the cosmic waves, oscillating in regular frequency which generated sufficient energy that in turn produced the cosmic sound identified by and encrypted in the word OM. The calm surface of this ether is the tranquil state of existence that goes beyond the mundane life full of restlessness and turmoil, and the presence of 'consciousness' in this state of existence is symbolised by the energy of the waves that create an oscillation in the cosmic ether. The best way to experience this phenomenon is to stand on the beach beside an ocean during the night when a continuous and indefinable roar is heard in the distance. This 'distant' roar is symbolic of Naad. It is also heard when one closes one's ears with the fingers. When one is asked to describe the type of sound heard, there is only one word which would give an idea of how it sounds, and it is OM pronounced in a subtle but resounding manner when one hums this monosyllabic word OM. Refer also to verse no. 2-3, 102 also.]

38. Even as a man can suck in water through the bore of the straw, the expert ascetic is able to draw his vital winds called Prans while steadily practicing meditation, especially Pranayam, and divert them upwards (i.e. he is able to rise above the mundane and attain a higher state of exalted existence when his vital energy and life forces are diverted towards his spiritual elevation instead of being frittered away in worldly pursuits) (38).

39. A wise and seasoned practitioner of meditation should make efforts to symbolically suck up the divine subtle energy present in the Kundalini (the coiled energy center present at the base of the spine) that is to be treated as a 'well or fount'

of cosmic energy, by the path of the symbolic straw represented by the stalk of the divine Lotus present in his subtle heart (i.e. through the duct or Naadi, called the Sushumna Naadi, passing up from the mouth of the Kundalini, through the center of the spine, and reaching up to the top of the head), and using the Ardha Matra of OM (i.e. the resonating sound produced in the mind after the mouth is closed and the sound of the word OM is continued with a prolonged humming) as the force to do the pulling-up of this energy just like water is drawn up from a deep well¹ by the means of a rope and bucket (or a liquid is sucked up through the means of a straw).

The pulled-up energy from the Kundalini should then be focused in the center of the eyebrows² (39).

[Note—¹It is to be noted here that this ‘humming sound’ resembles the working of an electric water pump that is used to pull up water from deep bore wells. The pipes used for this purpose are like the Naadi called Sushumna through which the energy of the Kundalini is being pulled up, the Kundalini itself is the underground water reservoir, and the energy being concentrated in the forehead is like filling of the overhead water tank with this pulled-up water. As is obvious in this example, the underground water reservoir is of no use unless the water is easily available and made distributable as when it is stored in an overhead tank.

²In other words, the practitioner should endeavour to use his meditative exercises to concentrate his subtle energy, which was hitherto locked inside the Kundalini and now released by meditation practices, in the region of the forehead between the two eyebrows where the faculty of intellect and discrimination is located. It is believed that this spot is the place where the symbolic ‘third eye of wisdom’ is located. This ‘eye’ has the same powerful impact and the same penetrating powers in the field of metaphysics and spiritualism that the beam of laser has in modern science. The small triangle formed at this spot, i.e. at the tri-junction of the two eyebrows and the root of the nose, is called the Trikona in verse no. 95.]

40. The spot of the forehead between the two eyebrows and the root of the nose is the place where the supreme Brahm is said to have his symbolic abode. This is the place where the elixir of eternity and bliss, called Amrit, is located¹ (40).

[Note—¹Refer verse no. 95, 103-106 below. This spot is called the spot of wisdom, erudition and enlightenment in the body. When the ascetic is able to concentrate his mental energy here, he is able to attain supernatural powers to see even things not visible to naked eyes just like the x-rays that can penetrate the skin and see the bones behind them. It is like generating powerful laser rays of spiritual energy which enables the practitioner of Yoga to penetrate the outer shell and see behind; it gives him mystical powers of deep insight. He becomes so engrossed in this concentration that he forgets about anything else much like the bee which is sucking nectar from the flower. This is a metaphoric way of saying that he experienced utmost bliss when his attention is focused here at this point. Besides this, it is here in the mind—more precisely in the hollow of the skull—that he hears the reverberations of the cosmic Naad while he repeats the Mantra OM as described in verse no. 103-106 below. These cosmic vibrations soothe down his nerves by subtly massaging them, and as a consequence he experiences unprecedented ecstasy and bliss.]

41. The six limbs of Yoga are said to be the following—Aasan (sitting posture), Pranayam (breath control), Pratyahar (withdrawal of the mind and its control), Dhaarna (having a firm conviction, faith and belief on the sanctity and truthfulness of the chosen path), Dhyan (contemplation and concentration of the faculties of the mind and intellect), and Samadhi (a perpetual trance-like state in which the aspirant loses all awareness of the external world and even himself, and remains perpetually in meditation) (41).

[Note—Refer Amrit Naad Upanishad, verse no. 6, which is Chapter no. 9, and Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 16-42 which is Chapter no. 14 of this volume.]

42. The numbers of Aasans (sitting postures) of Yoga are as numerous as the number of species of living creatures in this creation. Thus, there are hundreds of such sitting postures, and they are all known to Lord Shiva (42).

[Note—This is a very significant observation. It means that all the creatures, no matter to which plane of existence it belongs to or where it lies in the evolutionary ladder, can do meditation and contemplation in order to obtain the benefit of spiritual liberation and deliverance. It is not necessary that only humans have the birth-right to do Yoga and obtain spiritual liberation, but they only have an advantage of an advanced faculty of the mind and intellect as well as the privilege of being able to read the scriptures and seek advice of those who have had a first-hand experience of pitfalls of such practices and precautions to be taken to avoid them. After all, spiritual emancipation and salvation is open to all forms of life because all forms have the same divine soul in them just like each human being has a right to education and knowledge but only a limited ratio of the population takes advantage of this right, and even amongst them only a handful make good and fruitful use of this privilege.]

43. The four main Aasans or sitting postures during meditation are the following—Siddha¹, Bhadra², Singha³ and Padma⁴.

The two subtle energy centers at the lower end of the body are the Muladhar Chakra⁵ and Swadisthan Chakra⁶ (43).

[Note—(1) The *Aasan* is the sitting posture adopted by a practitioner of Yoga (meditation) in order to concentrate his mind and vital energies of the body to obtain success in his spiritual pursuit or obtain access to the boundless source of subtle energy lying untapped inside his own body for acquiring mystical powers and deep insight into the para-natural. Successful accomplishment of Yoga is dependent upon such sitting postures because they are like specific instruments to be employed by a student of any particular discipline of science in order to obtain success in his experiments, and at the same time are like strict regimes to be followed by him for this success. Some of the other Upanishads that describe the prominent Aasans in great detail are the following—Yogchudamani and Jabal Darshan of the Sam Veda tradition, and Mandal Brahmin of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition. The Amritnaad Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, which is included as Chapter no. 9 of this volume also deals with them.

¹The *Siddha Aasan*—To sit in this posture, the two legs are first stretched out. The left leg is bent at the knee and folded in so that the heel touched the genitals and the sole lies flat against the inner thighs of the right leg. Then the right leg is folded in and the heel is placed in front of the pubic bone and the sole touches the inner thigh of the previously folded left leg. The two hands are stretched out and the outer side of the wrist of each hand is placed on the bent knee-joint of the respective side. The palm is opened and the thumb is touched by the bent first finger to form a virtual ring, with the remaining three fingers held straight out. The practitioner sits perfectly in a ram-rod straight position, with the spine, the neck and the head in a straight line. The mental sight is fixed on a spot in front of the nose, and this state of intense concentration is maintained as long as is feasible for the practitioner. Then the legs are gradually unfolded and after some period of relaxation, the process is repeated with the opposite leg being folded in first and placed below the other leg. It is believed that this posture is one of the best postures to be adopted for Yoga amongst the eighty four lakh (84×10^5) postures of meditation. This Siddha Aasan is capable of cleansing all the seventy two thousand Naadis (ducts in the body), and is so-called because it is possible to access the divine source of cosmic energy trapped inside the

body as well as experience the cosmic power of the kindled Spirit by employing this Aasan. The word 'Siddha' implies one who has acquired stupendous mystical and supernatural powers that are beyond the parameters of the physical and mundane world.

²The *Bhadra Aasan*—To sit in a posture by placing the two ankle joints under the buttocks on either side of the suture, i.e. the junction point of the testicles and the anus such that they (the two ankle joints) touch each other, and then using the hands to firmly clasp the soles from the back side of the buttock, is called 'Bhadrasan'. This posture can neutralise the ill effects of all diseases which cause the production of toxins in the body (or which are caused by administration of poisons or other toxins in the body; it helps to get rid of diseases as well).

³The *Singha Aasan*— The sitting posture called 'Singhasan' is so named as it resembles the way a lion sits. It is this — tuck both the ankle joints (by folding the legs inwards and backwards) under the buttocks in such a way that the right ankle joint is to the left of the suture, i.e. the left ankle joint is under the right buttock and the foot of this left leg protrudes out from below the buttock of the right leg. Similarly, the right leg is folded in and the ankle is tucked under the left buttock and the foot points out from under this buttock. Both the hands should be stretched out straight and the open palms kept on the knee of the corresponding side with the fingers spread out like a fork on that knee (i.e. left palm should rest facing down on the left knee and the right palm on the corresponding right knee of the bent leg, with outstretched fingers). Then, open the mouth wide, extending the tongue out as much as possible, and fix the attention and sight on the tip of the nose. This is a posture adored by ascetics (Yogis) and it is dedicated to the memory of Lord Narsingh, the half man and half lion incarnation of Lord Vishnu to liberate his great child devotee Prahalad from the torments inflicted upon him by his own demon father. Amongst the benefits of this Aasan is that it clears the voice and removes foul breath.

⁴The *Padma Aasan*—This is to sit in a Lotus posture. It is also regarded as one of the most widely practiced posture of Yoga because of its ease and sustainability. This entails to sit crossed-legged in such a way that the foot of the left leg rests on the upper and inner part of the thigh of the right leg, and vice versa. The spine, neck and head are in a ram-rod straight position, and the hands, with palms facing upwards and resting one on the top of the other, are placed on the folded legs in front of the navel region.

(2) The *Chakras* are the various subtle energy centers present in the body. According to Yoga texts, when the vital energy trapped in these Chakras are activated, a person acquires immense potentials, including spiritual and mystical powers. They have been elaborately described in Upanishads dealing with Yoga and mystical forms of ritualistic worship involving meditative practices in order to enable to practitioner acquire astounding mystical and supernatural powers. Refer Saubhagya Laxmi Upanishad, Canto 3 of Rig Veda tradition, as well as Yograjo, Yogchudamani and Jabal Darshan Upanishads (Canto 4) of the Sam Veda tradition.

⁵The *Muladhar Chakra*—It is located between genitals and anus, in the region known as the perineum.

⁶The *Swadisthan Chakra*—It is located in the groins of males and the Bhug area of females. It has a 5-headed male phallus like a sprouting seed and its counterpart in the female is the clitoris.]

44-45. Between these two (Muladhar and Swadhisthan Chakras) is located the area (site) responsible for reproduction. It is called the 'Kaamroop¹' because it is a personification of such qualities as passion, lust and desires that a creature has.

At the base of the anus there is a Chakra shaped like a Lotus with four petals. In the center of this is located the famous center of cosmic creative energy called

‘Kamakhya’. This is adored by acclaimed practitioner (because it has the same potential to ‘create’ that is also possessed by the supreme Lord of creation).

To the front of this Kamakhya is the male organ present outside the body in the anterior side of the anus (44-45).

[Note—¹This is called the *Kaamroop Peeth* in terms of the Tantra Yoga.

The word *Peeth* means a seat or pedestal for an idol of a deity. In the metaphysical context, it refers to the four sheaths which form the body that harbours the Atma of the creature at its center. These four sheaths are—the Annamaye Kosh or food sheath, the Pranmaye Kosh or the wind sheath, the Manomaye Kosh or the mind sheath, and Vigyanmaye Kosh or the intellect sheath.

The subtle heart of a creature is shaped like a divine Lotus where the supreme Lord known as Vishnu, the personified form of the Viraat Purush who is the infinite, invisible, all-encompassing and all-pervading macrocosmic gross body of the supreme transcendental Brahm, is honorably seated. This subtle heart is located inside the ‘self’ of the spiritual aspirant himself. Refer Dhyan Bindu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse nos. 27-28.

According to Tantra Shastra, the Peeths are said to be the places where the Shakti (cosmic dynamic energy of creation) is located in the body which itself is regarded as the temple of Shiva (Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 168), and of both Shiva and Vishnu as representatives of Brahm on the one hand and of Shakti and Laxmi as representative of Brahm’s cosmic dynamic and active principle on the other (Canto 5, verse no. 4). The body is also regarded as a holy city or pilgrim site where these four Peeths or temples of Shakti are located (Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 2-4).

There are four such Peeths as follows—The first seat or Peeth is called Kaam Roop Peeth, the second seat called Purna Giri Peeth, the third seat is called Jalandhar Peeth, and the fourth seat is called Uddyan/Udiyan Peeth.

These Peeths or seats and their locations have been described in verse nos. 170-175 of Canto 1, and verse nos. 8-15 of Canto 5 of Yogshikha Upanishad belonging to the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

46-47. There is a self-illuminated center of light resembling a priceless gem, symbolising the fount of a natural source of wisdom, intelligence, thoughts and discrimination. A person who is well acquainted with it is said to be an expert in Yoga.

Located at a distance measuring the width of four fingers from the epicenter of the fire element (called the Kundalini located at the base of the spine) and below the pubic bone is situated the Gonad (the testicles in the male), the organ which produces the cells responsible for reproduction. It is symbolically radiant and glowing like the hue of molten gold, and brilliant and splendorous like the dazzling streak of electric. [That is, it is a center of a very powerful source of dynamic creative energy that has the potential to generate new life in the form of a new creature from one single cell of the mother, i.e. the egg, and one from the father, i.e. the sperm. The metaphors of the ‘molten gold’ and ‘electric’ are used here to indicate the stupendous energy and dynamism of creation that is concentrated in this part of the body. If the forehead is the site for wisdom and erudition, this lower end of the body, i.e. the gonad, is equally important if the creation is to be perpetuated.

The Swadhisthan Chakra is at the base of this center (46-47).

48-49. The area of the Swadhisthan Chakra is called the pelvic region. This site has the vital wind (the Apan Vayu) and it is illuminated like a gem. [This is because it is

the centre of the body harbouring such glorious centers of energy as the Kundalini, the Swadhisthan Chakra, the Muladhar Chakra and the reproductive organs.]

The Manipurak Chakra is situated in the region of the navel. It is shaped like a Lotus having twelve petals. It is the area that controls ‘Punya’ and ‘Paap’ done by an individual. In other words, it is the center that controls life in as much as it is through it that the embryo draws nourishment from the mother through the placenta, and being so nourished it develops and takes birth as a creature that does this and that deed in this physical world. Each deed done by him is classified as either good or bad, the former being called ‘Punya’ or something categorised as auspicious and noble, and the other is called ‘Paap’ or something demoted to the lowly class of sins and inauspiciousness (48-49).

50-51. It is only till the time that the living being is not aware of the essential truths behind these organs that he is remains trapped in the whirlpool or net of delusions and ignorance¹.

Above the region of the perineum and below the navel is the cluster of Naadis (ducts in the body; the nerves and veins) called the ‘Kanda’ (literally meaning a root like structure like the sweet potato or carrot or radish). It is from here that seventy two thousand Naadis originate. From amongst them, there are seventy two Naadis that are more important (50-51).

[Note--¹That is, till the time a man does not understand that the reproductive organs are meant to carry forward the legacy of the supreme Brahm in the way of procreation, and are not at all meant for sexual indulgences and gratification of carnal desires of the body, he remains trapped in ignorance-induced delusions and swept off in its tide. That is, he foolishly thinks that his sexual organs are meant for sexual enjoyments, pleasures and self-gratifications instead of realising that they are tools to participate in the cosmic scheme of creation. This eclectic thinking should be natural to a wise and enlightened man because he is deemed to be one who is aware that he is not an ordinary mortal creature but Brahm personified. The sexual organs are meant to fulfill some divine mandate and not for indulgence and sexual enjoyments. Refer note no. 3 of verse no. 36 above.

So as soon as this wisdom dawns in his mind, he begins to see his own self as a personification of the Supreme Being capable of generating new forms of life in the form of his offspring almost from scratch, besides creating this colourful and many-faceted world of magnificent charms and sights. He makes new discoveries, new innovations, improves on and adds to what the original creator has created in some earlier time. In other words, he possesses the same ‘creative and generating’ powers and potentials as possessed by the Supreme Being. This is exactly the main purpose of the great teachings of the Vedas and Upanishads—to kindle self realisation in the man and make him realise that he is not an ordinary mortal like other ordinary creatures in this creation who are destined to lead a life ending in death and rebirth depending on what that creature has done in its previous life, but someone specially privileged and endowed to get an opportunity to charter his own course of redemption and salvation which no other forms can do with the same ease that is available to him.]

52-53. Out of these (seventy two Naadis) there are only ten main Naadis through which the Pran (vital life giving forces present inside the body) move or pulsate. They are the following—Ida, Pingla, Sushumna, Gandhari, Haritjivha, Pusa, Yashaswani, Alumbusa, Kuhu, and Shankhini (52-53).

[Note—Refer Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 15-17, and Jabal Darshan Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 13-17 of Sam Veda tradition.]

54-57. Practitioners of Yoga are expected to have a thorough knowledge of these Naadi network. The three main Naadis amongst these are the Ida, Pingla and Sushumna, and the vital life known as Pran continuously pulsates and moves inside them. The patron God of Ida Naadi is Sun, of Pingla is Moon, and of Sushumna is Fire.

The Sushumna is in the center of the other two Naadis, the Ida being to its left and Pingla to its right. These three Naadis are like the highway through which the Pran moves.

The ten vital winds in the body are called Pran. They are the following—Pran, Apaana, Samaana, Udaana, Vyan, Naaga, Kurma, Krikan, Devdutta, and Dhananjaya. Out of them, the first five are the chief Prans while the last five are subsidiary Prans¹ (54-57).

[Note--¹According to various Upanishads, especially the Trishiki Brahmin Upanishad, 1/5 and 2/77-87, and Paingalo-panishad, cantos 2, verse nos. 3 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, the 'Pran' (vital wind) is classified into ten types depending upon the function that the wind element performs in the body of a creature. Amongst them, there are five winds which are considered more important than the rest. As such, these five are called the main 'Pran', or 'Panch Prans', and they are the following:--(1) Pran, the wind element, as breath, that is exhaled as well as inhaled, and which is responsible for infusing and sustaining life in the body; it is considered the chief wind in the whole setup because without life no other wind would be of any significance to the creature; (2) Apaana, the wind that passes down the intestines and is responsible for digestion of the food taken by the creature and its excretion through the anus and urinary organs (kidneys); (3) Samaana, the wind that is responsible for equal distribution of nourishment throughout the body, as well as in circulation of blood; (4) Udaana, the wind that helps the body to rise and move about, it also helps the body to expel toxic waste gases in the body through the nostrils and mouth in the form of exhalation and cough; and (5) Vyan, the wind that helps in maintaining equilibrium and pressure within the body, and it also controls the functioning of the other winds.

Besides the above, there are five subsidiary winds which act more like assistants to the chief Prans. They are:- (1) Naaga—this junior wind which helps in exhaling breath and belching; (2) Kurma—this subsidiary wind helps the eyelids to open and shut; (3) Krikan—this creates the sensation of hunger; (4) Devdutta—this creates sleep; and (5) Dhananjaya—it prevents decay and deformation of the body immediately after death for some time.

According to Subala Upanishad, canto 9, verse no.1-14 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, these ten winds have the following functions—(1) Pran—this controls eyes and the faculty of sight (verse 1); (2) Apaana—this controls ears and the faculty of hearing (verse 2); (3) Vyan—this controls nose and the faculty of smell (verse 3); (4) Udaana—this controls the tongue and the faculty of taste (verse 4); (5) Samaana—this controls the skin and the faculty of touch (verse 5); (6) Vairambha—this controls speech (verse 6); (7) Mukhya—this controls the hands (verse 7); (8) Antaryaama—this controls the legs (verse 8); (9) Prabhanjan—this controls the anus (verse 9); (10) Kurma—this controls the genitals (verse 10); (11) Shyen—this controls the Mana or the thoughts and emotions (verse 11); (12) Krishna—this controls the discrimination, intellect and wisdom (verse 12); (13) Shwet—this controls Ahankar or the notion of ego, pride, arrogance, vanity etc. (verse 13); (14) Naaga—this controls the 'Chitta' or the faculty of concentration, memory, sub-conscious, reasoning (verse 14).

Location of the five chief vital winds, called the Panch Prans, in the body—(1) Pran—it is present in the mouth, nose, heart, navel, big toe of the leg; (2) Apaana—it is present in the intestines and anus, lower abdomen, thighs, knees; (3) Samaana—it is

uniformly present throughout the body; (4) Udaan—it is present in the hands, legs, joints of the body; and (5) Vyan—it is located in the ears, thighs, waist, heels, shoulders, throat. The subsidiary winds as listed above, i.e. Naag, Kurma, Krikar, Devdutta and Dhananjay are located in the skin, muscles and the bones.

Besides the Upanishad mentioned above, there are others that elaborately describe the vital winds, their locations, their functions, how they are satisfied, along with their significance. The chief amongst them are (1) Chandogya Upanishad in its canto 3, sections 13-18; canto 5, sections 19-23 (describes how the five winds are satisfied); and canto 7, section 15, (2) Jabal Darshan Upanishad, canto 4, verse no.23-24 of the Sam Veda tradition, (3) Maitrayanu Upanishad, canto 2, verse no.6-7 of the same Veda (which describes the functions of these winds), (4) Subalo Upanishad, canto 9, verse no.1-14, (5) Paingalo-panishad, canto 2, verse no.3 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, and (6) Amritnado-panishad, verse no. 33-38 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition. These vital winds have also been elucidated upon in sage Veda Vyas' Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 4, verse no.38-39.]

58. The subtle vital forces of life called Pran collectively move and oscillate in these thousands of Naadis, injecting life or 'Pran' into the otherwise lifeless gross body of the creature. The living beings move up and down under the influence of the Pran and Apaana respectively¹ (58).

[Note—¹In metaphysical terms this means that they attain spiritual upliftment when their Pran is more active, while they get demoted to the mundane world of lowly life marked by grossness and inertia when the Apaana wind is more active. In more physical terms the movement of Pran refers to the process of breathing, while the movement of Apaana refers to the peristaltic movement that helps the food to move down the intestines. The breath (Pran) which brings in fresh oxygen-laden air inside the body and helps to rejuvenate the tissues on the one hand and removes toxic gases and other lighter waste products of the body when it is exhaled, and the movement of food in the alimentary canal, its digestion and expulsion of waste products from the body governed by the Apaana wind are both essential and indispensable parts of life because no life can survive without either of them.]

59-61. The Pran (here referring to the breath passing through the nostrils when one breathes) moves sometimes through the path which goes to the left (of the central Sushumna Naadi, i.e. through the Ida Naadi passing up to the left nostril), and sometimes through the one that goes to the right (of the central Sushumna Naadi, i.e. through the Pingla Naadi passing up to the right nostril). The Pran wind is so subtle and sublime that it cannot be visibly seen.

Just like a ball thrown at random by the player moves restlessly in various directions, bouncing here and there and changing its course every now and then unpredictably, the creature is also buffeted and kicked around (like the ball)¹ by the two prominent winds called the Pran and Apaana, and he moves restlessly in so many places (and in so many wombs or takes so many births).

The tug and pull of these two winds on the creature is much like a bird being pulled down by the string tied to its legs while it attempts to fly off in the sky². An ascetic who is well acquainted with this fact is regarded as really wise and enlightened.

While the Pran leaves the body it makes a sound equivalent to the Sanskrit alphabet 'Ha' (equivalent to the sound made while pronouncing *her*; this is the sound made in the throat whilst one exhales breath with mouth open). On the other hand when it is taken in, it makes the sound of the Sanskrit alphabet 'Sa' (equivalent to the

sound made while pronouncing sir; this is heard when one inhales air through the clenched teeth but open mouth). [Refer verse no. 24 also.] (59-61).

[Note—¹The same idea has been described in Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 27-28 of Sam Veda tradition. It says—“Just like a ball or balloon being throne or kicked around by players, a creature (an individual) cannot remain stable and steady for long because it is under the spell of Pran, Apaana and other vital winds which constantly keep it restless, agitated, always mobile and fidgety and in a state of constant flux (27).

The creature, under the buffeting influence or thrust of the vital winds or airs, is compelled to move upwards or downwards, to the left and to the right (like an air-filled balloon) so swiftly that it loses its bearings and does not know what is happening to it (28) [27-28]”.

These winds slap and dash against the sail of a ship on a high sea, as it were, tossing and turning it with the lashing of every gust. The creature cannot sit quietly and calmly in the ship because these vital wind forces continue to flap and flutter the sail, whipping the ship recklessly in the churning waters of the sea represented by this world.

The creature's body is like the balloon or a football, as it is filled with air called the vital winds. Even as a balloon or an air-filled light ball moves with the slightest touch, is easily tossed about violently in a squall or gale and it cannot remain at a single point for long even when there is no apparent breeze blowing, the creature also has an inbuilt and inherent natural tendency to be always on the move, remain restless and be fidgety. The biggest proof of this fact is witnessed when a dead body is observed. All the rest of the organs of a body while it was alive are present in a corpse, the only imperceptible element which has left the body is 'Pran' or the vital wind. The corpse becomes heavy than a living man and it lies motionless if it is not moved by others; it has no capacity to move on its own and it becomes heavy like lead. So it is clear that it was the 'Pran' that made the body light weight, agile and active much like the air-filled balloon or ball. Once the Pran leaves the body, the latter becomes heavy as lead.

The creature is flung around so rapidly in quick succession in waves of emotions and sentiments originating in its heart and mind due to the various influences of the external world that it is not able to discern and make out what is transpiring. It becomes completely disoriented in the topsy-turvy path of transmigration. It does not get a chance to bring itself together and realise who it is, what it truly is, where does it belong, what is the correct direction it should take and which direction it is actually heading to, where should it go and where it should not. Taking the example of a boat in a stormy high sea, the harried creature is so rapidly hurled and tossed about like a ball and thrown over board that it is more concerned with grabbing any float at hand just to avoid getting drowned than to focus on long term spiritual goals of life. Its immediate concern is the survival in the next moment, and not the moment beyond the first. Another good example would be a balloon or a dry leaf or a kite caught in a storm. There is no need to elaborate what happens to them. The allegory will aptly summarise the comic but alarming situation the trapped creature faces.

²The analogy of the *bird* is used here to emphasise the point that the creature has a natural tendency to remain free like the bird, but it allows itself to be tied voluntarily in shackles of delusions pertaining to this world out of its own ignorance, and its unending greed and desires, and gets trapped as a result much like the bird which falls for the trap laid for it by the cunning bird-catcher. The tug and pull in the world with its astounding variety of magnificent charms and fascinating colours, no matter how transient and horrifying they are in the long run, are nevertheless very enthralling and captivating for the time being for the creature, and the latter has no inclination to look ahead and see the horrendous consequences of falling for them. This is the 'downward pull of the Apaana wind', used here in a metaphoric way

because it is this wind that moves down the body through the intestines and helps to push the eaten food down the alimentary canal and out through the anus. On the other hand, the Pran moves in the upwards directions as is obvious when we observe the breath which moves out of the lungs and goes up to the nostril to be exhaled. This 'upwards movement of the Pran' is a metaphoric way of saying that the creature is seeking spiritual upliftment, it is 'looking up'.]

62-63. Since these two alphabets 'Ha' and 'Sa' form the word 'Hans'¹ meaning a divine Swan (representing the immaculate, uncorrupted, untainted and divine Brahm, and implying the constant assertion of the creature that he is as immaculate and pure as the Swan representing this Brahm), it is deemed that all the living beings (here referring to the human beings and other creatures who breathe air specially) are constantly doing Japa (repetition) of the divine Mantra pertaining to the supreme Brahm. This Japa is done involuntarily and automatically approximately twenty one thousand six hundred times because this is the number of times one breathes during the course of a day consisting one day and night².

This is equivalent to doing Japa using the famous and most acclaimed Gayatri Mantra as far as the Yogi who is a well established, wise, erudite and enlightened ascetic or any other practitioner of meditation and contemplation is concerned. This automatic Japa of the Mantra 'Hans-Hans' repeatedly and incessantly by the ascetic provides him the same benefit of emancipation and salvation that is obtained by repeating the Mantra of Gayatri³ (62-63).

[Note—¹The concept of *Hans* has been described in note to verse no. 24 above in this Upanishad. This verse says that the supreme transcendental Brahm known also as cosmic Consciousness resides in all the living beings in the form of a Hans or a divine Swan. The main objective of this Upanishad is to make the Yogi (a person who follows its tenets of meditation) aware that he is like the divine swan, but he was unaware of his divinity and sublimity, his exalted stature, till that was pointed out to him in this verse. So he must become one like a 'swan', remind himself constantly that he is like a swan, and he must do not do anything or act in anyway which is not befitting his exalted and superior status which is equivalent to a wise swan.

The Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 82-83 of Sam Veda tradition describes this Swan in the context of Yoga. Let us see what it has to say in this context—"The 'Hans' (literally a divine swan) resides gloriously and majestically in the center of the two eyes of a creature during the waking state of consciousness. The letter 'Sa' (सकारः) of the Hindi/Sanskrit alphabet represents the 'Khechhari Mudra' of the Yogi which is certainly the personification or the image of the word 'Twam' (82).

The letter 'Ha' (हकारः) represents the supreme Lord of creation, called 'Parmeshwar' which is certainly symbolised or represented by the word 'Tat'. That is, the two syllables of the word 'Hans', meaning the divine swan, are 'Han' (ह) and 'Sa' (स) which stand for the two words of metaphysics which have profound impact—the 2nd word is 'Twam' and the 1st is 'Tat' corresponding to these two syllables respectively. Any person who concentrates his mind and attention, and contemplates and meditates upon the letter 'Sa' shall surely become akin to, or equivalent to the form or the image represented by the letter 'Ha'. This is called contemplating upon and practicing of the twin tenets of 'So-a-ham' and 'Tattwa-masi' (83) [82-83]."

The Upanishadic sage establishes uniformity and oneness with the two great philosophies and metaphysical concepts of the scriptures—"So-a-ham" which means 'that is me', and 'Tattwa-masi' which means 'the essence is pure consciousness and it is me'. The word 'that' refers to Brahma which is the universal and absolute Truth and Reality about the existence, and has the qualities, inter alia, of enlightenment, of

being eternal, omnipotent, universal, omnipresent, immanent, omniscient etc. When the seeker/aspirant focuses his attention on the self represented by the letter 'Sa' (self) and the 'Khechari Mudra' (when he is unconscious of the external world and focuses his attention on the glorious supreme entity present in the center of his eyebrows), he realises the truth of the maxim 'So-a-ham'. When he opens his eyes of wisdom, the truth of the 2nd tenet 'Tattwa-masi' dawns on him. Put simply, it means that the creature realises that 'he is the same as the supreme Brahma who resides in his Atma/soul present in his bosom/heart'. At the same time, 'the external world seen through this eye of wisdom symbolised by the presence of the divine swan in his eyes is the same Brahma who has revealed himself in this multifarious, diverse and myriad world'. This is the essential truth, or 'Tattwa'.

Refer Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse nos. 16, 20-28, 34, 61-64, 78-79. This is Chapter 16 of this volume.

²The Amrit Naad Upanishad says that a living being breathes 1, 13, 680 times during the course of a day and night.

³The *Gayatri Mantra* has two versions which are presented here. According to one version, it is based on the typical 'Gayatri Chanda' which is a poetical composition consisting of three stanzas or lines each having eight letters or syllables. The total number of letters or syllables is thus twenty four. The Gayatri extolled by Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 5, Brahmin 14 is the one strictly conforming to this rule. On the other hand, the usual and commonly known Gayatri Mantra has four steps or stanzas and is based on the composition style called the 'Anushtup Chanda'.

The 'Gayatri Chanda' is used to compose the sacred hymns of the Vedas. Amongst the different composition styles, this is regarded as the best style of Chanda in which the Vedas were revealed (Jaimini Brahmin, 2/227) because it has the divine virtue and supernatural powers that provides protection to the Pran of the person who says the Gayatri Chanda and elevates his stature to that of the celestial Sun.

Let us first see the typical *Gyatri Chand pattern* of this divine Mantra. The Gayatri Mantra based on the style of this poetical composition is described in Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 5, Brahmin 14, of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition. This Mantra having three steps is extolled as the one which is superior to other forms of the Gayatri Mantra having four steps because this three-stepped Mantra is synonymous with Pran, i.e. it is the life or the essence of all that exists.

The Gayatri Mantra having three lines is the following—"Tatsaviturvarnyam Dhimahi Dhiyo Yo Naha Prachodayat". The fourth line honours and glorifies this Gayatri as a manifestation of the Sun God, and as brilliant and splendid as it. It is—"Paro Rajase Suvarnam". Since the Sun is a visible manifestation of the supreme Brahm who is the Transcendental Consciousness of the entire creation at the macro level, having the Atma resident in the bosom of the individual creature as its micro level counterpart and Pran as its subtle manifestation, the Gayatri Mantra is in honour of the supreme Authority of creation, i.e. Brahm.

Now the question arises that if the three lines are the complete Mantra, then what was the purpose of including the fourth line? It must be especially noted in this context here that this fourth step of leg of the Gayatri Mantra does not consist of any word which is a part of the main Mantra, but is only meant to establish its divine stature as the citadel for all spiritual Mantras; it is intended to give this Gayatri its place of honour in the pantheon of divine Mantras. Besides this, the fourth leg is visualised as a symbol of stability because anything that has four legs is more stable and steady as compared to one with only three.

Therefore, last stanza is like an epithet highlighting the magnificent divinity and spiritual value of the Gayatri Mantra. It is akin to the Sun shining in the sky, and all other planets and their satellites such as the moon shine because they reflect this light from their surface. The Sun is at the centre of the solar system even as the Gayatri is at the symbolic hub of all divinity and spiritually empowered Mantras. It is also akin to the Pran which supports life in a gross body of a creature and is an acronym for life

as a whole. The Pran symbolically illuminates the dark realm of the body from the inside while the Sun does the same from the outside.

The actual Gayatri Mantra that should be preached to the spiritual aspirant consists of the first three steps as described in verse nos. 1-3 of Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 5, Brahmin 14.

This famous Mantra is dedicated to the Sun God who is a manifestation of the supreme transcendental Brahm. It is this Mantra—which is a group of ethereal words having profound spiritual value and metaphysical importance. It is called Gayatri because it gave protection to the Pran--Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 5, Brahmin 14, verse no. 4. It has been accepted as a manifestation of Pran in Shatpath Brahmin, 1/3/5/15, while it is praised as having the potentials of Agni (fire) present in the faculty of speech known as Vak in Taittiriya Sanhita, 3/2/9/3, as Tej (energy) in Shatpath Brahmin, 1/8/2/13, and as Brahm (the supreme transcendental consciousness) in Maitri Brahmin, 4/3/1. According to the Purans (mythological histories of the Hindus), the Gayatri has been praised having manifested in the form of the Trinity Gods—Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva the concluder--Skanda Puran, Kashi Khand, Purva, 4/9/58. Whatever that exists is a revelation of Gayatri because it is a manifestation of Brahm—Chandogya Upanishad, 3/12/1. In fact this whole earth that gives refuge to all the life forms in this world is a manifestation of Gayatri-- Chandogya Upanishad, 3/12/2. By worshipping it, a person is blessed with worldly assets such as abundant livestock and flourishing family, a long, healthy and active life, wealth and fortunes, good name and fame, as well as spiritual attainment in the form of Brahm realisation—Atharva Veda, 19/71/1.

The Gayatri Mantra has been expounded and elucidated upon in Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 5, Brahmin 14 and other Upanishads, such as the Savitri Upanishad which is entirely dedicated to it, the Maitrayanyu Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 7, and the Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 3, Section 12, verse nos. 1-9 belonging to the Sam Veda tradition. Besides these, the Gayatri Upanishad appears as eight assorted verses or Kandikas numbering 31-38 of the Gopath Brahmin belonging to the Atharva Veda.

It has been said in the scriptures that Brahmins, the highest class amongst the humans and who are regarded as the most learned and wise amongst them, were born from Gayatri, thereby drawing a parallel between the highest stature and exalted standing of Brahmins amongst the creatures and the Gayatri amongst the hymns. It is pertinent to note here by the way that Kshatriyas, the warrior class, were born from the Chanda known as Trishtup, and Vaishya, the trading class, from the Chanda known as Jagati. In other words, the divine and eclectic powers encrypted in the Trishtup Chanda revealed themselves as the Kshatriya, and those of the Jagati as the Vaishya. The Trishtup Chanda has four lines each having eleven letters or syllables, totaling forty four letters or syllables in all, while the Jagati Chanda has six lines with eight letters or syllables each, totaling to forty eight letters or syllables.

(b) According to some schools of philosophy, the Gayatri Mantra composed in the style of an Anushtup Chanda is to be worshipped. Therefore, the Mantra according to this school of thinking is the following--‘OM BHURBHUVAHA SVAHA¹, TATSAVIURVARENYAM², BHARGO DEVASYA DHIMAHİ³, DHIYO YO NAH PRACODAYAT⁴’. It means ‘OM is the supreme, transcendental Brahm. He is the lord of creation of the terrestrial, the celestial and heavenly worlds. I offer my oblations to you. That Brahm is luminous like the sun. He is excellent, the best, the most exalted, a destroyer of sins, and a divine entity. May he imbibe, infuse and inspire our intellect with wisdom and enlightenment so that we are purified and move on the righteous and noble path’. The four phrases of the Gayatri Mantra are clearly marked by small numerals in this Mantra. This Mantra appears in the Rig Veda (3/62/10), the Sam Veda (1462), and Yajur Veda (3/35, 22/9, 30/2, 36/6).]

64-65. When the wise and erudite ascetic or any spiritual aspirant gives this sound of breath (i.e. the sound of Ha + Sa as described in verse nos. 61-63) going out of the body and coming in it the same importance, the same significance, the same respect, the same dignity and the same honour that any eclectic and divine Mantra (such as the famous Gayatri Mantra or any other Mantra for that matter) is given, then this sound of breath ('Hans') gives him the same benefit as any other famous Mantra.

He is able to obtain freedom from the ill effects of all sins and their evil consequences, and is able to reach and have access to the supreme state of Brahm realisation. There is no other Vidya (mystical knowledge and expertise) to match it; there is no Japa (repetition of a Mantra) equivalent to this constant and effortless repetition of the Mantra known as 'Hans'¹; and there is no other more auspicious deed than this (because it helps the man to focus his attention constantly, consistently and persistently on Divinity, and veer his mind away from this world of artificiality and delusions).

There is no Mantra as potential and holy as this subtle and sublime unspoken Mantra known as 'Hans'—there has never been and there would ever be (64-65).

[Note—¹This is because this Mantra Hans is repeatedly automatically when the man breathes—refer verse no. 61. Breathing is an effortless and natural exercise for a man, requiring no special attention, efforts, exertion and energy so much so that even an unconscious man or a sleeping man breathes just like when he was wide awake and active.]

66. The supreme source of divine cosmic energy is personified as a female deity (a Goddess) called the 'Parmeshwari'. [Here the term refers to the Kundalini¹ because it is the fount of this cosmic dynamic energy in creation inside the body.] This Parmeshwari representing the stupendous source of energy lies in a sleeping state or in a dormant state of existence, blocking the entrance or doorway to the pathway to Brahm realisation (called the 'Brahm-Dwar')².

This Parmeshwari is aroused or literally woken up from her sleep by the process of 'Vahni Yoga'³ or the meditative practice that is tantamount to doing a fire sacrifice in a symbolic way⁴ because it kindles the latent fire element inside the Kundalini. This process is aided by the strong will power of the mind called the Mana, and the proper channelising of the forces of the vital winds called the Maruts present inside the body by doing Pranayam and other exercises of Yoga (66).

[Note—¹*Kundalini*—The Kundalini is a coil-like center of subtle energy lying at the base of the spine. It is generally lying in a dormant state. By doing Yogic practices, the stupendous energy trapped in its coils can be released by the unplugging of its mouth which opens into the 'Sushumna' nerve. This energy then rises up the spinal cord and ultimately reaches the top of the head. The Yogi who practices this Kundalini activation, called 'Kundalini Jaagran', experiences brilliance and dazzle unmatched by any other experience.

²The *Brahm-Dwar* is the lower end of the Sushumna Naadi, the tubular duct running through the center of the spine and is regarded as the only duct that helps the expert ascetic to divert his vital winds upwards along with the subtle cosmic energy released from the Kundalini, upwards so that they reach the top of the head where the Brahm-Randhra is located. This Brahm-Randhra is the hair-like slit on the top of the skull from where the supreme transcendental Brahm is said to have entered the gross body of the creature at the time of creation and had taken up his abode in the creature's mind and intellect in order to control his creation at the gross level and material plane of physical existence from there. According to the philosophy of Yoga, when an acclaimed practitioner of meditation and contemplation is able to concentrate his vital forces of life, i.e. the Pran and Atma, there, he experiences a

closeness with this Supreme Being present in a subtle and imperceptible form at this spot. Finally, at the time of death, his Pran makes its exit, along with the Atma, his pure self or consciousness, from this point to merge with the wind or air element present in the vast cosmos outside the physical body. This is tantamount to the aspirant's final liberation and deliverance because then this Pran would not have to reenter any other body as it has merged and got itself lost permanently in the elements of Nature, losing its individuality.

Usually the lower end of this Brahm-Dwar (represented by the Sushumna Naadi) is blocked by the mouth of the Kundalini. The thrust of Yoga practice, especially the Vahni Yoga is to un-block it by opening the Kundalini's mouth and releasing the latter's cosmic energy into this pathway.

Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 36 of Sam Veda tradition describes this pathway.

³*Vahni Yoga*—It deals with the activation of the vital wind/air with the fire/energy of life. For it, various techniques, processes, postures and exercises have been prescribed in Yoga, the chief among them being the activation of the Kundalini by Pranayam. The 'fire' required to heat and activates the 'Apan' wind and push it upwards comes from the 'Sun Chakra' or the 'Surya Chakra' (subtle energy center) located in the region of the navel. It is done by 'Surya Pranayam'. During this meditative practice, it is imagined that leaping flames are flaring up from the core of the sun symbolically residing in the navel of the Yogi, and these flames are virtually heating the Sushumna nerve (also called the pathway leading to Brahm) as well as the other vital winds present in the lungs, the heart, throat etc. By heating the lower end of the Sushumna nerve, which is akin to heating one end of a heating rod or coil, alongside the heating of the Kundalini and the Apan wind, the opening of this Sushumna nerve, which was up till now blocked, is unclogged and the subtle energy of the coiled Kundalini, which was hereto before trapped inside it, is released and pushed up by the Apan wind into the spinal cord through this Sushumna nerve where it rises up through this channel right up to the mind or the top of the head, mixing with it all other winds en-route, collecting all their impurities with it, much like the hot air above the surface of the earth developing into whirlwind and rising up into the atmosphere, taking up along with it the dust particles, dry leaves, twigs etc. as it goes up. This polluted wind is finally exhaled through the right and left nostrils during the process of Rechak. The rising of the Kundalini is similar to the rising of heated mercury in a thermometer. When the bulb is heated, the mercury shoots up. Here, when the Kundalini is heated, the energy trapped inside it rises up the Sushumna nerve.

Vahni Yoga is so-called because it stokes the latent fire energy lying dormant hitherto in the body of the spiritual aspirant by activating the vital winds, especially the warm Apan wind present in the lower end of the intestines, and utilizing its powerful force to stoke and activate the Kundalini, thereby heating it and releasing its subtle energy through the opening of its mouth covering the lower end of the Sushumna Naadi (nerve). This released energy then snakes up this Naadi and reaches the head, first at the root of the nose and center of the eyebrows and ultimately the top of the head at the point of the Brahm Randhra, the hair like slit on the skull, from which is finally escapes at the time of death of the ascetic, giving him liberation from the fetter of this body for ever.

(Refer Yogchudamanu Upanishad, verse no. 38 and 107 of Sam Veda tradition.)

⁴The Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 36-39 of Sam Veda tradition has an identical view which says—

“Verse no. 36—The 'Kundalini energy' is located above/at the top of the 'Kanda' in the form of a coil having eight spirals. It covers the mouth of 'Brahm-Dwar' (literally, the doorway leading to Brahm). It remains ever present, but dormant, in that place.

“Verse no. 37—The stupendously supreme, Goddess-like divine and sublime cosmic energy (i.e. Kundalini) remains dormant and in a sleeping state. It keeps the door or the entrance point of the channel leading to Brahm residing in the ‘Mana’ of a creature (the Brahm which lives in the realms of the mind and the intellect, the heart and the soul of the creature) blocked or closed or chocked by its own mouth. This entrance point is called ‘Brahma’s doorway’, which is actually the opening of the ‘Sushumna’ nerve. [The coil of Kundalini is like a serpent, with its hood blocking the lower end of the spinal cord like a plug in the neck of a bottle.]

“Verse no. 38—By the practice of ‘Vahni Yoga’ (literally, the ‘fire Yoga’) it becomes activated. Simply put, the ‘fuse’ is ignited by the subtle fire produced or kindled or stoked by Yoga to make this energy active and viable. Once activated, it assumes the form of ‘light’, and accompanied by (or pushed by or impelled by) a determined mind as well as the forceful push of the vital winds, it gradually snakes up or rises up the ‘Sushumna’ nerve (like a flexible needle snaking up the intestine or veins during a micro-hole surgery as done during endoscopy by a doctor).

“Verse no. 39—Even as a person can open the locks of the door to his house with a key, Yogis can open the door to liberation and deliverance, emancipation and salvation by the use of this Kundalini.

To understand the phenomenon, one can imagine a flexible probe or scope passing up one’s rectum during a medical process called endoscopy. The rectum and the lower intestine have a titillating experience as a result of the probe moving inside it. The entire process has been elaborately described in a note to verse no. 107 of this Upanishad.]

67-68. Upon being woken up, this Parmeshwari (i.e. the cosmic dynamic energy trapped in the Kundalini but now released in its subtle and sublime form) rises up and moves upwards the Sushumna path (i.e. this energy snakes up the Naadi called Sushumna), taking along with her the Mana (subtle mind) and the Pran (the vital wind forces in the body representing the spark of life and vitality that makes the creature move about and show signs of life) just like the needle takes the thread passing through it upwards when it is moved in that direction by the hand while sewing a cloth.

Wise, erudite and expert ascetics diligently and forcefully open the door leading to their liberation and deliverance from the fetters that shackle them to this body by releasing the trapped energy of the Kundalini just like a man opens a magical trapdoor of some mysterious citadel by clapping or knocking at it to summon the person inside the citadel to open the door for him¹ (67-68).

[Note—¹True form of liberation and deliverance for an enlightened ascetic implies the release of the ‘Pran’, i.e. the vital winds present in the body which are synonymous with ‘life’ in a creature, from the trap-like physical gross body upon its exit from the latter, and its merger with the primary air or wind element that is present outside the body, followed by the disintegration of the body and release of the other elements such as earth, water, fire and sky, which were an integral constituent parts of the gross body, into their primary cosmic forms. This ensures that there would be no more vestiges of the earlier body left, and the dissolution is complete and final. Refer Yog Kundali Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.

69. [This verse describes how to activate the Kundalini.]

The person desirous of activating the Kundalini and releasing its subtle energy for his spiritual benefit as well as to empower him with great mystical and occult powers should sit steadily in the Padmasan posture¹. The palms of the two hands are placed one on the top of the other, face upwards and put on the heels of the two legs (which have already been folded in from the knee joint in such a way that the heels

are just opposite the navel, the sole is pointed upwards and inwards towards the body, and the toes of the leg of left side rest on the thigh of the right side and of the right leg on the thigh of the left side). The chin is drawn in and held tightly near the pit of the throat below the Adam's apple.

While sitting in this posture, the practitioner should focus his mind on the patron deity of ascetics, usually on Lord Shiva who is regarded as the supreme Brahman manifested in the form of the 'pure self'. The *Apaan Vayu* (i.e. the wind in the lower part of the body, especially in the lower intestines and pelvic region) is drawn or pulled upwards, while at the same time the *Pran Vayu* (i.e. the breath moving in the upper part of the body, especially in the nostrils and lungs) is made to divert inwards or held from escaping. [This physical exercise is very difficult and requires a lot of practice and patience. It results in mixing these two primary winds in the body. This is effectuated when the *Apaan* wind is pulled up by the upwards tug of the *Pran* wind, and the latter is pushed down by the downwards pull of the former, resulting in a balancing effect.]

The net result of this exercise is that the practitioner is able to experience the astounding potentials of the released powers of the trapped subtle cosmic energy that was hitherto lying dormant in a hibernating state in the *Kundalini*. [When the two winds cross each other's path, they create enough force that shakes and rattles the *Kundalini* into activity, thereby unplugging its mouth to release the energy trapped inside its coils. This is like doing physical exercises in a gymnasium to loosen rigid muscles and tone them up.] (69).

[Note—¹The *Padmasan* posture is to sit in a lotus posture. This entails to sit cross-legged in such a way that the foot of the left leg rests at the base of the thigh of the right side and the heel is just in front of the navel. Similarly, the right leg is drawn in and the foot is placed at the base of the thigh of the left leg and the heel is in front of the navel. The toes of each leg rest upon the thigh of the other side and the sole points upwards. The spine, neck and head are held in a ram-rod straight position, and the hands, with palms facing upwards and resting one on the top of the other, are placed on the folded legs in front of the navel region. The chin is drawn in and held tightly near the base of the Adam's apple near the chest. This *Aasan* has been described in *Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad*, Canto 2, verse no. 39 of the *Shukla Yajur Veda* tradition.]

70. Those expert ascetics who are able to pull in the *Pran Vayu* (fresh breath) through the relevant *Naadi* during the practice of *Pranayam* (i.e. during the inhaling phase called 'Purak' when the breath is pulled in successively through the left and right nostrils where the *Ida* and *Pingla Naadis* are respectively located), and then hold this *Pran Vayu* inside the body during the 'Kumbhak' phase, are certainly able to obtain liberation and deliverance from the fetters represented by this body (i.e. are able to obtain 'Mukti' as described in note to verse no. 66-68 above). There is no doubt about it (70).

71. The drops of sweat that come out (due to the rigorous efforts made for *Pranayam* and *Kundalini* activation) should be rubbed into the body (instead of wiping them off with a towel). The practitioner should avoid diet that includes things that are bitter, sour, acidic or salty. Instead, he should remain happy subsisting on a diet of milk (71).

72. A diligent and wise ascetic who practices *Yoga* (various meditation exercises such as *Pranayam* etc.), observes the principles of *Brahmacharya* (self control, abstinence and continence etc.) and restrains his eating habits (as outlined in verse no. 71) is able

to obtain success in his meditative endeavours by attaining Siddhi (mystical powers and spiritual elevation) within a period of one year. There is no doubt it (72).

[Note—The points mentioned in verse nos. 71-72 here are exactly the same as expressed in Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse nos. 41-43 of the Sam Veda tradition.]

73-76. [Verse nos. 73-78 ½ describe the three ‘Bandhas*’ and their benefits for the practitioner of Yoga.]

An erudite and wise ascetic is able to obtain Siddhi (spiritual, mystical and occult powers) by harnessing the stupendous potentials of the Kundalini located at the upper end of the Kanda¹.

Constant practice of the meditative exercise called ‘Moolbandh’ or closing of the Muladhar Chakra² (located at the base of the spine, between the anus and the genitals) helps in mixing of the two vital winds, i.e. the Pran and Apaana (as described in 69-70 above). The output of urine and stool is reduced to a minimum level, and this can make an old man much younger than his age.

Moolbandh is done by pressing the genitals with the heels and constricting the muscles of the anus to close this opening. Meanwhile, the Apaana Vayu (the wind present in the rectum and anus region) is pulled upwards forcefully. [Refer Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 46-47.] (73-74^{1/2}).

‘Uddiyan Bandh’ is said to resemble the flight of some great bird (such as a falcon, a kite, a hawk, or an eagle) in the sky when it draws its stomach in to make its body more suitable for flight according to the principles of aerodynamics. Thus, the practitioner should pull the muscles of the stomach (abdomen) inside so much so that it is sucked in and almost touches the backbone or spine (thereby making the front part of the stomach look like a concave surface or a hollow bowl). The navel is pulled upwards as much as possible. [Refer Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 48-49.] (74^{1/2}--76).

[Note—*The word *Bandha* literally means to stop, to close or to prevent the escape of an entity. In the context of Yoga it refers to the closing of the subtle apertures of the body through which the Pran or the vital winds could escape when pressure is exerted on them while doing Pranayam or other Yoga exercises. It is the virtual closure of all the exit points in the body so that the vital airs trapped inside and activated by doing various Yoga exercises such as Pranayam or Asanas or Mudras etc. are prevented from escaping from the body when put under great pressure. As a result, these winds can then be diverted in the desired channel by the practitioner of Yoga, such as utilizing them to unclog the blocked Kundalini (the coiled subtle energy center located at the base of the spine) and the Naadis (the tubular ducts of the body through which the vital life-factors called the Prans, the various impulses and signs of life such as the consciousness etc. move inside the body—e.g. the nerves, capillaries and veins). These Bandhas enable the practitioner to acquire stupendous mystical powers that enables him to perform supernatural deeds, such as to float in the air. They also help to arouse the latent energy of the Kundalini and aid in its rising up in the Sushumna Naadi to reach the head which ultimately leads the practitioner of Yoga to experience the bliss of ‘consciousness realisation’.

The three Bandhas described in these verses are also described in the Yoga Kundalini Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 41 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition. Refer also to Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 27, and Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 5, verse nos. 44-45 of Krishna Yajur Veda.

¹Jabal Darshan Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 3-6 describes the *Kanda*. It is located at a distance of nine fingers above the Muladhar Chakra. The Kanda means ‘a root which is edible’, e.g. radish. Kanda is located near the navel, is approximately 12 inches above the opening of the anus, approximately 4 inches or finger-width in

diameter, and is about 12 fingers in length. It is enclosed or encased by a soft, silk like shroud made of a jelly like membrane or fold of skin. It is oblong and shaped like an egg. The nerve passing through the center of the Kanda (as its core) is the 'Sushumna Naadi'. It is surrounded by a dense network of nerves numbering 72 thousand.

Refer also to verse nos. 50-51 of the present Dhyan Bindu Upanishad which also describes the Kanda.

²The *Muladhar Chakra*—The word 'Muladhar' means a principal place or the root or fundamental place or foundation upon which everything else rests, or the place which gives support to all others, while 'Chakra' means a whirling energy center in the body. It is one of the principal seven nerve centers in the body where all the Naadis coordinate and form a knot of nerves. The word comes from 'Mool' or 'Mul' meaning 'a seed, the head, the source, the beginning, the root of a tree'. Hence, it is a metaphor for that portion of the body which harbours the divine subtle fire which, when aroused and kindled, can foster life in the creature. Muladhar is the foundation of life, as it were, because life rests on it. It is also called the Agni Kund or the symbolic 'fire pit' which harbours forces of life.]

77-80. This Uddiyan Bandh has the same relation to death for the ascetic as the lion has for the elephant. [In other words, just as a lion, though smaller in size than the giant elephant, is able to kill it because of its sheer muscular powers, agility, maneuverability, strength and stamina along with a fierce determination and use of crude force, this Uddiyan Bandh can certainly deliver the aspirant from the fetters of this body by setting his Pran or vital wind along with the Atma or soul free from the captivity of the body.]¹

The 'Jalandhar Bandh' literally means to hold the flow of water and it is like the magical and supernatural capacity of stopping the rain from falling down from the sky and instead remain hanging or transfixed up there in the sky itself. Practicing this Bandh helps the aspirant to overcome pains and torments caused by sins and misdeeds, as well as to destroy the fetters created by the deeds done by him which tie ordinary mortals in their entangling web².

To do Jalandhar Bandh, the throat is constricted at its pit so as to close the glottis and the larynx. This stops the flow of air (breath) and prevents the drop of Amrit (the nectar-like ambrosia of life) from virtually falling down and being consumed in the fire present inside the body. [In other words, the holding of the breath helps to preserve vital energy and hinders the decay of the body by the latter preserving its latent vital energy from being consumed in the fire which would be otherwise stoked if the air was allowed to be let in and out. This is like putting the vital functions of the body on hold, to put a break on the metabolic processes of the body or at least slow them down perceptibly, or it is like closing the workshop of the factory for a while to let the body recuperate its lost energy and regenerate its consumed vital fuel.] [Refer Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 50-51.] (77-78^{1/2}).

The 'Khechari Mudra'³ is that in which the tongue is inverted and tucked inside the mouth near the upper palate, and the sight is fixed at a point between the two eyebrows. When the Yoga practitioner is able to gain expertise in doing this Mudra, he is able to acquire astounding mystical powers that are supernatural and empowers him with great potentials. By successfully accomplishing it, the ascetic has no fear from being tormented by excessive desire to sleep, hunger, thirst and fear (78^{1/2}—80). [77-80].

[Note—¹The Uddiyan Bandha gives the practitioner to fly like the bird and acquire the same strength as that possessed by the lion vis-à-vis death—i.e. it helps the ascetic to

conquer death much like the lion overcomes and kills the elephant (verse nos. 74 ½-76 ½).

²The Jalandhar Bandha can empower him with such great mystical powers that he can stop the rain from falling if he so wants. From the metaphysical point of view, this Bandha helps him to overcome the pains and torments or evil consequences of sins and misdeeds (verse nos. 77-77 ½).

³The *Khechari Mudra* is amongst the best and toughest body postures that can be adopted by any ascetic, but at the same time it can empower the practitioner with stupendous mystical and occult powers and potentials. The word 'Khechari' is derived from the root 'Khe' which stands for the sky, and 'Chari' means to move, to wonder or to roam. Therefore the combined word 'Khechari' means one who can move in the sky.

It involves elongation of the tongue by constantly pulling it out and making it flexible by constant rotation. The nerves and veins at the lower end are cut so as to make it senseless. To obtain success in this, the tongue is smeared with butter and stretched by holding it with an iron tong. This results in the tongue getting sufficiently elongated as to reach the inner opening of the mouth by inverting it backwards, and then it is tucked inside the rear of the mouth at the back of the hind part of the upper palate, at the spot where the wind pipe, the food pipe and the mouth cavity converge in the throat. It is generally believed that it greatly helps in focusing attention. It also helps to conquer hunger, sleep, greed, unconsciousness or numbness of the sense organs, and keeps the practitioner alert and focused, etc. The apparent difference between Khechari and Shambhavi Mudras is that in the latter the tongue is not tucked inside the mouth cavity, and is therefore easier to practice. Meanwhile, the sight is fixed unwaveringly at a point midway between the two eyebrows.

This Khechari Mudra has been graphically described in Gherand Sanhita, Chapter 3, verse no. 25-28, besides the Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse nos. 52-64 of the Sam Veda tradition; the Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, verse no. 2/1/8 Shukla Yajur Veda tradition; the Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 5, verse nos. 40-42, the entire Canto 2 of the Yog Kundalini Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

81-84. A wise and erudite person who is an expert practitioner of Khechari Mudra is not tormented by epilepsy or fainting disease, nor by any other type of disease. He is also freed from getting entangled in the web of deeds and their consequences.

A person whose attention is diverted upwards towards higher planes and values of existence (i.e. when he attains spiritual elevation and supernatural powers) symbolically enabling him to float in the sky and soar higher into it, and whose tongue has been bridled and reined in (or tamed by tucking it inside the roof of the mouth, symbolising his control over his speech and the ability to remain silent for prolonged periods of time), is said to be possessed of great mystical and occult powers that are made available to him by the brilliant good effects of Khechari Mudra so much so that he cannot be tied any longer by any of the fetters of Kaal (time, age and circumstance) that are so strong that rarely anyone is freed from their clutches. [That is, he is able to cut through the web of ordinary existence by rising much higher than the mundane and possessing such mystical supernatural powers and potential that he can achieve goals that are not ordinarily possible for ordinary living beings.]

This is why this Khechari Mudra is so much lauded and applauded by experienced and acclaimed ascetics.

It is so potent that a person who has mastered this art can withhold his sperms from being ejaculated even while having sexual intercourse with a woman¹. And as long as the life-giving sperm is held inside the body, say how can he fear from death and its chance appearance?² (81-84).

[Note—¹Refer Yogchudamani Upanishad of Sam Veda, verse nos. 57-59 which explicitly describe and reiterates this fact. Refer also to Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 6, Brahmin 4, verse no. 9-11.

²That is, so long as a ascetic is able to exert sufficient control over his vital life forces and energy form being frittered away in sensual gratification, he would preserve sufficient stamina and vitality to maintain his health in a prime state, thereby eluding death for as long as is practically possible. This verse should not be wrongly construed to mean that he would never die, for this is incongruous even to imagine as everything that has come into being in this gross world would certainly come to an end some or the other day. The idea is to lead a healthy and productive life free from diseases which generally attack a body made feeble by dissipation of vital forces of life in the body such as happens by over-indulgence in sensual pleasures, whether it be related to overeating, sexual indulgences or any other sphere of physical activity that puts a strain on the vital energy of the body.]

85-88. If the sperm inadvertently ejects into the womb of the woman even while the man is in the Khechari Mudra, then it is possible to suck it back from the womb if the man is well versed and an expert practitioner of this Mudra.

The cells bearing life are of two types—one is white coloured and the other is blood coloured. The white coloured ones are called ‘sperms of the male’, while the red coloured ones are called the ‘egg of the female’, called so because it is embedded in the vaginal fluid which resembles blood. This female fluid is called ‘Maharaj’ (the vaginal fluid), while the male fluid is called ‘Shukra’ (semen which contains the male sperm).

The red hot life bearing cells called the Maharaj is present in the womb, while the male cell is located in the testicles called ‘Chandra’ because of its white colour and its dangling nature outside the body in the scrotum. Obviously, their union is rare and very difficult to bring about.

The male sperm is said to be a personification of the Moon God and Lord Shiva, while the female reproductive cells are regarded as the personification of the Sun God and Shakti, the manifestation of the stupendous generative powers of creation in a personified form. (85-88).

[Note—Refer Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse nos. 59-62 and Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 2/1/5 which expound an identical view on the subject. The semen is a white fluid just like the ambrosia of eternity and bliss that is meant for the use of Gods. It is called Amrit and is stored in the transparent celestial pitcher called the Moon—and this is why the Moon appears to be shining white in colour. The sperm helps to perpetuate creation with its magical and magnificent generative powers; hence it is used as a metaphor for eternity, fertility, perpetuity, virility, vitality, strength and stamina. Since sexual process gives immense bliss, it is also regarded as a giver of extreme bliss and ecstasy. Lord Shiva is the personified Viraat Purush, the cosmic ‘male’ of creation, so he is depicted in iconography as bearing the pitcher of sperm, i.e. the Moon, on his head.

On the other hand, the female sexual fluid is red in colour like the blood, which is again a metaphor for life and vitality besides being synonymous with energy, heat, fire and passions. It is associated with new forms of life because of the presence of blood in it. It is used as a metaphor for the ferocity of fire, its dynamism and energy. It is red-hot, so it is compared to the Sun instead of the Moon. Lord Shiva’s counterpart is called Shakti which is the Sanskrit word for energy, stamina, strength, vitality and powers. This female aspect of Shiva symbolises the creative powers represented by the ovary and its eggs along with the other female sexual organs. It’s their union called ‘Yoga’ which results in the coming into being this visible creation. Refer also verse nos. 89-90 ½ below and its accompanying note.]

89-93. When these two, the male sperm and the female egg cell, unite, the physical body of the creature is conceived. When the mature eggs in the female ovary are activated or moved by the forces of subtle winds present inside the body, they are dislodged from the ovary and taken to the hollow cavity of the womb much like any light thing is taken aloft in the space of the sky by the sweeping action of a strong gust of wind, such as a tornado or a violent storm¹.

This female cell is endowed with the dynamic creative energy and the heat of the Sun (because it is surrounded by blood which is red in colour and is a symbol of vitality and life, and also because the red colour is a metaphor for heat and energy as indicated by the fiercely burning fire which appears to be aglow with a fiery red or orange colour). The white 'Shukra' (sperm floating in the sperm) resembles the Moon, and the red 'Maharaj' resembles the Sun². A person who is aware of the equal importance of these two forms of life is said to be an expert and erudite ascetic who is well versed in the essential philosophy of Yoga. [These concepts have been described in Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse nos. 63-64 also.] (89-90^{1/2}).

The 'Maha Mudra' is employed to cleanse the different Naadis (tubular ducts in the body) of their impurities that clog them, disciplining their functioning and reforming and revitalizing them. The impurities that clog the Naadis are 'Vaat' (afflictions caused by rheumatism, gout and arthritis; problems of disturbed wind in the body), 'Pitta' (excessive bile formation; acidity) and 'Vayu' (wind or flatulence) by employing the coordinated efforts of the Sun and the Moon³. [Refer also to Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse nos. 65-70.]

The process of doing the Maha Mudra is the following—the hollow at the pit of the throat is pressed by the chin, the left leg is folded in at the knee and its heel is pressed against the genital, the body is bent forward so that the big toe of the outstretched right leg is grasped by the thumb and first fingers of both the hands, the abdomen is filled with inhaled air in the process called Khumbhak (holding it inside for roughly 1-3 minutes), and then letting it out gradually (also in another 1-3 minutes).

This process is repeated with the right leg folded in and the left stretched out. Wise and acclaimed ascetics assert that this 'great posture of Yoga' called the Maha Mudra is potent enough to destroy all sins and their evil consequences (90^{1/2}—93).

[Note—¹This is a metaphoric way of describing aroused sexual passions and lust in a mature woman which 'drives her madly towards sexual intercourse', fuelling her 'flight of imaginations and fancy' much like a balloon swept away by the wind. She does not bother about the consequences of this enterprise that can cast an eternal ignominy on her and taint her character for ever if such passions and natural desires are not handled by her judiciously, prudently and with propriety. She even forgets about the horrors and pains of bearing the child and the torments at child birth along with the attendant consequences on her general health so much so that she willingly goes about the entire cycle repeatedly, more often than not in quick succession, often coaxing her partner into submission. It is usually believed that it might be possible for a man to control his sexual passions, but for a lustful woman it is almost impossible.

²The *Moon* is said to be a heavenly transparent pitcher containing Amrit, the elixir of life and eternity which is white in colour indicating its purity and divine nature. The semen resembles this Moon because it contains the sperm which is possessed with all the qualities possessed by the mythical Amrit.

Similarly, the female egg is embedded in the blood present in the cavity of the female sexual organs. This cavity is hot and sexually arousing besides being the harbinger of life and its crucible. It is therefore compared to the *Sun* which is said to

provide energy and heat to all forms of life in this world. Refer note to verse nos. 85-88 above also.

³The *Sun* is a symbol and receptacle of Nature's energy, light, heat, vitality and life bestowing abilities as is evident from the fact that life would be extinguished without the presence of the Sun. Likewise, the *Moon* is said to be a receptacle of Amrit, the ambrosia of Gods that gives fertility and eternity.

In the present context, the coordination of the Sun and the Moon to de-clog the blocked and congested Naadis and revitalize them implies that the 'Maha Mudra'—so called because it is the 'great posture of Yoga'—can enable the ascetic to harness the dynamic energy of creation symbolised by the Moon and the Sun, standing for the male generative powers and the female generative powers respectively, which is present inside the body itself in the form of different Chakras (whirling subtle energy centers of the body) and the Kundalini (the coiled serpent-like energy center at the base of the spine), and which flows in the various Naadis (ducts) of the body once it is unleashed. This energy helps to revitalize and energise the Naadis, scrubbing them and reactivating them along with the other tissues of the body, and ridding them of their impurities and toxins. The entire process rejuvenates the entire body of the practitioner. That is why an ascetic who practices Maha Mudra is able to render himself free from all sorts of bodily ailments and chronic diseases—refer Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 69 which is very specific and explicit on this point.]

93/1. [Verse nos. 93/1-93/11 describe why the otherwise taintless, faultless and eternally immaculate pure conscious Atma of the creature is viewed as being tainted and corrupted by the influences of the different traits and qualities that it allows itself to be surrounded with during its interaction with the material world and its habitat in the gross body of the creature. This results in the Atma exhibiting certain traits that are not characteristic of it.

The Atma is visualised as residing in a Lotus which is like a glass-house having coloured walls. When this wishes to see the world, it sees it through these walls and gets a coloured view of the truth, i.e. it sees a tainted view of the world. Conversely, when one attempts to analyse the nature of the Atma he would be constrained to view it through these walls also and naturally the observer's view of the Atma would be effected by the colour of these walls.]

Now the Atma, the pure conscious soul, is being discussed. The Atma is the pure consciousness of the living being, which is the latter's truthful 'self', and it resides in a microscopic form in a hypothetical Lotus having eight petals said to represent the subtle heart. This Atma is an invisible and imperceptible divine source of illumination (symbolising knowledge, erudition, sagacity, wisdom and enlightenment) manifesting itself as 'conscious self' of the living creature known as the 'Jivatma'. The Atma is all-knowing and omniscient, is omnipotent and able to accomplish everything, and is the habitat of everything in this existential world.

The Atma erroneously believes that it is the one who is the doer of all deeds, and is consequently the enjoyer of the rewards of these deeds or a sufferer of their evil effects. Likewise it believes that it is the one who suffers from distress and sorrows as well as enjoys and feels happy; it has deformities of the physical body such as being a one-eyed one, lame, dumb, deaf, emaciated and thin, or fat and well built. In this way, it behaves in different ways under different circumstances and occasions in an independent manner (93/1).

93/2. The petal of this divine symbolic Lotus pointing towards the east is white in colour. It is symbolic of the dominance of such traits as 'Dharma' (virtues of

auspiciousness, righteousness, nobility and good conduct) and ‘Bhakti’ (the virtues of devotion, faith, reverence and submission of one’s self to the divine forces in creation and worshipping them). Thus, the Atma exhibits these grand traits when it dwells on this petal (of the divine Lotus symbolically present in the heart); or it exhibits these grand virtues when it turns towards this petal or leans more towards it as compared to other petals when it sees and interacts with the world.

In other words, when the Atma sees the world through the east side of this symbolic prism represented by the petal located on the east side of this Lotus, it discerns the eclectic virtues of Dharma and Bhakti as being more dominant than other qualities in the world. Thus it is influenced by these eclectic virtues and begins to exhibit them its self (93/2).

[Note—This is a metaphoric way of saying that these two traits—Dharma and Bhakti—are some of the divine virtues and eclectic qualities present in the Atma in its most primary and divine form as pure consciousness.

In more contemporary terms it is like the Atma looking at the world through a white prism. The colour of the prism would naturally affect the way the Atma sees the world much like a man wearing an eye-glass tinged white. Taken differently, this is like the Atma being surrounded by a transparent sheet of plastic which has a slight whitish hue to it, thereby casting a similar colour on the surface of the Atma. Thus, in this scenario, the Atma would appear to have a white colour and exhibit all those characteristics that go with this colour, such as the auspicious and virtuous traits of Dharma and Bhakti.

This same analogy would apply to all other verses showing different colours of the petals which are like different prisms through which the Atma looks at the world, or the different coloured sheaths or veils that surround the Atma, and which in turn cast their specific colours symbolising one or the other traits unique to that colour upon the Atma, thereby distorting its neutral existence. These characteristic traits either make the Atma appear tainted by corruptions so typical of this material world, or auspicious if it is able to acquire some noble and good characteristics which are also present in the same world. This is because the world has the three types of qualities called the Gunas—viz. the Sata Guna, the Raja Guna and the Tama Guna—simultaneously in varying proportions. While the Sata Guna induces noble and auspicious virtues which makes a man contemplative and thoughtful, inducing in him a desire to search the truth of life and attain liberation from the shackles of the world, the Raja Guna makes the man more inclined to enjoy the world and its material comforts and pleasures, and the Tama Guna makes him evil and pervert, making him thoughtless and reckless.

Looking at the world through these symbolic petals as narrated in verse nos. 93/1-93/9 is a metaphoric way of saying that the Atma would not be able to see the reality as long as it depends upon the instruments of the body such as its gross components as the organs of perception and action, or its subtle components as the mind-intellect complex. The only way to know the ‘truth and reality’ would be to be self-contemplative and analytical by its own self. This is the main endeavour of all spiritual pursuit—to make the man realise the true nature of the Atma which is not only his ‘true self’ but also the immaculately pure consciousness and the Absolute Truth of existence that is never affected by any of the traits of this existential world. It is like pure gold which might appear to take myriad shapes and get tainted when the goldsmith moulds various ornaments with it, but ‘gold’ as the pure metal is always taintless and free from all impurities.]

93/3. The petal of this divine Lotus pointing towards the south-east is red in colour. It is symbolic of the dominance of such traits as ‘Nidra’ (tendency to sleep; drowsiness) and ‘Alasya’ (lethargy, torpor, inactivity, laziness, sloth, idleness and indolence).

Thus, the Atma exhibits these negative traits when it dwells on this petal (of the divine Lotus symbolically present in the heart); or it exhibits these negative qualities when it turns towards this petal or leans more towards it as compared to other petals when it sees and interacts with the world.

In other words, when the Atma sees the world through the south-east side of this symbolic prism represented by the petal located on the south-east side of this Lotus, it discerns the negative qualities of excessive Nidra and Alasya as being more dominant than other qualities in the world. The Atma gets influenced by these traits, and as a result it appears to be dominated by sleep and laziness. Since the Atma is also the 'true identity' of the creature, such a creature who picks up these traits from the world would be more inclined to be drowsy and lethargic (93/3).

[Note—This is a metaphoric way of saying that these two traits—excessive desire to sleep and remain drowsy, as well as to become indolent and lethargic—are some of the negative virtues and demeaning qualities exhibited by the Atma when it begins to disassociate itself from its grand original nature as the immaculately pure consciousness by thinking that it is someone who has a physical gross body known as the creature that has a tendency to enjoy sleep when it feels tired and worn out, or become lazy when it abhors work and prefers bodily comforts.]

As explained in note to verse no. 93/2, the colour of the prism or veil through which the Atma sees the world and which in turn casts its own shadow upon the colourless Atma is red in the case of this verse. This colour stands for the qualities mentioned above, thereby making the Atma appear to possess these attributes.]

93/4. The petal of this divine Lotus pointing towards the south is black in colour. It is symbolic of the dominance of such traits as 'Dwesh' (having ill-will, hatred, resentment, malice and animosity towards others) and 'Krodh' (having anger, indignation, spite, and being vengeful and wrathful). Thus, the Atma exhibits these negative traits as well when it dwells on this petal (of the divine Lotus symbolically present in the heart); or it exhibits these negative qualities when it turns towards this petal or leans more towards it as compared to other petals when it sees and interacts with the world.

In other words, when the Atma sees the world through the south side of this symbolic prism represented by the petal located on the south side of this Lotus, it discerns the demeaning negative qualities of Dwesh and Krodh as being more dominant than other qualities in the world. As a result it is influenced by these traits and consequentially the creature also begins to exhibit these characteristics in his dealings (93/4).

[Note—This is a metaphoric way of saying that these two traits—having Dwesh and Krodh—are some of the negative virtues and demeaning qualities exhibited by the Atma when it begins to disassociate itself from its grand original nature as the immaculately pure consciousness by thinking that it is someone who has a physical gross body known as the creature who is different from other creatures in this creation, forgetting in the process that all the creatures have the same Atma inside them. The Atma begins to treat others with suspicion and treats them as competitors and opponents who are ready to harm its self-interest. This motivates the Atma to develop these negative traits of Dwesh and Krodh as described in this verse. The Atma becomes selfish and cruel; it develops animosity, jealousy, ill-will and skepticism which in turn fuel anger and hatred. The Atma forgets that the other creature is also its own image because the same consciousness resides uniformly and universally in all the living beings.]

As explained in note to verse no. 93/2, the colour of the prism or veil through which the Atma sees the world and which in turn casts its own shadow upon the

colourless Atma is black in the case of this verse. This colour stands for the qualities mentioned above, thereby making the Atma appear to possess these attributes.]

93/5. The petal of this divine Lotus pointing towards the south-west is blue or violet in colour. It is symbolic of the dominance of such traits as 'Paap Karma' (the natural tendency to commit unrighteous and sinful acts, and do deeds that are not auspicious, noble and virtuous) and 'Hinsaa' (causing harm of any kind to other creatures, whether physical or mental). Thus, the Atma exhibits these negative traits when it dwells on this petal (of the divine Lotus symbolically present in the heart); or it exhibits these negative qualities when it turns towards this petal or leans more towards it as compared to other petals when it sees and interacts with the world.

In other words, when the Atma sees the world through the south-west side of this symbolic prism represented by the petal located on the south-west side of this Lotus, it indulges in the demeaning negative qualities of Paap Karma (evil deeds) and Hinsaa (cruelty) because it sees the world as its opponent, competitor or harming its self-interest, or it forgets about its noble heritage and exalted pedigree as the supreme cosmic Consciousnesses personified and consequentially gets sucked in the muck of worldly deeds not bothering whether what it is doing is virtuous or not (93/5).

[Note—This is a metaphoric way of saying that these two traits—doing Paap Karma and showing the tendency of Hinsaa—are some of the negative attributes and demeaning qualities exhibited by the Atma when it begins to disassociate itself from its grand original nature as the immaculately pure consciousness by thinking that it is someone who has a physical gross body known as the creature who is selfish and self centered, and he needs to lord over other creatures in this creation who are meant to serve him. This erroneous belief and perception about its true 'self' leads the Atma to commit horrible sins in order to serve its selfish interests and gratify its own self, even to the extent of causing pain to others if they come in its way. This is because the Atma treats itself as being different from other creatures in this creation, forgetting in the process that all the creatures have the same Atma inside them. The Atma begins to see and treat others as its opponents and competitors who are hell-bent in harming its self-interest, and therefore it is motivated to become extremely selfish and cruel, resulting in its doing evil deeds and becoming ruthless and cruel in order to protect its interests at all costs.

As explained in note to verse no. 93/2, the colour of the prism through which the Atma sees the world and which in turn casts its own shadow upon the colourless Atma is blue or violet in the case of this verse. This colour stands for the qualities mentioned above, thereby making the Atma appear to possess these attributes.]

93/6. The petal of this divine Lotus pointing towards the west is said to have the divine colour of the pure crystal (i.e. transparent and colourless, having the colour of the surrounding environment). It is symbolic of the dominance of such traits as 'Krida' (the natural tendency to playfully do anything in a spirited form; to play sport and do deeds cheerfully, to remain ever active and spirited) and 'Vinod' (to remain in a cheerful and joyous mood; to enjoy life and its delights; to treat the world and its activities as a magnificent deal; to derive pleasure and comfort from this world and its activities; to derive maximum pleasure and comfort from the materials that this world has to offer). Thus, the Atma exhibits these enjoyable and exhilarating traits when it dwells on this petal (of the divine Lotus symbolically present in the heart); or it exhibits these unique qualities of doing deeds as a means of enjoyment when it turns towards this petal or leans more towards it as compared to other petals when it sees and interacts with the world.

In other words, when the Atma sees the world through the west side of this symbolic prism represented by the petal located on the west side of this Lotus, it discerns the enjoyable characteristics in the world such as the qualities of Krida and Vinod that all the creatures in the world indulge in. This acts as an incentive for the Atma to indulge in Krida and Vinod itself though by nature it is supposed to be neutral, dispassionate and detached from such things pertaining to the gross world and the gross body. Again, since the Atma is the true 'self' of the creature, the latter also begins to get involved in enjoying this world and deriving pleasure from the activities of the material world (93/6).

[Note—This is a metaphoric way of saying that these two traits—playfully doing all types of activities or indulging in doing Krida, and enjoying it and deriving pleasure from it at the same time, i.e. having Vinod from it—are some of the attractive attributes and engaging qualities exhibited by the Atma when it begins to disassociate itself from its grand original nature as the immaculately pure consciousness that is neutral to, uninvolved in and dispassionate towards any forms of emotions and sentiments that have anything to do with the material world and its alluring charms and physical attractions that cause any kind of arousal and restlessness in the calm waters of the deep state of eternal blissfulness in which the Atma, the pure self, exists. This distorted view of what consists of true happiness and joy leads the Atma to exhibit these traits of getting involved in playful activities of the world and then enjoying the pleasures derived from success in them.

As explained in note to verse no. 93/2, the colour of the prism or veil through which the Atma sees the world and which in turn casts its own shadow upon the colourless Atma is like the crystal in the case of this verse. This colour stands for the qualities mentioned above, thereby making the Atma appear to possess these attributes.]

93/7. The petal of this divine Lotus pointing towards the north-west has the colour of Manik (a dark red-coloured gem known as Ruby). It is symbolic of the dominance of such traits as 'Gaman-Chalan' (the natural tendency to be constantly on the move and wander from place to place) and 'Vairagya' (to remain in a state of profound renunciation; having total disinterest in anything pertaining to this material world or anything that is not eternal and imperishable; to be dispassionate and detached). Thus, the Atma exhibits these grand traits when it dwells on this petal (of the divine Lotus symbolically present in the heart); or it exhibits these virtues and auspicious grand qualities when it turns towards this petal or leans more towards it as compared to other petals

In other words, when the Atma sees the world through the north-west side of this symbolic prism represented by the petal located on the north-west side of this Lotus, it finds that the world is always on the move and never rests. It also finds that the world is arriving and departing constantly—i.e. the creatures die and take a new birth in an endless cycle. It sees constant destruction and construction; it observes that nothing is static and stable in this world. This makes the Atma also think that these characteristics of the world are also applicable to it, and it forgets in the process that it is distinct from the ever-changing world as it is a stable, unmoving, eternal and imperishable divine entity (93/7).

[Note—This is a metaphoric way of saying that these two traits—remaining constantly on the move like a wandering friar or mendicant, and having complete renunciation—are some of the magnificent attributes and virtues qualities exhibited by the Atma when it begins to recognise its true nature and form as the immaculate and pure enlightened consciousness, and consequentially begins to disassociate itself

from the falsehoods of this illusionary and perishable world along with its equally illusionary and perishable material pleasures and comforts.

As explained in note to verse no. 93/2, the colour of the prism or veil through which the Atma sees the world and which in turn casts its own shadow upon the colourless Atma is dark red in the case of this verse. This colour stands for the qualities mentioned above, thereby making the Atma appear to possess these attributes.]

93/8. The petal of this divine Lotus pointing towards the north has a yellow (or orange) colour. It is symbolic of the dominance of such traits as having pleasure in 'Sringar' (the natural tendency to be constantly decorating oneself and trying to look physically beautiful and attractive to others; grooming one's self and taking unusual care of the external beauty of the physical body; being obsessed with physical charms and beauty of the body and deriving immense pleasure and mental satisfaction from it). Thus, the Atma exhibits these peculiar quirky traits of self indulgence in the gross and perishable body when it dwells on this petal (of the divine Lotus symbolically present in the heart); or it exhibits these negative qualities of self-indulgence and being extra obsessed with the care of the body and its physical charms and attractiveness when it turns towards this petal or leans more towards it as compared to other petals.

In other words, when the Atma sees the world through the north side of this symbolic prism represented by the petal located on the north side of this Lotus, it finds that the world is a beautiful physical place to live in and those with beautiful and handsome bodies are at a premium; everyone praises those who are charming and attractive to look at. So the Atma begins to adore the physical gross body in which it lives and starts adorning it and grooming it. It forgets in the process that the 'real self' is not the physical gross body that needs to be groomed or decorated but the eternal 'consciousness' that does not need any external grooming or adoration to enhance its natural beauty. It also forgets in this delusory environment that this body, so meticulously taken care of, is nevertheless perishable and subject to decay and death (93/8).

[Note—This is a metaphoric way of saying that this trait—of being unduly obsessed with the grooming of the gross body, spending hours to decorate it and make it look attractive and charming, i.e. doing Sringar—is one of the many ill begotten traits that taint the Atma and divert it from its inherently taintless nature and form. This happens when the Atma begins to identify its self with the body and not as the pure consciousness residing inside this body as the true 'self'.

As explained in note to verse no. 93/2, the colour of the prism or veil through which the Atma sees the world and which in turn casts its own shadow upon the colourless Atma is yellow or orange in the case of this verse. This colour stands for the qualities mentioned above, thereby making the Atma appear to possess these attributes.]

93/9. The petal of this divine Lotus pointing towards the north-east has the colour of Vaidurya Mani (the precious gem known as beryl; lapis-lazuli; the gem with a silvery grey colour; or yellow, white, green and blue colour; the most common forms being Aquamarine and Emerald). It is symbolic of the dominance of such noble traits as 'Daan' (doing charities, making donations and giving of alms) and 'Kripa' (showing kindness, compassion, mercy and grace). Thus, the Atma exhibits these virtuous noble traits when it dwells on this petal (of the divine Lotus symbolically present in the heart); or it exhibits these grand and magnificent qualities of (of being magnanimous

and kind towards others and helping them in their needs) when it turns towards this petal or leans more towards it as compared to other petals

In other words, when the Atma sees the world through the north-east side of this symbolic prism represented by the petal located on the north-east side of this Lotus, it discerns grand and auspicious virtues of Daan and Kripa as the dominant traits in this world. The Atma finds that these virtues are very much lauded and sought after, so it endeavours to acquire them for its self; it gets influenced by this noble view of the world and becomes charitable and compassionate its self (93/9).

[Note—This is a metaphoric way of saying that these two traits—Daan and Kripa—are one of the many auspicious and divine virtues shown by the Atma when it is in its primary form. These two attributes of the Atma are what makes a man as holy and revered as the supreme Lord who is famously known as the ‘merciful one’ and the ‘benevolent Lord of all’.

As explained in note to verse no. 93/2, the colour of the prism or veil through which the Atma sees the world and which in turn casts its own shadow upon the colourless Atma is that of Aquamarine and Emerald in the case of this verse. This colour stands for the qualities mentioned above, thereby making the Atma appear to possess these attributes.]

93/10. When the attention of the Atma of the creature is focused on the various joints of the body, great sufferings afflict the body and it suffers from great pain and agony caused by ‘Vaat’ (disturbed wind in the body), ‘Pitta’ (disturbed bile and acidity in the body) and ‘Kaf’ (disturbed mucous in the body, causing cough and other discharges)¹ (93/10).

[Note—¹When the Atma thinks that there exists something called the ‘body’ which is its ‘own self’, it is only then that it begins to feel pain and suffer from that pain. But once it gets disassociated from the body and treats the latter as a distinctly separate entity from its self, then such cause of pain does not arise. The clear proof of this way of thinking lies in two examples—one, a particular man does not feel pain when someone else writhes in agony due to an injury, and two, the same man does not feel the pain in his own body when he goes to sleep. This is because in the first instance, his own Atma is not linked to the second person’s body and therefore this person does not feel the pain and suffering of the other person, and in the second case the sleeping man’s consciousness is diverted away from the physical body as long as he is asleep, thereby eliminating all senses of pain and sufferings.

The idea here is that only as long as the Atma identifies itself with the body that it would feel pain afflicting the latter, such as the horrible torments of rheumatism, arthritis, gout, cough, acidity and other diseases of the body which causes its movement very painful. Once the Atma pulls itself away from the body, it would lose all connections with it and would become a neutral observer of its sufferings, watching it stoically with a calm demeanour.]

93/11. When the attention of the Atma of the creature is focused away from these joints and centered on some other point (i.e. when the creature is not tormented by stiff joints and pain in them, or cough and hyper-acidity that causes headaches etc. for example), it is able to divert its attention in learning things, in focusing its attention on studying and acquiring knowledge, in singing and dancing and generally enjoying life¹ (93/11).

[Note—¹When the Atma is freed from the numerous afflictions of the body, i.e. when it begins to tolerate the pains of the body and regard them as part of the game of life, becoming unconcerned about them and does not remain too obsessive with them, it then begins to enjoy the same life with new zeal and vigour though the body might still be suffering from these afflictions.

In other words, this verse advises the reader to be dispassionate and neutral towards this body and the sufferings of the world, and treat them as a part of the game of life which have to be tolerated without making any fuss, because making fuss and raising tantrums would not erase the pain and suffering, instead they would only exacerbate them. The best path for a spiritual aspirant is the median path of being stoic and tolerant, tending to the needs of the body just like a doctor attends to his patient dispassionately and in a clinical fashion, but always remaining cheerful and happy internally so that the mind is peaceful and life could be lived fruitfully.]

93/12. [Verse nos. 93/12-93/15 describe the three paths or rings that the creature traverses to reach his final resting place when he is tired of this world and wants peace and rest. Since the Atma is the true identity of the living being, when the word 'Atma' is used in these verses it is used as a synonym for the living creature.]

When the eyes are tired, the Atma is said to move along the first path or first ring that is overcast with the colour of the flower called 'Bandhuk' (a flower that blooms in the middle of the day and is usually of red colour), making the eyes look drowsy, droopy and sleepy. When the Atma follows this path, the man falls asleep. [It is like the case of a hot summer day when a man feels tired and wishes to go to sleep in spite of the fact that the natural sleeping time is not the day but the night. It is also why tired or over-strained eyes look blood-shot red.]

The dreaming state of existence is during or part of this sleeping state of consciousness. During this dreaming state, the Atma does not find its complete rest because of so many activities that are deemed to be done by it during this stage, and because there are so many things that are seen, heard and imagined during the dreaming phase of sleep (93/12).

[Note—When the man is tired of the work in this world and wants to take rest, his eyes clearly reflect this weariness by becoming sleepy and blood-shot red; the man becomes drowsy and listless; his eyelids begin to droop and he loses focus and attention. This indicates that he wants to retire to his inner-chamber or the bed-room and rest for the day.

When he falls asleep, it appears that he is resting, but it is only his gross body that is inactive, for the mind and the sub-consciousness are as active as they were while he was awake. Rather, the mind becomes over-active in his dreams because now it can feel freed from the limitations imposed by the physical gross body, and therefore it can imagine a world which is much more fascinating and stupendous than what the man was actually witnesses while he was awake, and then the mind makes the man do things that he would never imagine of ever doing in the physical world where he lives. The mind takes 'wings' and lets off its imaginative and creative talents take hold of the man's sub-conscious, and he begins to fly off to unimaginable heights of fantasy and magical charms. In other words, the man begins to dream. That is why a man dreams of things, places, persons and achievements that are simply beyond his imagination while awake.

In short, when the creature is tired, his Atma wishes to take rest, so the creature sleeps. The first step of sleep is this 'dreaming stage'—defined as the 'first path' or the 'first ring' here. The red, tired eyes are the preparatory stage or the initial stage for this first path. Like a man closes his office doors when he wishes to retire for the day, the closing of the eyelids are done by the Atma to shut off the outside world and go to sleep.]

93/13. To overcome the restlessness and the weariness caused by strenuous efforts made during the dreaming state of existence, the conscious Atma enters the second ring or path called a 'Valaya' that leads to the path that gives better rest to the Atma. This so-called second path is called 'Sushupta' or the deep sleep state of existence.

This path has a shadow over it to give protection and comfort to the Atma which has become weary from the restlessness of the dreaming stage. This shadow is of the colour of the insect called 'Vir-Bahuti' (a red coloured insect that appears when the first rains fall). [The word 'shadow' here refers to the practice of covering one's eyes when one goes to sleep. Though the eyelids are already closed, proper sleep is got by covering the eyes with some cloth or shutting off all sources of external light which would be also like putting the eyes in a shadow.]

During this stage of deep sleep state of existence called the Sushupta, the creature's intellect and thoughts are concerned only with the supreme transcendental Consciousness present in his own bosom as his 'true self' which is wisdom and enlightenment personified. It is only when this stage is reached that it is possible for the creature to have access to the supreme transcendental Ishwar or Brahm (present in his own self as his Atma as described in the next verse) (93/13).

[Note—Even though the external body appears to be resting during sleep when the man is dreaming, he does not find actual rest as expected as his mind is as active and restless as it was during the waking state of his existence. This is because the mind is engaged in doing so many things, seeing so many things, hearing so many things in the imaginary world of dreams that it is equivalent to it remaining engaged while the body was awake, and getting tired in the process. So the creature enters the second path which is much quieter for him, and this is the path of deep sleep when there are no dreams and the mind then finds complete rest. It is freed from having to attend to so many sensory inputs from the external world in which it had dwelt earlier, whether it was the physical world of waking state, or the imaginary world of dreams. Now the mind has got the time to look somewhere else, and then it discovers to its amazement the world of pure bliss, the world of peace and restfulness is in the non-involvement with the world, whether that involvement is physical or imaginary. This total 'non-involvement' comes in the deep sleep state of existence because the mind-intellect as well as the sub-conscious are inactive.]

The Atma which is the 'real self' of the creature was involved in this world in the hope of deriving peace and bliss in it, but to its dismay it discovered that the world would not give it either of them. So it wished to sleep. Then to its utter frustration it discovered that the mind would not let it rest it in sleep also because it started dreaming. Then the Atma crosses this ring and enters the next inner ring called the 'deep sleep or Sushupta' state of consciousness. Left undisturbed and unperturbed, the Atma of the creature now finds rest and peace. The creature discovers the presence of pure consciousness in his own bosom, and this is the supreme transcendental Divinity known as Brahm personified.

So on the one hand the Atma has searched out its 'true self' as the pure consciousness which is Brahm personified, and on the other hand the creature has got what he wanted—peace and tranquility.]

93/14. When the creature's Atma enters the third ring or takes the third inner path which is of the colour of Ruby or a red lotus flower and plunges into it, then it is said that it has reached the fourth state of exalted existence called Turiya¹. This is a stage from where the Atma does not revert back to first three stages, i.e. the deep sleeping, dreaming and waking respectively in this reverse order, and thus it remains in perpetual contact with the fount of eternal enlightenment and blissfulness known as the Atma. In other words, it gradually withdraws itself from successive layers of existence and finally enters the sanctum sanctorum of Divinity when it realises the eternal source of enlightenment and bliss, of beatitude and felicity which is known as the Atma, and then remains perpetually submerged and drowned in it, without thinking of anything else (93/14).

[Note—¹There are in all three primary stages in which the creature's Atma exists in this world from the metaphysical point of view. The first is the waking stage, and then it enters the second stage called the sleeping stage. This sleeping stage has two divisions—i.e. the dreaming stage as described in verse no. 93/12 and deep sleep stage as described in verse no. 93/13. Beyond this is the third stage called the Turiya stage as described in current verse no. 93/14.

These primary stages can be regarded as four stages if we take the two stages of dreaming and deep sleep separately. Refer also verse no. 94. Verse no. 36 of this Upanishad presents another interpretation of these three states of existence.]

93/15. At this last stage, the aspirant should merge his Pran and Apaana winds (i.e. the wind that is primarily located in the upper part of the body, and the one located in the lower half respectively), and treat the entire world as synonymous with the single divine entity known as the pure conscious Atma. [It is to be noted that the process of mixing the two winds has been described briefly earlier in this Upanishad in the context of Pranayama, various Aasans and Mudras.]

When the aspirant is convinced that there is essentially only one truthful entity in this creation, which is the immutable and immanent 'Atma', he should then focus his entire attention on this single goal as the aim of his spiritual pursuits. This last stage is called 'Turiyatit' or the stage that goes even beyond the fourth stage of Turiya. During this last state of existence of the creature, all his doubts and confusions are removed, and everything appears to be soaked in absolute bliss and ecstasy. This is the ultimate state of the realisation of the Absolute Truth of existence.

Only till the time the creature believes that it has a physical body which belongs to it and is its true 'identity' and 'self' does it remain trapped in this delusion and erroneous perception about the true nature of the 'self'. As soon as the creature goes beyond this fallacious notions of the 'self', and rises higher in his spiritual progress to realise the actual eclectic truth about his own self as being the subtle and sublime Atma which is the universally pure consciousness and not the gross physical body with its inherent limitations, he is said to have obtained the essential nectar of supreme transcendental Divinity marked by eternal beatitude and felicity.

This eclectic path provides a holistic approach to divinity and holiness in as much as it shows the way to 'Moksha' (liberation and deliverance, emancipation and salvation) as well as to 'Atma Darshan' (the realisation of the truth about the real 'self' of the creature as the Atma which is the pure, enlightened and sublime Consciousness, and which is different from the gross body) (93/15).

94. When the Atma is accustomed to remaining steady inspite of the buffeting effects of the winds present inside the body which cause undue restlessness to it and hinder its spiritual progress (by causing so many distractions for it as narrated, inter alia, in verse nos. 50, 59-61, 80-81, 93/10-11 above), it acquires sufficient expertise to accompany the vital winds as they move upwards towards the abode of Brahm by the practice of various meditation exercises and concentration of the forceful powers of the mind as described earlier in this Upanishad.

In other words, these four symbolic paths (described in verse no. 93/12—93/15 above) are taken by the Atma (i.e. the pure conscious self of the creature) along with the Pran (i.e. the vital winds that infuse life inside the body) as it moves towards the 'Maha Dwar'¹ or the great doorway leading to Brahm-realisation and attaining the final Moksha or liberation and deliverance of the soul. During this journey, it reaches the so-called 'Ardha Trikona'² or the symbolic half-triangle. Here the Atma is able to witness or 'see' the presence of the exalted seat of the divine Being honoured by the

epithet 'Achut'³. In other words, it is here that the spiritual aspirant is able to witness the symbolic presence of the supreme Brahm as 'Achut' because it is here that he gets the light of enlightenment. (94).

Note—¹The *Maha Dwar* is literally the 'great doorway or gate'. In metaphysical terms it refers to the Brahm-Randhra located on the top of the head (cranium) where there is a hair-like micro-fine slit in the skull bone from where it is believed the Pran, or the vital life-giving winds present inside the body, of the ascetic leave when he reaches the climax of meditation. This Pran is accompanied by the Atma on its outward journey from the body. This is because Pran and life are synonymous with each other, and so is the Atma which is synonymous with 'consciousness' that prevails in a living being. When the ascetic dies by the exit of his Pran from the body through the Brahm-Randhra, it is obvious that his consciousness also leaves; the body that is rendered lifeless without the Pran becomes unconscious—or 'without consciousness'. It is believed that the supreme transcendental Brahm entered the body of the man at the time of creation through this Brahm-Randhra, and then took up residence in the head as the man's eclectic virtues of having wisdom, erudition, sagacity and intellect with its accompanying faculties such as reasoning, rationality, analysis, logic, discrimination, deduction, scientific predictions etc.

Yoga Upanishads describe elaborately how the Pran is channelised through the Sushumna Naadi by activation of the Kundalini and practicing the various Mudras and Aasans along with Pranayam to reach the forehead. It is here that the ascetic experiences the presence of light of wisdom and enlightenment besides accessing the various mystical powers of deep insight into the realm of the unknown and transcendental. Such achievements are truly super-human, and can only be achieved by a Brahm-realised person and not by an ordinary mortal. So when the Atma reaches this area of the head, the spiritual aspirant witnesses the presence of the supreme Divinity known as Brahm.

When the Pran makes its exit through the Brahm-Randhra and merges with the universal air or wind element present outside the gross body of the creature, there is no chance of it ever returning back into the body. This is tantamount to his final liberation and deliverance because the body without life would disintegrate into its basic elements such as the fire, water, sky and earth, leaving nothing behind. This is also called 'Kaivalya Mukti' in metaphysical parlance.

It is the final dissolution of the creature when he becomes one with the cosmic elements of creation from where his origin can be traced. This Brahm-Randhra is called the 'Maha Dwar' because it is the main gate through which the Pran and the Atma exit from the body to find their liberation and deliverance; it facilitates the exit of the Pran and the Atma from the great prison of the body in which they were trapped. Since freedom from a life of bondage is an exhilarating experience, it is said that the creature experiences extreme sense of bliss when the creature in the form of his Pran (life sustaining forces in his body) and the Atma (pure consciousness) reaches this Maha Dwar.

The Amrit Naad Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse no. 26 asserts that it is the Mana or the mind of a creature that decides the path he should take to reach his goal in life out of the various options available depending upon the natural inclinations, temperaments, objective of life and desires of the creature. So if the creature sincerely wishes to obtain liberation and deliverance from the shackles of the body and the find freedom from the endless cycle of birth and death in the world and its accompanying horrors, then the mind would aid in the process by concentrating all its faculties to help the Atma and Pran reach the Maha Dwar and escape. In other words, the Mana would enable the enlightened creature to find the eternal source of bliss and happiness by becoming 'self-realised'.

Another related concept is the *Brahm Vivar*. It is literally a hole like aperture present at the back of the mouth where it opens into the wind pipe which connects the

lungs to the nose. This is the location of the 'Talu Chakra' or the swirling subtle energy center located at the back of the palate. It has a direct link to the Brahm Randhra present in the cranium at the top of the head, and is the hair-like slit marking the joint between the two parts of the skull.

This Brahm Vivar is also called *Brahm Dwar* or the 'doorway to Brahm' because it opens directly into the duct that connect the lower part of the body to the Brahm Randhra and through which the vital winds called Pran travel during the practice of Yoga (such as Pranayam, Kundalini and Sushumna Naadi activation, various Aasans and Bandhas etc.).

Refer verse nos. 103-106 of this Upanishad below in this context. Refer also to Amrit Naad Upanishad, verse nos. 27, 39; Kshuriko-panishad, verse nos. 18-20; Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 3, verse nos. 12-17 in this context.

²The *Ardha Trikona* or the half-triangle refers to the area of the forehead between the hair line and the two eyebrows. The full triangle would consist of the base formed by joining the eyebrows so that the line passes through the base of the root of the nose, and the apex would be the Brahm Randhra described above. This area is said to be the seat of wisdom and enlightenment. Refer verse no. 39 of this Upanishad.

It is here that the creature witnesses the supreme transcendental Brahm's presence in the form of Achut.

³*Achut* means an entity that is exalted, divine, holy, immaculate and incorruptible; that has a high stature, is untainted, imperishable, steady, constant and eternal; an entity that cannot be demoted, degraded, demeaned or belittled in anyway whatsoever. This epithet applies to the supreme transcendental Brahm present in the creature's inner self as his own Atma or the pure consciousness.]

95. Above this so-called 'half-triangle' is the site where the brain is located, and therefore is the site where the thinking powers of the creature, the stupendous powers mind and intellect to contemplate and fix attention on something, to discriminate and analyse, to rationalize and deduce anything systematically as well as their creative and constructive powers of imagination are located. [This area is the cerebrum.]

A wise practitioner should meditate and contemplate upon the primary elements along with their primary colours and their relevant Beej Mantras here.

Therefore, he should next meditate and contemplate upon the basic elements of creation such as the earth etc. (the others being water, fire, air and space) as well as the five vital Prans (winds such Pran, Apaana, Vyan, Udaana and Samana) along with their root words (called the 'Beej' Mantra or the basic letter that symbolises them and represents their inherent subtle strength and powers), their specific distinguishing marks and classifications (called their 'Varns'), and their locations (called their 'Sthaan') in this creation.

The Beej or seed letter of the Pran wind (the primary air which infuses life inside the gross body; the breath) is the Sanskrit alphabet 'Ya'. It has the hue of purple or violet or reddish blue, and it represents the rain bearing clouds that are harbingers of life on earth.

The Beej or seed letter of the Apaana wind (the primary air which moves downwards in the body and helps in food intake and its movement through the intestines, its digestion and elimination from the body) is the Sanskrit alphabet 'Ra'. It has the hue of golden yellow resembling the brilliant sun, and represents the fire element (95).

96. The Beej or seed letter of the Vyan wind (the primary wind that helps in maintaining equilibrium and pressure within the body, and it also controls the functioning of the other winds) is the Sanskrit alphabet 'La'. It has the hue of red like

the colour of the flower called 'Bandhuk' (a flower that blooms in the middle of the day), and it represents the earth element.

The Beej or seed letter of the Udaan wind (the primary wind that helps the body to rise and move about, it also helps the body to expel toxic waste gases in the body through the nostrils and mouth in the form of exhalation and cough) is the Sanskrit alphabet 'Va'. It has the hue of shining white like that of the conch shell, and it represents the Jiva or the living being in this creation (96).

97. The Beej or seed letter of the Samaan wind (the primary wind that helps the body in equal distribution of nourishment throughout it, as well as in the circulation of blood) is the Sanskrit alphabet 'Ha'. It has the hue of the colour crystal, and it represents the taintless, colourless and pristine pure sky element in creation.

This Samaan wind lives in the heart, navel, nostrils, ears and the big toe of the foot (97).

98. It (Samaan wind) also lives uniformly in all the seventy two thousand Naadis (ducts of the body) as well as in the twenty eight crore (1 crore = 10 million) roots of hairs present in the body (98).

[Note—In the context of verses nos. 95-98, refer also to the Amrit Naad Upanishad, verse nos. 31-39.]

99. It is to be noted that Pran wind and Samaan wind are not two distinct winds but are essentially the same wind element hypothetically classified into two types just for the sake of convenience of study—primarily they are one, they refer to the same living entity which cannot survive even for a fleeting second without the presence of any one of them.

So a wise practitioner of meditation should steady his mind and attention, and not allow it to be stupidly and unduly get disturbed in futile debates about these artificial classifications of life giving entities known by different names. Thus, becoming steady in his convictions, he should diligently practice the three phases of Pranayam such as Purak (inhaling wind or air), Kumbhak (filling the body with this inhaled air and holding it inside for certain time) and Rechak (exhaling this trapped air from the body). [This would help in mixing all the winds in the body, because no artificial boundaries are present inside the body that could prevent the various winds from mixing freely.] (99).

100. He should draw all the forms of the wind element from different parts of the body and concentrate them into the core of the subtle heart (where his pure conscious 'self', the Atma, resides). To enable this to happen, he would have to prevent the vital winds from escaping from the body by stopping their exit in the form of the Pran wind (the exhaled breath) and Apaana wind (the flatulence passing out of the anus). [Verse nos. 73-93 describe how this is brought about.]

To aid in this enterprise, he should focus his attention of meditating upon OM in a holistic way. [This is described in verse nos. 14-34, 54-65, 70, and 93 amongst others in great detail.] (100).

101. The passage of the throat (i.e. the trachea and the gullet) and the opening of the genital organ (i.e. the urethra) are drawn in and closed, followed by the upwards pulling action of the Sushumna Naadi which resembles the stalk of the lotus flower

which emerges in the Mooladhar Chakra at the base of the spine and passes up through it (101).

102. An expert practitioner of Yoga exercises hears a resonating sound resembling the music emanating from the Indian lute reverberating through the core of the Sushumna Naadi much like the hollow of the conch shell produces the sound when air is blown hard into it (102).

[Note—Refer also to verse nos. 2-3, 37 of this Upanishad also.]

103-106. When the practitioner of Yoga is able to concentrate his Pran and Atma in the top of the head (the skull) which is shaped like an inverted hollow bowl, he hears a sound resembling the loud call made by the peacock¹ at the spot called the 'Vyom Randhra' which is also known as the Brahm Randhra².

The inverted (upside down) bowl of the skull has four openings, called the 'doors'³.

The self-illuminated and self-enlightened Atma (here referring to the supreme transcendental Consciousness known as Brahm) is present in the subtle space of the hollow of the skull much like the celestial sun is present in the external sky.

The inherent subtle and sublime divine authority, powers and potentials that this Atma (i.e. Brahm) possesses are represented by the 'Shakti' (the female personification of these virtues and qualities) standing at the opening of the 'Brahm Randhra'. This Shakti empowers the practicing ascetic to be able to concentrate his thoughts and focus his attention on realisation of the true 'self' which is the pure conscious Atma personifying the supreme transcendental Brahm in order to facilitate his final liberation and deliverance from this body and the world. This is tantamount to emancipation and salvation of his soul, called 'Kaivalya Mukti' because it is his final dissolution and a unique one at that in as much as he would not have to take birth again. This is possible when true self-realisation and enlightenment dawns upon the intellect and mind of the aspirant ascetic, and this unique achievement is therefore regarded as the crowning glory of all his Yoga practices as well as his spiritual pursuits.

The point in the forehead where the virtual 'third eye of wisdom' is located is like the Chandra Bindu placed on the symbol of OM. [That is, it is like the focal point of the parabolic surface representing the cosmic dish where the practitioner of Yoga can hear the cosmic Naad, the primary sound of ether, resonating in his head.] It symbolically represents the 'sight' that comes with wisdom and enlightenment. Since Lord Shiva is the God who personifies the virtues of wisdom, enlightenment, erudition and self-realisation of the highest order, remaining perpetually in a state of meditation and contemplation, this place in the forehead is said to be his symbolic abode⁴.

Again, since knowledge, erudition, wisdom and enlightenment are like priceless and glittering gems, this place is said to be bejeweled and embellished with brilliantly shining gems.

A person who is well acquainted with the knowledge contained in this Upanishad is deemed to be eligible to attain final emancipation and salvation for his self, called Kaivalya Mukti. Verily, this is what this Upanishad expounds, elucidates, asserts and affirms.

Thus ends this Upanishad (103-106).

[Note—¹When the vital winds are concentrated on the top of the skull which is like an inverted bowl, the grave and resonating but soothing sound emanating from the

Sushumna Naadi is heard louder like a shriek of the peacock because of the acoustic make of this area. The hissing and rustling sound that is made by the movement of the vital airs inside the body is magnified manifold when they enter the Sushumna Naadi and reach the head. The practitioner of Yoga can hear this otherwise very subtle sound that is inaudible under ordinary circumstances in a loud reverberating mode as narrated in verse no. 102.

²The *Brahm Randhra* is the hair like slit on the top of the skull from which the Pran and Atma of the Yogi escape to the outside world at the time of his death and his final dissolution into the elements. It is believed that the supreme Brahm had entered the man's body through this aperture at the time of creation.

The word Vyom means the sky, and therefore the opening that opens into the sky is known as *Vyom Randhra*. This is also the location of the *Vyom Chakra*.

³The four openings or 'doors' of the skull are the following—the two nostrils and two eyes. Through the nostrils the creature inhales and exhales wind which creates a whizzing, hissing or rustling sound when it passes through them; it is symbolically depicted as the sound made when the string of the bow is pulled and released. The other opening, i.e. the eye is the site of all vision and knowledge acquired by the creature when it sees things in the world. It is a metaphor for the subtle quality of wisdom and enlightenment as well as of deep insight and the sixth sense that any creature possesses. ⁴That is why it is called the seat of Lord Shiva and Shakti because Shiva stands for such virtues as wisdom and enlightenment of the highest order, while Shakti stands for the stupendous authority, powers and potentials that knowledge bestows upon the creature. The forehead is the site of the fore part of the brain much like the headlight on the miner's helmet or the headlight of the car which enables the miner or the driver of the car to see in the darkness. This is a metaphoric way of saying that the practitioner of Yoga who follows the rules and regulations as laid down in this Upanishad is able to see the truth in the light of wisdom and enlightenment that is present in his own head. This area of the head is known as the cerebrum.]

-----Shanti Paath-----

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Chapter 16

Brahm Vidya Upanishad/Brahmvidyo-panishad

The word 'Brahm' refers to the transcendental supreme Divinity, the cosmic Consciousness and the ultimate Truth of existence, while the word 'Vidya' means knowledge, information, skills and erudition on a subject. Therefore, this Upanishad expounds and elucidates upon the mysterious secrets of Brahm, and it is an exposition on the various means by which this great enigma of creation can be unraveled by a spiritual aspirant. This eclectic and esoteric knowledge opens for him the vast treasury of bliss and contentedness that comes when one has accessed the ultimate goal in one's life, and has discovered the great spiritual 'truth' that can provide him with freedom from the endless cycle of delusions and their attendant miseries and torments.

This Upanishad discusses the ways by which Brahm can be realised by a spiritual aspirant, along with explaining the esoteric and mystical form of that Brahm. It starts with a discussion of the subtle meaning of the four sublime letters that constitute the ethereal word OM which is metaphorically used as a classical synonym of Brahm. It goes on to describe the difference between Brahm, the transcendental and eternal Supreme Being, and the ordinary Jiva, the mortal living being or creature, and how this same Jiva can become as exalted as Brahm and be known as a Hans or a divine Swan when it becomes enlightened about the Atma or the pure consciousness present in his own bosom. This eclectic knowledge about Divinity helps the creature break free from all fetters that shackle him down to this mortal existence, and it paves the way for his obtaining eternity, beatitude and felicity by being liberated from the grossness created by the physical world and the gross body, and instead realising the true nature of one's own self as the Atma that is nothing but the ethereal, subtle and sublime cosmic Consciousness.

The attainment of emancipation and salvation of the soul is the final aim of all spiritual pursuit, and the metaphysical knowledge that empowers the aspirant to achieve this aim is called 'Brahm Vidya'. It is also called so because everything discussed in this Upanishad is aimed at elucidating upon the essential form of Brahm that is ethereal, divine, truthful and eclectic, and which helps to unravel the great mysteries associated with this enigmatic divine entity besides highlighting the path to be followed for its actual realisation. 'Brahm Vidya' literally means that text which imparts knowledge of Brahm, which enlightens an aspirant about the salient features of Brahm.

In context of this Upanishad, one should refer to some other Upanishads that describe the Atma and are quite similar in tenor and language to this one, e.g. Hanso-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Atma Pujo-panishad of Rig Veda, Brahm Bindu, Dhyan Bindu, Amrit Naad, Shwetashwatar and Tejo Bindu Upanishads of Krishna Yajur Veda, and Atmo-panishad of Atharva Veda. Besides them, the Upanishads that deal with Yoga are equally relevant because Yoga plays an important and leading role in Brahm-realisation. Some of the Yoga Upanishads are (i) Rig Veda—Saubhagya Laxmi Upanishad; (ii) Sam Veda—Yog Chudamani and Yog-rajo, Jabal Darshan Upanishad; (iii) Sukhla Yajur Veda—Advaya Tarak, Trishikhi Brahmin, Mandal Brahmin and Hanso-panishad Upanishads; (iv) Krishna Yajur Veda—Dhyan Bindu, Yog Kundalini, Amrit Nada, Kshuriko, Shwetashwatar (Canto 2), Varaaha, Yog Shikha and Yog Tattva Upanishads. Some parts of Tejobindu Upanishad describe the metaphysical importance and spiritual significance of terms used in Yoga texts in its Canto 1, verse nos. 15-19, 25-27, 31-42; and (v) Atharva Veda—Shandilyo-panishad.

-----Shanti Paath-----

ॐ सह नाववतु । सह नौ भुनक्तु । सह वीर्यं करवावहै । तेजस्वि नावधीतमस्तु । मा विद्विषावहै ।
 ॐ शान्तिः । शान्तिः । शान्तिः ।

The meaning of this Shanti Paath is given in appendix no. 1.

1. Now we shall describe the Upanishad called Brahm Vidya. It is by the grace and blessing of the supreme Lord known as Vishnu (the sustainer of creation; the Viraat Purush or the macrocosmic form of the Supreme Being known as Brahm) who is famous for his most marvelous, fascinating and mysterious deeds which are very auspicious and divine by nature that this eclectic but most esoteric and mystical knowledge is revealed for the benefit of all spiritual aspirants. This knowledge is called 'Brahm Vidya' and it is like an eternal and steadily burning fire of knowledge and enlightenment (because it provides the much needed 'light' that illuminates the path for the spiritual seeker of Brahm by enlightening him about the secrets of this divine transcendental supreme Authority of existence) (1).

2. [Verse nos. 2-12 analyse the various metaphysical connotations of the different components of OM. This monosyllabic word stands for 'Pranav' which in turn is an aphorism for the supreme transcendental Divinity, the Absolute Truth and the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm. In this context, refer Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 2, 9-18, 37 and 102, besides Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 1-6.]

Those who are experts in the metaphysical knowledge pertaining to the supreme transcendental Being known as Brahm address and recognise him by the monosyllabic word OM. This word OM is known as 'Akchar', i.e. something that is imperishable and perpetual. It is also called 'Akchar' because it consists of one continuous homogenous sound that rolls out like a rumble of the distant cloud. Upon analysis it is determined that this sound OM consists of three distinct subtle letters (A, U and M), and this analogy is used by these experts to explain the three subtle aspects of that Brahm—viz. its body or form, its habitat or the places where it is deemed to be present, and its planes of existence which are three in number (called the 'Kaal Traya') (2).

3. This ethereal and eternal word OM has three Devtas (patron deities)¹, incorporates the three worlds², symbolises the three Vedas³, and has the three forms of the legendary fire element⁴ in it in a latent form. These three letters represent Shiva—one who is auspicious and truthful, is most enlightened, wise and erudite, and is most exalted and pure in nature. Besides these three letters, the complete word OM has a half-syllable called 'Ardha Matra' consisting of the 'Anuswar' or the dot put on the top of the symbol of OM⁵ (3).

[Note—¹The three Devtas are the personification of the three primary forces of Nature—viz. the Fire God, the Water God, and the Wind God.

²The three worlds are symbolised by the three primary words uttered by the creator Brahma at the time of creation—viz. 'Bhu' or the terrestrial world, 'Bhuvaha' or the sky, and 'Swaha' or the heavens. Another interpretation can be the three worlds such as the heavens, the earth and the nether world.

³The three Vedas are the Rig, Sam and Yajur.

⁴The three fires are the Garhapatya or the fire of the household hearth, the Dakshinagni or the fire lit as a witness to charities and donations and other auspicious deeds, and Ahawaniya or the fire lit during a fire sacrifice to invoke the Gods.

⁵In Sanskrit, the dot placed on the top of an alphabet to produce the nasal sound is called an 'Ardha Maatraa'. It is pronounced as 'sum' depending upon the word. Refer Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 2 and 17.]

4. Those who are experts in the eclectic knowledge of Brahm have proclaimed and asserted that the symbolic body of the first letter 'A'¹ (of the divine ethereal word OM

standing for the supreme transcendental Brahm) consists of the following units—the Rig Veda, the sacred fire called Garhapatya Agni (fire of the household hearth), the Prithivi (earth) element, and Brahma (the creator of the visible world) (4).

[Note—¹The Sanskrit letter ‘A’ is the first letter of the alphabet and the first basic short vowel sound. It forms the base for pronunciation of all consonants. It sounds similar to the sound of ‘o’ in the word ‘son’, or the first vowel ‘A’ of the English alphabet and used to denote a single entity or as an article in English grammar—e.g. ‘a’ man. According to metaphysical interpretation, this letter forms the base from which the entire creation has sprung forth. This is drawn from the fact that it is the basic and first sound that emanates from the throat when a person attempts to begin to speak. It symbolically therefore stands for the initiation phase of creation.]

5. The second letter ‘U’¹ (of the divine ethereal word OM standing for the supreme transcendental Brahm) consists of the following units—the Yajur Veda, the sacred fire called Dakshinagni (fire lit as a witness to some charitable deed such as giving of donation or alms), the Akash (sky) element, and Vishnu (the sustainer and protector of the visible world) (5).

[Note—¹The Sanskrit letter ‘U’ is the fifth letter of the alphabet and third short vowel sound. It is sounded as in the word ‘full’. According to metaphysical interpretation, this letter stands for the expansion, development and growth of the creation. It is pronounced by cupping the lips in a spout mode, indicating the spewing of the vital spark of life to as long a distance as possible just like a water-syringe is used to sprinkle liquid over a large area. When a full-throated ‘U’ is sounded as in the case of an expression of utter astonishment or excitement, or as an exclamation made in immense shock or horror, its sound is heard at a long distance, symbolising the fact that the point of origin of this sound has affected a point far away from it. It is different from the guttural sound which cannot be heard from afar.]

6. The third letter ‘M’¹ (of the divine ethereal word OM standing for the supreme transcendental Brahm) consists of the following units—the Sam Veda, the sacred fire called Ahavahaniya (the fire lit during a fire sacrifice to invoke the Gods), the Duo Loka (the heavens and far reaches of the deep space), and the supreme Lord called Ishwar (referring to the Supreme Being) (6).

[Note—¹The Sanskrit letter ‘M’ is the twenty fifth consonant and the fifth one in the fifth category of consonants headed by the letter ‘Pa’. It is the labial nasal, and sounded as ‘ma’ in mother. This class of Sanskrit alphabets is pronounced by snapping the lips open (e.g. when we say any word beginning with ‘P’, our lips have to be opened with a snap). In metaphysical terms, the letter ‘M’ stands for the conclusion of the creation because when we pronounce the word OM, the mouth is finally closed and the lips shut. This is akin to the state of sleep when one closes one’s mouth, or the state of dissolution when one has no awareness of the existence of the external world. This ‘death like’ state is when the entire creation dissolves and merges into its primary form, the invisible and attributeless Brahm from it has sprung forth when the first rumblings of life and activity were symbolised by the appearance of the word ‘A’.]

7-8. The letter ‘A’ is symbolically present in the center or core of the splendourous area that surrounds the celestial Sun. The letter ‘U’ is similarly located in the center or core of the brightly illuminated area that surrounds the celestial Moon. And the letter ‘M’ is present in the terrestrial fire that has no smoke (i.e. the fire which is burning brightly) as well as in the fire that is at the heart of the electric or lightening in the sky (i.e. as the stupendous fire element inherently present in electric, enabling the latter to burn anything to ashes in an instant).

Hence, these three letters or syllables should be regarded as being equivalent in their mystical powers and dynamism to the Sun, the Moon and the Fire (7-8).

[Note—The symbolism is very remarkable here. The sun is the harbinger of life on the planet—it provides rains, light, heat and energy. As soon as the sun rises in the morning there is activity and signs of life everywhere, the animals and birds start calling and the man wakes up and normal life with all its accompanying cacophony springs back to life after the sleep of the previous night. This is like the initiating of the new phase or dawn of life by the pronouncement of the letter 'A' by Brahm. Besides this, the Upanishads have uniformly described the Sun God as a visible manifestation of Brahm.

Next comes the Moon and the letter 'U'. The Moon God is the patron God of the Mana, the emotional and sentimental behaviour of a man; he controls the heart and the mind. The moon shines during the night, the period when one makes love to his partner and indulges in the activity of procreation. The letter 'U' stands for expansion of creation, and therefore this procreative activity done during the aegis of the benevolent Moon God is symbolised by saying that this letter is at the core of the moon.

Finally, the letter 'M' stands for conclusion—an obvious allusion to the destructive and ruinous character of the fire element. The lightening and electric are more potent and powerful manifestation of this basic character of the fire to destroy and reduce everything to ashes. The fire without smoke also refers to the fire that is at its ferocious worst, for a smoldering fire would not burn things as easily as the brilliantly lit fire.]

9. Just like a leaping flame of a fire or an erect flame of a lighted lamp is always located on the upper side of it and faces or moves upwards (instead of downwards), one should understand that the half-syllable (represented by the 'Anuswar') is always placed on the top of Pranav (the word for OM representing the supreme transcendental consciousness known as Brahm) (9).

[Note—The Anuswar is the after sound represented by a dot placed on the top of Sanskrit letter to produce the nasal sound of 'Um' as in the word '*sum*', or as 'Ang' as in '*sung*'. It always belongs to a preceding vowel. In the present case of OM, it belongs to the preceding vowel sound 'A' which stands for the initiator of creative cycle, i.e. the supreme Brahm. Hence it refers to the Ishwar, the Lord God called also as Pranav. When the word OM is sounded in the mind, a resonating effect is produced in the region of the forehead around the tri-junction of the root of the nose and the two eyebrows. This is the symbolic location of the third eye of wisdom, and wisdom and enlightenment are like fire in the sense that they remove the darkness of ignorance and burn all impurities of the mind much like the fire doing the same thing in the physical world.]

10-11. This erect or upwardly facing flame is visualised in the form of a lotus filament. This majestically waving filament of fire represents the Naadi (the tubular duct; the nerve or vein of the physical body of the creature) which is like the Sun in its splendour and potentials. It appears to thread all the other seventy two Naadis in the body and pass through the brilliant Sun (like an arrow passing through the fire to reach the other side) to reach the top of the head (i.e. the cranium, past the cerebrum). It has the divine power to bless everyone and it pervades every aspect of creation (10-11).

[Note—The Naadi referred to here is the Sushumna Naadi which starts at the bottom of the spine and is said to reach the top of the head. It controls the central nervous system. It is obvious that the proper functioning of the central nervous system is at the core of conscious living in this world. The symbolism is very clear—a wise man

is able not only to live but to live wisely and intelligently as indicated by the symbolism of this Naadi piercing through the Sun indicating the man's ability to have deep insight and see the truth and real nature of things beyond the blinding dazzle and illusions created by ignorance and delusions.]

12. The sound of OM resembles the reverberating and resonating sound produced by a bronze bell. OM is soothing for the nerves and it vanishes into nothingness just like the sound of the bell vanishing into silence long after it has been rung. The person who understands the import and importance of OM in its entirety is able to attain enduring peace and tranquility (12).

[Note--In other words, this is a symbolic way of saying that a spiritual aspirant can find enduring peace and tranquility by diligently cultivating devotion for the supreme Divinity, the transcendental Being known as Brahm as well as Pranav and represented by the eclectic, ethereal and esoteric word OM, by meditating on this word and by using it as a medium or Mantra to concentrate upon the great Truths of creation to unravel their mysterious secrets. This also helps him to acquire mystical powers that are inherently enshrined in OM and are unleashed once the aspirant is able to unlock its secrets. The spiritual aspirant can reach lofty heights of enlightenment and self-realisation by contemplating upon the esoteric meanings and significance of the sound elements that constitute the all-pervading cosmic sound OM that ubiquitously pervades throughout the universe in its sky element, and which is a subtle hint of presence of life and consciousness everywhere. The aspirant sort of harnesses the cosmic energy trapped in the sound elements of OM and can use it for his own benefit, whether he is desirous of worldly gains or of spiritual liberation and peace.]

13. The esoteric, mystical and enigmatic entity in which the subtlest element in creation, i.e. the sound, vanishes is known as the supreme transcendental Brahm¹.

Similarly, the Buddhi, which is the intellectual mind and also a subtle element in creation, that submerges itself in meditation and contemplates upon this unknown Brahm is said to be indistinguishable from Brahm and becomes one like the Brahm (because it would remain submerged in and fully occupied with the thoughts of Brahm)².

Resultantly, it would also be like that Brahm and possess or exhibit virtues and characters of Brahm, such as having the eclectic quality of being like the excellent elixir of life known as Amrit that gives everlasting peace and tranquility to the creature³ (13).

[Note—¹When the bell is struck, a sound appears from nowhere, lasts for sometime, and then vanishes into nothingness. It is a physical mystery because no one has seen the place from where the sound had emerged and where it vanishes. Surely there must be some spot from where the sound had come and where it vanished. This unknown and mysterious point source of sound is known as Brahm. It is consciousness personified because only an entity that has 'life' can generate sound, and not a dead entity. A dead man does not speak, and that is why doctors are not satisfied that a person has recovered after some life threatening disease or operation unless he is able to answer questions put to him, i.e. he is able to speak.

Since the word OM encompasses the entire gamut of cosmic sound as well as all the genres of basic sounds that are heard on earth, the hearing of OM in the mind and its attendant soothing effects on the nerves and the resultant peace and tranquility that overtakes the entire being of the spiritual aspirant is tantamount to his being dipped in a pitcher of elixir and drenched in the eclectic virtues of peace and tranquility. His earlier form and nature of being restless and agitated and fragile in temperament is now replaced with that which is one of a calm and serene and stable demeanour. This is what is meant here. When a person becomes Brahm-realised or when he practices

meditation by using the word OM, he becomes peaceful and calm, he overcomes his earlier state of remaining in a state of flux and vexed, and instead becomes rested and stable. This is in effect the purpose of Yoga—to bring a harmony between the soul and the supreme Soul, to restore the lost balance between the mortal creature and the immortal being. Thus, concentration on OM has the same effect that is had by Brahm-realisation because OM is a ‘sound’ manifestation of Brahm.

²We can understand this phenomenon with a simple example. In the cosmos there are certain mysterious spots called the Black Hole. These are collapsed stars which have become so dense that even light cannot escape from their gravitational pull—hence the name ‘black’ because anything appears to be black when light is completely absorbed by it. Nothing that falls in this ‘black hole’ escapes, even radiation of the cosmos. Another instance is one looking fixedly or gazing unblinkingly at the fire or a brightly lit flame or the sun for a prolonged period of time—sure enough he would lose sight and would not be able to see anything else. Likewise, when the intellect is focused on Brahm, the latter’s powerful attractive powers and stupendous brilliance of consciousness and divinity precludes the chances of the mind and intellect ever moving away from it. It is also like the case of a less dense object coming into contact with a denser object—the gravitational pull of the large object would trap the smaller object in its grasp.

This macrocosmic divinity known as Brahm is represented by the ethereal word OM which is known as the cosmic Naad or the background noise in the cosmos. This is so overwhelming that when the aspirant meditates using the word OM as a Mantra, the resounding vibrations created by its constant chanting or repetition drowns other sounds and impulses that flow through the sensory nerves of the brain. This effectively blocks them out, and the aspirant submerges in the extreme sense of bliss and ecstasy that this OM produces in his mind by massaging his nerves and titillating them.

When the mind constantly repeats the ethereal Mantra OM and contemplates upon its subtle elements as described in verse nos. 2-8, it becomes so engrossed in it that it forgets about everything else just like a serious student or researcher remains submerged in his study and research so much so that he even remains oblivious of whether it is the day or the night.

³The exalted spiritual stature when this happens is so exhilarating for the aspirant that his condition is comparable to the bee which is drinking nectar from a flower. Like the bee, he too remains oblivious of everything else except the bliss that he gets by this meditation and contemplation.]

14. The Jiva (the living being) is compared to the three subtle elements—the Vayu (wind or air element), the Tej (the dynamic energy, vitality, vigour, stamina, agility etc. that form the inherent quality in a creature), and Akash (the sky and space element).

The dimension or measurement of this Jiva is visualised to be as miniscule as the hundredth part of the tip of a hair follicle (14).

[Note—It is obvious from this dimension that the word ‘Jiva’ does not refer to the physical gross body of the creature. A whale or an elephant for example are not this small! Therefore, the creature or the living being referred to here is its microscopic Atma or soul which is the real identity of the creature. This Atma is the pure consciousness residing in the creature’s bosom in his subtle heart. No part of the gross world is the subject matter of Upanishadic research, for what is obvious and visible need not be researched and looked into. What needs study is something that is not apparent, and not something that is obvious; something that is secret needs to be deciphered, and something that is known by all requires no research.

This invisible and mysterious entity known as the Atma is nevertheless the secret and hidden power-house that runs the visible and the apparent world. This is because

if the Atma is removed from the scene, the world would cease to 'exist' and 'live'; it would cease to have any meaning and relevance. This mystery about the Atma arouses curiosity in an enquiring and intelligent mind which gets inspired when it faces something mysterious and unknown which titillates it and provokes it to research and try to unravel its mysteries and the enigma surrounding its existence.

The size of the Atma is compared to the tip of the hair follicle as a means to stress the point that it is too small to be imagined in physical terms in which we are accustomed to measure and visualise the world and its things around us.

Refer Shwetashwatar Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 9 which also asserts this point.]

15. That Jiva (the creature or the living being represented by the conscious factors of existential life) lives in the symbolic navel of the vast manifested world. That is, this vast visible world has any value and importance because there is life and consciousness at its core for which the navel is a metaphor or symbol. Or, this living world revolves around the central hub known as the Atma or pure consciousness which injects life in the creature's gross body. [This is because the creature is a microcosm of the entire creation. No one would have given a second glance on this world if there was no life and vitality in it. Thus, the Atma as pure consciousness forms the nucleus (navel or hub) of this creation; life with all its vibrancy and colour revolves around this central core much like a wheel rotates around a central hub.]

This enigmatic entity which is the core (i.e. the truthful essence and the absolute reality) of this world is however different from the world of which it forms the navel¹.

It (i.e. the Atma) is like the Sun that appears to be at the center of the sky to light up the entire world with its brilliant light (just like a lighted lamp lit in the center of a room illuminates the whole room)² (15).

[Note--¹That is, whereas the Atma most subtle and sublime, is pristine pure, immaculate, eternal, imperishable, infinite, all-pervading and consciousness personified, the world of which it is the core on the other hand is gross, corrupted, impermanent, finite and artificial. Though the conscious Atma permeates throughout the length and breadth of the living world in a uniform manner, the latter nevertheless remains gross and perishable.

The physical body of the Jiva or the living being is like the physical gross world that can be visibly seen and verified. But even as this world is not the reality and the true picture of the Atma which is at its core, the gross body of the Jiva is also not its true identity and self though the consciousness flows throughout the gross body.

If we take the example of the wheel, if the central hub is removed then the entire wheel would fall apart and cease to be called a 'wheel'. Similarly, if the Atma is removed, the Jiva and the world would cease to exist and live.

²The Sun is metaphorically like this navel of the creation. It shines and provides the life sustaining factors of heat, energy and light to this world. Besides this, if there was no Sun the planets would run off randomly and collide with each other. It is the gravitational pull of the Sun that keeps the planet dangling in the void of space as well as in their fixed circuits in the vast bottomless space of the sky. One can imagine the all-engulfing darkness of death and doomsday that would surround the creation if there was no Sun. Similarly, the Atma is at the core of creation and life. Had there been no such entity as the conscious Atma, the living world as we know of today would not have come into being in the first place, and this cosmos would have been one big pitch dark void just like a dead body from which the Atma has exited, or would have been as dark, fearful and foreboding as a huge underground dungeon or catacomb of cellars in which the lamp has been extinguished.]

16. The Jiva (i.e. the life-consciousness present inside the gross body of the living creature) involuntarily does a constant Japa of the two holy Mantras—i.e. ‘Sa’ and ‘Ha’¹. [Japa refers to the repetition of an esoteric group of letters which are called a holy Mantra. They are said to possess mystical and divine powers, and are used as a tool to focus attention and energy during meditation and contemplation. The concept of involuntary Japa has been described in verse nos. 78-79 below.]

The mystical effect of this involuntary Japa is that the Jiva (in the form of his subtle Atma or conscious life factor) moves upwards or looks upwards from the ‘Nabhi Randhra’ (literally the subtle aperture of the body represented by the navel where this life factor is supposed to live)².

This Jiva is not affected by any of the flaws and shortcomings that are inherent to this material world of sense objects³ (16).

[Note--¹When the creature breathes, the inhaled air produces a sound which is equivalent to the letter ‘Sa’ in the mouth, and the exhaled air produces the sound equivalent of the letter ‘Ha’ in the throat. The combined effect is the creature is involuntarily repeating the great Mantra ‘So-a-ham’, meaning ‘that essential and absolute Truth of creation that is known as Brahm is none but I’, or ‘the supreme Truth is my true self and it is me’. Here ‘me’ or ‘I’ refers to the soul. In other words, the creature is involuntarily, at the subtle and atomic level of his existence, recognizing and accepting the spiritual fact that he is not an ordinary component of the world but the supreme Brahm personified in his form. This is called the exalted state of self-realisation and enlightenment.

Since breathing is an automatic and involuntarily exercise done regularly and without any effort whatsoever, when the wise and enlightened aspirant understands that each breath is tantamount to repeating the eclectic Mantra ‘Hans’, he is deemed to be doing an involuntarily and unbroken Japa day in and day out. Refer Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 62-65.

There are a number of Upanishads that elaborately deal with this quintessential Mantra of *Hans*—e.g. (a) Krishna Yajur Veda—Shwetashwatar Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 6; Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 3-4; Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 24, 61-65; Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 131-132, Canto 2, verse nos. 9-11, and Canto 6, verse no. 20, 52-54. (b) Shukla Yajur Veda—Hansopanishad is exclusively dedicated to explain the concept of the pure conscious Atma by way of using the metaphor of a Hans. (c) Sam Veda—Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 82-83.

The present Brahm Vidya Upanishad itself has many verses dedicated to this eclectic Mantra—e.g. verse nos. 16, 20-28, 34, 60-64, 78-79.

²The *Nabhi Randhra* is the virtual center of the body as the site of the navel. This is because—(a) It is through this cite that the embryo draws its nourishment when it lay in the mother’s womb, which is like saying that the lifeless clump of flesh was infused the spark of life and vitality through this hole. (b) It is here that all the Naadis or nerves in the body are said to have their center in the Nabhi Kanda, and it is from here that they radiate out to various parts of the body. (c) The navel is believed to be the center of the Nabhi Chakra, the subtle energy center which is the focus of the sun’s energy which is concentrated here. It is in this center where the sun is shining in a symbolic way in the body of the creature like it does in the sky. The point of the sky where the celestial sun is located is regarded as the navel of the Viraat Purush, the invisible, macrocosmic and all-incorporating gross body of the supreme Brahm. The navel of the individual creature occupies the same importance because the latter is regarded as an image of the Viraat Purush. The subtle form of the sun located here energises the body much like the celestial sun energises the world from its center located in the sky.

Since the creature draws its energy, vitality, strength and nourishment from the mother’s blood through the placenta attached to the navel, the latter is like the

aperture of the mouth through which one draws or sucks in liquids through the bore of a straw dipped in the latter. That is why this navel is called a 'Randhra' which literally means a slit or opening present in the body. This is the picture at the micro level of creation in relation with the individual creature. When it is extended to the macro level, then the cosmic embryo would be the Hiranyagarbha and the subtle aperture from where it draws its nourishment and dynamic creative energy from Brahm to reveal itself in the macrocosmic gross body known as the Viraat Purush would be represented by the celestial Sun. That is why the Sun is regarded as the cosmic center of creativity, energy, vitality and life; it is the cosmic swirling center of dynamic energy. It is like the 'navel' of the Viraat Purush much like the navel that is present in the body of the individual creature because the latter is the microcosmic visible manifestation of the former.]

17. This essential entity known as the Atma (soul or pure consciousness) of the living being (creature) is pure and wholesome like the clarified butter which is extracted by churning the milk, and is a refined and purest essence present in it¹.

This Atma is known by the five dimensions or parameters of life called the 'Panch Prans', or the five forms in which life exists in this world² (17).

[Note--¹In other words, the Atma is the purest form of life in this world. It is the real essence of life in all its forms. It is immaculate and uncorrupt; it is wholesome and without any faults associated with the world much like the butter which has nothing to do with the adulteration of milk with water, for once the butter is extracted from milk it loses its wholesomeness. The 'churning' of the milk is a symbolic way of indicating that the Atma is hidden in this world and can be known only by diligent effort, by deep research and contemplation, by doing meditation and study.

²The five forms of life or Pran refer to the five basic elements in existence—such as earth, water, fire, air and sky. These five are the fundamental building blocks of life much like the atoms which are at the core of the molecules that combine in various permutations to metamorphose into the uncountable number and variety of gross things in this world. Taken in their physical elementary forms, all of them are lifeless entities, but the great mystery of creation is that the same elements exhibit stupendous life-bearing abilities in this world in their subtle forms. Thus, there must be some mystical power that helps them do so, and it is this power that is being referred to here as the consciousness or Atma. When these elements are injected with the Atma, they begin to show vital signs of life and activity. To illustrate this point, we can take a simple example of a balloon. When the balloon is filled with air, it tosses about on its own; if it is filled with some light gas, it even rises on its own to reach high altitudes. The earth is a lifeless clod of mud or hard rock, but the same earth harbours an astounding variety of vibrant life forms in its bosom. The factor that helps bring about this is known as the Atma.

The five Prans are also called the five forms of the air or wind element which infuses life in the creature's body. These five vital airs are the following—Pran, Apaana, Samaana, Udaana and Vyana. The statement that 'the Atma is known by the five dimensions or parameters of Pran' establishes that the two entities—the Atma and the Pran—are synonymous with each other; they are like the two sides of the same coin known as 'life'.

The five forms of Prans are called the Atma's five 'Kalaas', and they have been described in verse no. 18 below.]

18. Just like the milk is churned by the churning rod, the main vital wind present in the body, called the Pran, keeps the four other forms or aspects of this vital wind, called its four Kalaas¹, to remain activated and circulating in the body through the medium of the four sections of the heart². [In other words, the breath called the main

Pran keeps the body alive, thereby ensuring the heart beats and helps in circulating the blood and the other four forms of the Pran inside the body.] (18).

[Note—¹The word *Kalaa* refers to the different aspects or forms of an entity. The Pran is the vital wind or air element that sustains life in a man. The chief form of this air element that sustains life in the body is called 'Pran', and the term is usually applied to the breath. But besides this, there are four other types of main Prans such as Apan, Saman, Udan and Vyan. These are the names given to the vital wind in order to distinguish between the various functions or roles that it performs inside the body. This classification is done in order to study this air or wind element in a comprehensive way just like we classify any given subject into various streams or branches to facilitate study and analysis. Therefore, hypothetically, the Pran is divided into five main Kalaas. Thus, there is the main Pran and its four Kalaas as follows—(i) The 'Pran' is the wind element which, as breath, is exhaled as well as inhaled and is responsible for infusing and sustaining life in the body; it is considered the chief wind in the whole setup because without the life-infusing breath, no other wind would be of any significance to the creature. (ii) The 'Apan' is the wind that passes down the intestines and is responsible for digestion of the food taken by the creature and its excretion through the anus and urinary organs (kidneys). (iii) The 'Saman' is the wind that is responsible for equal distribution of nourishment throughout the body, as well as in circulation of blood. (iv) The 'Udan' is the wind that helps the body to rise and move about, it also helps the body to expel toxic waste gases in the body through the nostrils and mouth in the form of exhalation and cough. (v) And finally the 'Vyan' is the wind that helps in maintaining equilibrium and pressure within the body, and it also controls the functioning of the other winds.

The main Pran or breath is the one which keeps the entire machinery working. If a man stops to breathe, or when his supply of fresh breath is cut off as in the case of strangulation, then neither can the heart nor the remaining four vital winds can keep him alive. The heart would cease to beat and the other four Kalaas of the Pran would become defunct as soon as the Pran (breath) is cut off.

The breath or Pran is depicted here as a 'churning rod'. If we see the structure of the wind pipe, it indeed looks like a length of pipe, resembling a churning rod, going down into the body from the opening of the nostrils.

From the metaphysical point of view, there is another dimension of this verse. The body of the man is said to have the following five Kalaas which represent the five sheaths that surround his Atma or pure consciousness—the Anna Maye Kosh or the food sheath, the Pran Maye Kosh or the vital wind or air sheath, the Mano Maye Kosh or the mental sheath, the Vigyan Maye Kosh or the intellect sheath, and the Anand Maye Kosh or the bliss sheath. These sheaths cover the Atma and determine the Atma's characters, temperament, nature, inclinations and behavioural patterns in this world. The Pran Maye Kosh is the churning-rod here because the rest of the body is kept alive by its energizing and revitalizing effect.

²The heart has four sections—two auricles and two ventricles. The four must work in harmony and with perfect coordination in order to keep the man alive. The Pran as breath keeps the heart beating and supplies fresh oxygen to the body which oxidizes and revitalizes the various tissues and organs of the body while at the same time helping to remove or purge the body of all impurities and toxins such as poisonous gases like carbon dioxide etc. that have accumulated due to metabolic activities inside it.]

19. The great and swift Bird symbolising the Atma or pure consciousness of the creature, which incidentally is the true identity of the latter, resides in a restless manner in this body¹.

When the breath stops, i.e. when the body dies, the living being called the Jiva becomes lifeless or loses all his Kalaas². In other words, when the Pran leaves the

body, all other vital signs of life also cease to exist, and the Jiva shows no characteristics and attributes that had distinguished it while it was alive. [This is because all dead bodies are alike. It is only when a man is alive that each individual person depicts his unique personality and character traits, his typical way of speaking, behaving, writing, interacting, thinking etc. So symbolically, when the breath is stopped, he also stops to exhibit his uniqueness and individuality. The 'Jiva' dies as soon as the breath known as the Pran stops. What remains is the 'non-Jiva' aspect of the gross body.] (19).

[Note—¹The Atma is compared to the big bird such as a falcon or eagle or kite which is accustomed to a free-flying life in the sky being suddenly trapped in a small cage. This bird would become extremely agitated and restless.

It is 'restless' in the sense that it is never satisfied with this body and never finds peace while residing inside it. It always wants this and that; it is in a constant state of uneasiness and flux. The bird would be endlessly restless and clawing at the walls of the cage in its attempt to break free; it would be hopping mad from one corner to another in its bid to find a way out of its prison-like confinement though no string might be tied to its legs to keep it in forced bondage and the bird-catcher might even give it proper and adequate food to eat.

It is 'swift' because as soon as it finds an opportunity it would immediately fly off to freedom. Similarly, the Atma takes a fraction of a second to leave the body when the creature dies. There is another connotation to the word 'swift'. The subtle mind is very agile and swift as it keeps on changing from subject to subject like a bird hopping around when picking grains from the ground. Even the gross body is very restless and swift in the sense that it continuously changes position from moment to moment; it is fidgety and twitchy.

In the context of the Atma which represents the creature's 'true identity and his true self', the condition is similar. The bird got caught because of its greediness and ignorance that it is being trapped when it swooped down on the bait shown by the bird-catcher. The Atma similarly got trapped in this body when it got enticed by the attractions and charms of this deluding and entrapping world. Since the world can be enjoyed by the medium of a gross body having organs of perception and action and not in the ethereal form of the Spirit and Consciousness that do not have any grossness in them, the Atma willingly fell in the trap of acquiring a body for its self. It was then too late for it; once inside the body it began to experience its horrors and limitations, and yearned for freedom.

But even as the bird is so stupid that if once given a chance to fly free it would again fall prey to another bait, the Atma of the creature also leaves one body at the time of death and re-enters another body instantly in the hope of further enjoying the material comforts proffered by the material world and the pleasure derived by the gross organs of the body, instead of remaining eternally free like the ethereal Spirit. Another reason for it to enter another body is the fact that in the earlier one the Atma had thought that the deeds done by the body were actually being done by it and therefore it is entitled to their rewards or benefits. Since this is not possible in one life time and also since the last deed done would bear results after some time, the Atma takes another body. Besides this, there are many unfulfilled desires and aspirations of the previous phase of life in the earlier body which needs to be addressed by the Atma. This is the reason for it taking a new birth.

²As has been explained in note to verse no. 18 above, the word 'Kalaa' refers to changeable aspects of an entity. A dead body does not show any signs of life such as movement etc. It remains in a static and unchanging state. This is what is meant here—as soon as the Pran leaves the body, the latter loses all signs of change. The erroneous notion that the creature had harboured that the body is his 'true self' is used here while referring to the body as the 'Jiva'. It has already been said in the first

stanza that the Atma is restless and swift—i.e. it is ever changing and agile, an aphorism for having Kalaas.]

20. Such a man who contemplates about and meditates upon the enigmatic and eclectic divine entity that is subtly present in the sky element and which, like the sky, has no attributes and qualifications whatsoever is able to free himself from the fetters that shackle the creature to this world of attributes, qualities, characteristic features and qualifications. [That is, he becomes one like the supreme Brahm which has no attributes, qualities, characteristic features and qualifications. It is like the case of white light which contains all the seven colours of the rainbow but they remain hidden in its whiteness.]

A self-realised person hears the cosmic vibrations called ‘Anaahat Naad’¹ emanating in his heart from the divine entity in the form of a symbolic ‘Hans’² (a Swan) present there (when it breathes—refer verse no. 16) (20).

[Note—¹Anahat/Anaahat Naad—The word *Anahat Naad* refers to the apparently self-created cosmic sound called ‘Naad’. It is called ‘Anahat’ because it was generated on its own without any apparent cause such as striking of two entities with one another which is the usual cause of generation of sound in this world. It resembles the distant rumbling of clouds or a train trundling along on its track. The Naad Bindu Upanishad of the Rig Veda tradition describes this Naad in great detail. From the point of view of genesis according to the Tantra Shastra which believes that everything in existence originated from Shiva and Shakti (the cosmic male and female elements), a very interesting depiction is given as to how the cosmic Naad came into being and how the rest of creation was revealed from it. Its basic scene is as follows-- According to the philosophy of Tantra Shastra dedicated to the worship of divinity in the form of Shiva and Shakti, the process of creation took the following initial steps. Before anything came into being, Brahm, the supreme consciousness and the ultimate truth of creation, known as Shiva, was established in his own radiant effulgence or self-illumination symbolising his splendourous glory, majesty and divinity. Hence he was called ‘Prakash’, literally meaning light. When he decided to deliberate and actually started the process of deliberation in order to start the process of creation, there was a subtle ‘spandan’ or a slight throb or imperceptible movement which transformed into a vibration. The waves generated by this initial vibration developed in the cosmic ether and gradually coalesced with each other to give rise to higher waves of higher amplitudes. This produced the cosmic sound called the Naad. Since the creation was conceived in the bowl of the cosmic ether, the energy of the initial sound was focused at a central point, called the focal point or the dot or ‘Bindu’. This Bindu contained the combined powers of both the male Shiva and the female Shakti like a dicotyledonous seed which produced the two separate entities called Shiva and Shakti. The union of these two resulted in the unfolding of the rest of the creation. Thus it will be observed that whatever exists in this creation can be traced back to this primeval Naad. Hence, the latter is called ‘Shabda Brahm’, or the Brahm as sound. Therefore it is very natural to assume that all Mantras dedicated to any divine entity and consisting of the sound element (because Mantra consist of letters and words, and are chanted or repeated to make them effective) has its origin in this Shabda Brahm and gets its powers and energy from this Shabda Brahm. In other words, the Mantra contains in itself the essential meaning, form and spirit of the deity whose Mantra it is and which is being worshipped and invoked. Constant repetition of the Mantra generates so much energy in due course of time that the deity being worshipped is revealed. This is because the sound has great powers and energy as is evident when reverberation of sound waves and the resonance created by them are so powerful and forceful that they can shatter sheet glass in windows when an explosion occurs near a building.

Thus we observe that the Naad is the ethereal background reverberating sound energy in Nature which is said to be the primary source of energy that provided the vital spark to set off the chain reaction in the primordial cosmic gel from which the rest of the creation eventually evolved. The Naad has been envisioned in the form of waves in the cosmic ether, the waves which overlapped and coalesced with each other to generate sufficient energy that produces sound which traveled in the sky and was heard by ancient sages and seers who devised the word OM to capture its fundamental tones and notes in the constituent letters or syllables of this OM. Since the primordial cosmic gel was a neutral and static entity, this energy of sound waves was the first to create some sort of activity in it—like subtly and imperceptibly stirring it from within. This energy multiplies itself manifold and in due course of time the different elements separated from one another, the heavier ones settling at the bottom and the lighter ones going upwards to float on the surface. This is how basically the earth and other elements such as the water and air took up their places in creation, with the heavier earth solidifying at the lower level and the lighter water floating on its outer surface and the air going still higher into the space of the sky. The fire element however remained trapped in the bowls of the earth as the world gradually crystallised into its present shape.

The Naad was envisioned by ancient sages and seers as the cosmic sound having its genesis in the form of waves in the cosmic ether, the waves which overlapped and coalesced with each other to generate sufficient energy that produced the background sound which traveled in the sky and was heard by them during their meditative sessions which lasted for extended periods of time. Now once having heard it, they devised a word to encapsulate its fundamental notes and tones, and they came up with the word OM to capture the essential mode in which this cosmic Naad was heard by them. When they revealed this secret to their disciples, it was through the word OM, and they went on to analyse this sound and deciphered its components as the basic letters that constitute it, i.e. A, O, U and M. Refer to Tejobindu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse no. 6.

Since the primordial cosmic gel was a neutral and static entity, this energy generated by the sound waves was the first to create some sort of activity in it—like subtly and imperceptibly stirring it from within. This energy multiplied itself manifold and in due course of time the different elements present earlier in the homogenous cosmic gel separated from one another to give it a heterogeneous character, the heavier ones settling at the bottom and the lighter ones going upwards to float on the surface. While this process was progressing, the elements captured or soaked energy according to their capacity much like sponge soaks water or earth attracts anything by its gravitational pull.

This is how basically the earth and other elements such as the water and air took up their respective places in creation, with the heavier earth solidifying at the lower level and the lighter water floating on its outer surface and the air going still higher into the space of the sky. The fire element however required a medium to hide itself in because the water and air were inimical to its existence; the water would douse it and the wind would blow it out of existence. Therefore it hid inside the bowls of the earth and entered subtly into things originating from earth. That is why it is present even under the vast reservoir of water known as the ocean, and at the same time lives subtly inside everything that grows on earth, such as food. The creator is so wise that he has this tremendous source of life, energy and vitality in the earth because he knew that if life is to be made sustainable it would need a viable source of self-sustenance in the form of an inexhaustible source of energy. Finally, the grossest element known as the earth also solidified into its present shape.

Since the Atma is the only conscious factor in creation showing basic elements of the existence of life in any of its myriad forms, and the Naad is also the first sign of primordial activity in the cosmos, it naturally follows that the Atma, the 'soul or life' of all that exists in Nature, and the Naad, the primary source from which the entire

creation is said to have evolved and derived its energy, are synonymous with each other. This fact has been endorsed by Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 5, verse 3 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition which says that the Atma is synonymous with the Naad. This cosmic Naad is still hearable when one closes one's ears when one hears the roaring sound of the blood flowing through the veins and arteries inside the body.

But the cosmic Consciousness called the Atma is not such an easy thing to understand, because the same Tejobindu immediately asserts in the following verse no. 4 of its Canto 5 that the the Atma is even beyond the concept of Naad. It is because the Naad has been visualised in the form of the cosmic ethereal subtle sound heard when one pronounces the word OM. It is believed that it is from this OM that the rest of the creation has evolved, i.e. Naad and OM have some 'beginning', no matter how ancient and primary. On the contrary, the Atma is said to be 'eternal and infinite, having no beginning and end, and even outlasting the end of the present creation and preceding the next one'. The Atma is the eternal cosmic consciousness which initiates the process of creation, and hence of Naad in the first place. It's not the other way round.

In order to understand the genesis of creation in terms of Naad, this cosmic sound represented by the word OM has been broken up in its constituent sound elements represented by the various letters and syllables such as A, U, O and M. These alphabets symbolise the basic forms in which sound representing cosmic energy in its most fundamental and basic form exists in this creation. Then each unit is further analysed and assigned symbolisms—such as the letter 'A' for example was envisioned to represent the appearance of the first signs of creation, the letters 'U' and 'O' for its evolvement, development, expansion and growth, and 'M' for its conclusion. Then a geometrical symbol was devised to physically depict this word OM, and it is 'ॐ'.

Sound has its own classifications which are used in the field of learning music. But the Atma is such a unique and magnificent entity that even though it has been said that it is like the cosmic sound called the Naad in this Upanishad's verse no. 3 as stated above, but it is only to emphasise the fact that like the Naad it too is a cosmic and enigmatic phenomenon, but this observation should not be treated too literally because the Atma is much superior to the Naad and does not qualify to be treated at par with any physical phenomenon like the Naad. The Naad is actually (physically) heard by ascetics who have risen above certain level in their meditation much like the Atma which is also experienced and witnessed by all spiritually enlightened aspirants.

But the comparison ends there, for the Atma cannot be analysed and classified and mastered like the sound element is done by an expert musician who can fiddle and play around with it to create masterpieces of music, or by teachers of metaphysics and theology who try to explain the complex phenomenon of creation by using the word OM as some model in a science laboratory.

The Tejobindu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 5, verse no. 2 asserts that the *Naad* is a manifestation of the cosmic Consciousness. The Hanso-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse no. 16-17 describes the sound emanating from this Naad, while verse no. 18-20 describes its effect on the body. Refer also to Mandal Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, Brahmin 2, section 2, verse no. 2; Dhyan Bindu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition in its verse no. 2-3, 37 and 102.

²The concept of 'Hans' has been explained in note of verse no. 16. Refer also to verse nos. 21-28, 34, 60-64, 78-79 of the present Brahm Vidya Upanishad.

This swan is the pure consciousness living inside the subtle heart, and the Anaahat Naad is the sound that is heard when this swan breathes. This concept has been elaborately explained in the Hanso-panishad belonging to the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition amongst other Upanishads.]

21-22. This pure consciousness, which is likened to a divine Hans or Swan, is eternally blissful and self-illuminated. A wise and erudite person who is able to go beyond the two phases of breathing process called Rechak and Purak (exhalation and inhalation respectively), and instead hold the breath inside the body as done during the Kumbhak phase of meditation exercises called Pranayam, is able to merge the two vital winds called Pran and Apaana in the region of the Naabhi Kand (i.e. in the region of the navel)¹.

Consequently, he becomes so focused and concentrated in hearing this Anaahat Naad reverberating around him as he becomes completely engrossed in drinking the nectar-like elixir of bliss and spiritual ecstasy called Amrit dripping from the subtle sky located in his head² (21-22).

[Note--¹The word Rechak refers to elimination or purging and hence stands for the Apaana wind, while Purak refers to filling and hence it refers to Pran wind or breath which fills the body with oxygen and life. When an ascetic stops breathing, it is obvious that these two forms of winds would mix with one another as there are no water-tight compartments in the body to separate them. Now where is it done? This is answered here—‘in the region of the navel’. This is because when the breath is held, the abdomen acts like the pitcher in which the air is filled. The navel is the metaphoric center of this pitcher-like abdomen, hence the symbolism. All the Upanishads dealing with Yoga describe how these two winds are mixed by doing Pranayam.

²The is a remarkable observation. The reverberating humming heard by the ascetic is like the humming of the honey bee, and the dripping of the nectar from the head is like the dripping of the honey from the honeycomb hanging high up as symbolised by its presence in the head. The divine swan is the Atma as the pure conscious ‘self’ of the man, and the Naad heard is the resonating sound that is heard by ascetics when they meditate upon OM. This can be practically heard by an ordinary man also and its process has been elaborately described in Upanishads dealing with Yoga.

In practical terms this verse means that when a spiritual aspirant practices Pranayam, he is able to bring together the vital winds in the body, such as the Pran and the Apaana. Hitherto they had different directions of movements—for while the Pran was located in the upper part of the body in the lungs and nostrils and moved upwards, the Apaana was located in the intestines and moved downwards. Due to Pranayam and the closure of the body’s apertures called the ‘nine doors of the body’, all the vital winds present inside the body get mixed and their energy is coordinated to help the aspirant achieve the spiritual high of extreme bliss and ecstasy. Refer verse nos. 66-68 and 75 in this context which describe this concept in detail. The incarcerated wind gets heated and agitated while it violently swirls inside the abdomen, dashing with each other and gaining in energy and heat. This helps to build up the pressure inside the body and the vibrations caused by these clashing winds build up to reach a crescendo that is heard as the reverberating Naad in the head in the form of a resonating buzz or hum. This is aided and compounded by the constant chanting of the Mantra OM. The resultant effect is an overlapping of waves and compounding of frequencies which have an astounding affect on the nerves of the practitioner of Yoga and he experiences an extreme sense of bliss and ecstasy.

This phenomenon is metaphorically depicted in the form of dripping drops of Amrit from a pitcher held aloft in the head much like the honey is squeezed from a full honeycomb dangling from the branch of a tree. The ‘squeezing’ here is done by the pressure of the heated and energized vital winds of the body. In fact, the nerves are massaged and titillated to such an extreme level that the practitioner experiences only exhilaration to the exclusion of all other types of sensory perception such as pain and worries that had been tormenting him till this exalted state is reached. He does not want to revert back to his earlier time of miseries and wishes to put it behind him.

This is a symbolic way of saying that he has found the eternal fountain of bliss and happiness through the practice of Yoga.]

23-24. Those wise ones who symbolically pour a stream of this elixir on the divine deity called Mahadeva (literally the 'great God' or Lord Shiva), located in the region of the navel and whose form is like a lighted lamp, while doing Japa with the Mantra 'Hans-Hans'¹ are blessed with being free from various diseases such as the degenerating effects of old age culminating into death. [That is, such a man acquires robust health and maintains it even in his old age; he dies peacefully without having to undergo the usual torments associated with old age and death.]

He is also becomes eligible to acquire the various mystical powers called Siddhis² such as Anima etc. [That is, he acquires special powers by preserving his vital energy, stamina and vitality.] (23-24).

[Note—¹The word *Hans* has two components—Ha + Sa. It comes by reversing the great saying 'So-a-Ham' meaning 'that essence or truth is me'. So when the self-realised man repeats this Mantra, he is in effect asserting that he has realised who he actually is. He affirms that he is not an ordinary man with the body, but that divine Being known as the Brahm who resides in his heart as the pure consciousness or Atma. The bird swan is chosen to represent him because this bird is deemed to be very pure and selective in what it accepts and what it rejects. It is known to select pearls from an assortment of gems, and drink milk and leave its water content. Similarly, the wise man is expected to pick the truth from amongst the basket of assorted charms present in this creation and leave aside the non-truths. The concept of Hans have been described elsewhere in this Upanishad also, such as verse nos. 16, 20-22, 25-28, 34, 60-64, 78-79.

²The *Siddhis*—The word Siddhi refers to various mystical and occult powers that a spiritual aspirant acquires as a result of certain ritualistic practices.

There are eight Siddhis which are divine mystical powers which enables the person to accomplishment astounding feats. They are the following— (i) 'Anima' means the power to become microscopic or so minute that one becomes invisible to the naked eye; (ii) 'Mahima' is to have majesty, glory and fame; to be honoured and acknowledged for one's achievements, knowledge and skills; (iii) 'Garima' is to have weight, stature, dignity, decorum, gravity and significance, (iv) 'Laghima' is to have simplicity and humility; (v) 'Praapti' is to be able to attain or obtain anything wished or desired; (vi) 'Paraakram' is to have valour, ardour, strength, powers, prowess, potential and punch leading to triumph, glory and majesty; (vii) 'Ishwatwa' is to be able to have lordship or sway over others; and (viii) 'Vashitwa' is to be able to control and subdue others.

The Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 1, verse no. 151-155 classifies all Siddhis into two categories—Kalpit and A-Kalpit. The Kalpit Siddhis are the ones which are created with efforts made for them using various means and methods. They have a limited scope, are perishable, and have imaginable powers and potentials that can be predicted. On the other hand, the A-Kalpit Siddhis are those which are self-generated or uncreated by any artificial means, are natural and with unimaginable mystical potentials and powers that cannot be predicted.

Refer also to Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 5, verse nos. 46-55 and Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 56-102.]

25. A wise and enlightened man who is constantly involved in pursuing this spiritual path of Brahm-realisation is indeed able to attain the exalted stature of the supreme Lord known as Ishwar. In other words, he becomes one with Ishwar. There are a number of enlightened people who have successfully done this (25).

26-28. There is no other way to spiritual eternity and attainment of an exalted stature of being one with the supreme Brahm except following this path known as 'Hans Vidya' (as described in the forgoing verses). Any wise and enlightened man who imparts this great, eclectic, most magnificent and holy spiritual knowledge called Hans Vidya to an eager seeker should be duly respected, honoured and served by all. Whatever good or bad (acceptable or unacceptable, liked or disliked, compatible or incompatible, pleasant or unpleasant, comfortable or uncomfortable, reasonable or unreasonable) instructions that such an exalted Guru (teacher) gives to his disciples should always be obeyed by the latter without raising any questions and in a calm manner. [Obviously, such a wise and enlightened teacher would not give instructions that would harm the self-interest of the disciple or would violate the codes of conduct which deal with righteousness and auspiciousness.]

One should accept this eclectic knowledge from the wise teacher and then ensure that the teacher is served to the best of his abilities. [This is because such knowledge is hard to come by, and there are few enlightened souls who would be willing to impart it to others. This knowledge is like the gem amongst the entire body of spiritual knowledge that is available to a man; this knowledge is so precious and priceless that no material wealth in this world can weigh even a fraction of its importance. Therefore, the recipient of this knowledge has a moral obligation towards his Guru, and this obligation is so great and binding upon him that he in spite of his serving the teacher with the best of his ability and with full sincerity he would still be indebted to his teacher; he would still feel that he could have done more if given a chance.] (26-28).

29. By the blessings of the enlightened and honest Guru, one becomes enlightened about one's own 'self', and this leads him to become enlightened about the essence of the Atma residing in his own bosom. This Atma of his is synonymous with the cosmic, all-pervading, quintessential and ubiquitous supreme Atma or soul of everything in existence, and the latter is called cosmic Consciousness or Brahm. This helps one to become steady in his convictions and beliefs; he gets firmly established in this knowledge because it has come through 'self-realisation' and not something which is merely based on hearsay or conjecture.

When he understands the reality and comes to terms with the essential and absolute Reality and Truth of existence, the rest of the things in this creation become superficial and redundant. He does not care about the different codes of conduct to be followed or about the sanctions or restrictions imposed upon individuals depending upon the Varans or classes of society to which he belongs, or the worldly traditions that are meant to be followed by all living creatures having a gross physical body with which they interact with other members of the society. For a self-realised man who has known the nature of the true 'self' as the Atma and not the body, such regulations, codes of conduct and traditions pertaining to worldly behaviour become unnecessary, obsolete and redundant. This is because for such an enlightened man all creatures become one Atma instead of distinct living beings having different bodies. He has discovered the 'truth' of existence and the reality of what constitutes a living creature—consequently for him the gross physical body and identification based on it become irrelevant. Thus, for such an enlightened man all classes of human beings become one irrespective of their birth, clan, nativity, age, sex, colour of skin, vocation etc. because he has realised the fundamental truth that the body is not one's true self, but it is the Atma and this Atma is the same in all persons (29).

[Note—The Atma is the universal Spirit that is invisible, immanent, ubiquitous and uniform in the entire creation. The Atma as the pure consciousness is the true ‘self’ of all living creatures, while the gross body which the world recognises as the creature is merely a dwelling in which this invisible Atma lives. Whereas the Atma is immaculate, taintless, eternal and imperishable, the body is perishable and subject to deformities of old age and sufferance such as diseases. So when a wise man who has known the spiritual secrets revealed in the Upanishads and has verified their trustworthiness, truthfulness and applicability in practice by constant meditation, contemplation and observation of life in the real world deals with other creatures, he does so from a high level of wisdom, knowledge and enlightenment. This ensures that he sees behind the external façade of delusions and falsehood and realises that the person with whom he is dealing is not the physical body but the Atma in that body. Since the Atma in all living beings is the same, it obviously follows that all living beings are the same in their essential form and nature.

Ancient sages and seers had formulated certain laws and regulations in order to maintain orderliness in society, but all pertain to the physical gross body and not to the Atma simply because the latter is an ethereal Spirit which cannot be restricted and butted and bounded like the gross body.

Therefore, a person who has in-depth knowledge of the Hans Vidya knows that all the creatures (human beings for instance) who breathe are actually Brahm in that form. He realises that the entity who is breathing and making the subtle sound of ‘Hans’ while doing so as described in verse no. 16 is the real living entity who is known as the ‘living being or creature’, and the latter’s true identity is the pure consciousness known as the invisible Atma and not the gross physical body in which it lives as a temporary dwelling in this world. Since the world is accustomed to recognizing things that are easily seen instead of things that cannot be seen, it usually recognises the gross body that is visible as the creature’s identity instead of the Atma which is invisible.

A wise man would like to deal with the truth, and hence would like to deal with this Hans that resides in the gross body of the creature instead of the latter. Since the Hans is the Atma which is constant and uniform in all the creatures, it follows that he would treat all living beings alike without any discrimination, equally and with equanimity. For him no one is an enemy and no one is a friend.]

30. Similarly, he abandons getting perplexed by so many versions of scriptures (because he has already understood the basic truth that they all attempt to explain in different ways). Instead, he should serve his Guru diligently and with devotion. [This is because this Guru has helped him save his precious time and energy by helping him to know what he set out for, without letting him get bogged down in voluminous scriptures and getting lost in their maze. A disciple should indeed be obliged and grateful to such a teacher.] By following this path, a man finds true welfare and auspiciousness (30).

31. The Guru is Lord Hari (Vishnu, the supreme Lord) personified. He is nobody else. This is the assertion of the Vedas (Sruti) (31).

32. Whatever the Vedas (Sruti) say is indeed auspicious and trustworthy; there is no doubt in what they say. If one doubts them, if one questions their authenticity and truthfulness, if one begins to contradict, ridicule, doubt and flay them, then nothing is left by which things in this world can be judged as to their truthfulness or otherwise. There would be no standard criteria, yardsticks or touchstone left against which other things can be weighed or measured or compared, and their certainty, truthfulness, reality or trustworthiness be ascertained. Anything that has no proof or

certainty, anything that is not based on some reliable criterion, anything of which the truthfulness or trustworthiness cannot be unequivocally confirmed or positively ascertained would be ruinous and harmful in the long run. [It would be based on hearsay and conjecture, and would be like the mirage seen in a desert. When a person is not certain of the value of anything or not certain of the goal he is pursuing in life, he would be listless and like a ship adrift on a choppy ocean—tossing around and causing immense hardship for the passengers and the sailors alike. He would be agitated and restless, he would be skeptical and apprehensive, he would be lacking in drive and motivation, and he would be a fertile breeding ground for doubts, confusions, perplexities and vexations. Every now and then he would try to find out his bearings and much of his energy and time would be spent in this than the actual pursuit of the goal. He would be literally going round and round in a wild goose chase. Even if has accessed pure gold, he would still be miserable and regard himself as penniless because he does not know what he has and what is its value.] (32).

33. The consciousness present in the gross body of the creature called the Jiva-atma should be regarded as the one that has different Kalaas, i.e. as the one which shows various attributes and characteristic qualities and features typical or specific to that body. On the other hand, the same consciousness when it is freed from the limitations and tainting effects of the gross body becomes free from these limiting factors and thus becomes one without any Kalaas, i.e. it has no attributes or special characteristic features that are specific to it, that can limit its virtues and qualities to a particular set of attributes and characteristics¹. [Refer verse nos. 37-40.]

This eclectic and divine knowledge that is received by the grace of an enlightened Guru, who is himself self-realised and enlightened, is universal and uniform. This knowledge enlightens the aspirant of the fact that the Atma is to be realised as being the pure and true 'self' of all the living beings, including the aspirant himself. It is the same in all the creatures; it has none of the attributes exhibited exclusively by any one sample creature. Externally all the living beings exhibit different characters and attributes which are specific to each one of them simply because the gross body is a variable and changing entity as compared to the Atma, and it is the gross body that is usually regarded as the identity of the creature simply because it is easily visible and easy to deal with as compared to the invisible Atma which is an ethereal spirit.

So, two creatures appear to be different from one another because their bodies are wrongly treated as their identity instead of their Atma which is actually their true 'self'. Since this error creeps in, the perception about the creature changes—i.e. the immaculate, immutable, uniform, eternal and imperishable Atma appears to be tainted and ever-changing. Therefore, obviously, when the gross body is removed from the scene, what remains is the pure consciousness or the Atma which is always and invariably the same in all the creatures irrespective of the type of the body that they have (33).

[Note—¹To understand this phenomenon we can take a simple example. Water in its purest form consists of two atoms of hydrogen and one atom of oxygen. But this water assumes so many shapes and colours according to the vessel in which it is kept, or it acquires so many tastes such sweet or salty, or is assigned such attributes as being hot, warm, cold, scalding, boiling etc. Then this same molecule of water has different names such as water, vapour, moisture, ice, snow, rain, sleet, river, stream, ocean, sea, lagoon, lake, pond, well and puddle. Is there any fundamental difference in water molecule in any of these different varieties of water bodies? No, certainly not. The same thing applies to the Atma which is also atomic and microscopic like

the basic unit of water called its 'molecule'. When the Atma is seen in the context of the physical body of the creature, it shows so many attributes, but shorn of this body and seen in its pristine pure form it becomes an entity that is one and non-dual.]

34. A wise and enlightened man who remains engrossed in repeating the eclectic and divine Mantra 'Hans-Hans' (i.e. '*So-a-Ham' meaning 'that essence or Truth or Brahm is me') is indeed an auspicious personification of the Trinity Gods, i.e. of Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer and protector, and Shiva the concluder. He can be successful, by the grace and blessing of his enlightened Guru, in becoming aware or realising the ubiquitous supreme Brahm who all-pervading, all-encompassing and all-incorporating (34).

[Note—Refer verse nos. 16, 23-24, 61-64, 78-79 also. This Mantra *So-a-Ham is also prescribed in Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 132.]

35. Just like oil is present in the sesame seed and fragrance is inherent in flowers, the same universal Brahm is uniformly present inside as well as outside the body of a human being (just like the same air is present inside and outside of a hollow pitcher) (35).

[Note—The word 'Brahm' refers to its microcosmic part as the pure conscious Atma.]

36. Even as the lighted torch is abandoned as it is rendered useless after one has seen or found the thing that was being searched with the help of its light, a wise person is one who leaves the instrument of Gyan (information, knowledge and their intelligent application), which was being used by him to successfully study, analyse, deduce and obtain access to the object of his intellectual pursuit, once his aim is fulfilled (36).

[Note—In other words, once a wise man has realised the truth about Brahm, which was only possible by application of intelligent and analytical mind and its various faculties as well as by taking help from external sources such as the scriptures and the teacher, he no longer needs them just like a professional man no longer needs his college text books once he has mastered the subject and passed the exam. The word Gyan has a wide application here, such as the use of the brain's intellectual faculties, its analytical, thinking and rationalizing abilities as well as so many other intangible aspects of the consciousness that come under the general terms such as the person's own sixth sense, his intuition, his moral and spiritual background, certain special divine qualities that he carries which enable him to do stupendous tasks not within the reach of others, his diligence and perseverance etc. which all together lend a combined helping hand to him to successfully reach his lofty goals and attain things not even imaginable by others.

In the context of metaphysics and spiritualism, this goal of knowledge is Brahm-realisation and self-realisation; to understand the real Truth and separate it from the apparent truth. It is the pursuit to find out the 'absolute and irrefutable truth' of existence and solve the eternal riddle about one's true identity, origin and form as well as the destiny of the creature and how to break free from the endless cycle of miseries and agonies associated with this mundane world and its vicious entrapments. Once this spiritual goal is successfully reached, once the man becomes self-realised and Brahm-realised, then the medium of Gyan becomes redundant much like one no longer needs the boat once the river is crossed. The wise man would proceed with his journey instead of clinging to the boat or dragging it along or carrying it on his head! One reads the scriptures, studies them, discusses them and hears them preached by erudite scholars only till the point their essence is not grasped; after that they are no longer needed.]

37. [Verse nos. 37-40 describe the concept of 'Kalaas' vis-à-vis the living creature. In this context, refer also to verse no. 33 above.]

The entity that has a definable and tangible form, characteristic features, qualities and attributes which gives it its individuality is regarded as 'Sakal', i.e. one that has one or more Kalaas. Such entities are gross and have a physical dimension. On the other hand there are certain things which do not come under this definition; they are called 'Niskal', i.e. one that has no Kalaas. Such entities are subtle, ethereal and sublime; they lack a physical dimension.

To illustrate, the flower is Sakal, while its fragrance is Niskal. Similarly, the tree is Sakal, while its shade is Niskal (37).

[Note—The flower has a gross body and a physical structure, it can be touched, seen and felt, but its fragrance is a subtle thing that cannot be even precisely defined. Similarly, the tree has a definitive form and characteristic features; it is vibrant and colourful; it is full of variable life forms and a resting place for a wide variety of insects, birds and centipedes. On the other hand, its shade is obviously something that no one can touch, smell and precisely describe; it is dark, gloomy and intangible; it has no trace of life whatsoever in it.]

38. In the aforesaid way, one can observe the existence of both the Sakal and the Niskal aspects of creation everywhere in this world. The entity that comes under the ambit of the definition of Sakal is a medium or instrument or aid which is employed or used to arrive at or to know or to deduce or to learn about or to gain access to the entity that comes under the ambit of Niskal (38).

[Note—The different scriptures and other means of acquiring the knowledge of the quintessential truth of the supreme transcendental Brahm would come under the category of Sakal because they are tangible and known instruments employed to arrive at some other entity that is intangible and unknown. The latter is Niskal in the sense that it is most sublime and subtle, having no attributes and definitions applicable to it in a specific manner. The Sakal is one which has Kalaas, which has certain attributes and qualifications, while Niskal has no Kalaas, it has no attributes and qualifications. In the instance cited in verse no. 37, when one sees a particular flower one immediately gets an idea of the type of fragrance that it emanates. Similarly, when one sees a tree from afar one instantly gets an idea of the type of shadow it produces and the area this shadow covers. For instance, when a group of people look for shade on a hot summer day, they search for a tree that is large and has a huge cover of foliage because they take it for granted that its shade would be large and dense enough for them to rest.]

39. An entity that is described as being 'Sakal' has one or more Kalaas (aspects, forms, fractions, attributes, qualities, qualifications etc.) in it as its integral part or characteristic feature. On the other hand, that which is said to be 'Niskal' has no such limitations imposed upon it. [That is, the Niskal entity is immutable, indivisible, non-dual and one single subtle and sublime whole. It cannot be portioned or partitioned into segments or fragments that have specific Kalaas for study and analyses, or for any other reason.]

Those entities that come under the definition of Sakal (i.e. ones that have various Kalaas) have one, two and three Kalaas. They are differentiated by and classified into different classes or segments based on the number of Kalaas they have (39).

[Note—This is a very interesting verse. Let us see how it describes the various levels of creation in an encrypted language. The living world consists of both the animals as

well as the plants. The basic life forms have one or two Kalaas to start with, and then it progresses to the level of humans and Gods having five and more Kalaas.

The creatures in the living world have been classified into four categories and their respective Kalaas are as follows—(i) Udbhij—these are those life forms that are born from seeds, such as members of the plant kingdom. These have only one Kalaa called Anna Maye Kalaa. In other words, they depend on food and become food for others higher up in the evolutionary ladder. (ii) Swadej—they are those which are born from dampness and sweat, such as fungi, algae, bacteria, germs, mosquito, lice, flies etc. They have two Kalaas, viz. Anna Maye and Pran Maye. That is, they are formed from food, they live for food and they die as food. Besides this, they also exhibit signs of life, e.g. the mosquito and lice have life like any other member of the animal kingdom. (iii) Andaj—they are placed higher up in the evolutionary ladder, and are born from eggs, whether inside the mother's womb or outside. Such birds as pigeon, sparrow, parrot, peacock etc. come under this category. They have three Kalaas which are Anna Maye, Pran Maye and Mano-maye. The last Kalaa refers to the fact that such creatures have a mind and heart which enables them to think, albeit in a primitive level. (iv) Jarayuj—these are the creatures that are born as embryo that develops inside the mother's womb. Under this class come the animals such as horses, cows, dogs, elephants etc. They have four Kalaas, such as Anna Maye, Pran Maye, Mano-maye and Vigyan Maye. The last Kalaa refers to their ability to have a higher level of thinking ability called intelligence. The human being comes under this last category with the added benefit of having five Kalaas. Besides the four Kalaas mentioned above in other creatures of this category, the man has the fifth one and it called the Anand Maye Kosh. It is only possessed by a man and not by other creatures in the sense that the man can realise the true meaning of the terms 'bliss and happiness that is eternal and substantial' by the virtue of his attaining higher level of intelligence and his ability to delve into the secrets of the concept of truth itself and then realising that kind of happiness and bliss that is not superficial and which is not limited to enjoyment of the sensual pleasures of the body and the material comforts of the world, but which has a holistic and all-inclusive dimension that incorporates the spirit or the soul.

Since the present verse deals with one, two and three Kalaas, it refers to the Udbhij, Swadej and Andaj class of creatures.]

40. That which is half of a Kalaa, i.e. one that is so small and miniscule that it is not even one single unit or Kalaa of any given entity but is only a fraction of it (that is, an entity that is smaller than one molecule and only a part of it, i.e. the atom), is to be regarded as 'Paraa', literally meaning knowledge of things that are beyond the range of perception and comprehension, or that which is subtle and sublime (in the sense that it is invisible, miniscule and microscopic as compared to the Kalaa which has grosser and more tangible form). [This refers to the subtle body of the creature such as his mind and intellect, as well as his various qualities which form his basic character but which cannot be physically seen or felt. These effect his Atma, which is a fraction of what the supreme transcendental Brahm is, hence most apt to be called one with the 'half Kalaa'.]

Beyond the state of Paraa, or one that transcends this state, is called 'Paraatpar', literally which is beyond the furthest point of imagination and comprehension, something that transcends the boundary of knowledge and comprehension. [This refers to the supreme transcendental Brahm who has no Kalaa or embodies all the Kalaas in him to form a one single immutable whole.]

In this way one should recognise this world as having five subtle forms and five grosser forms¹ (40).

[Note--¹The figure of 'five' is arrived as follows—entity with one Kalaa + entity with two Kalaas + entity with three Kalaas (as described in verse no. 39) + entity with half Kalaa + entity that has no Kalaa (as described in verse no. 40) = 5. This obviously covers the entire gamut of creation for the following reason.

The five *subtle forms* of Kalaa are the five vital winds such as Pran, Apan, Samaan, Udaan and Vyan. The vital winds are synonymous with life and consciousness in a living creature—see verse no. 17.

The other subtle Kalaas of the creature are its five Koshas or sheaths that surround its Atma. They are the Anna Maye Kosh or the food sheath, the Pran Maye Kosh or the vital wind sheath, the Mano Maye Kosh or the mind sheath, the Vigyan Maye Kosh or the intellect sheath, and the Anand Maye Kosh or the bliss sheath. It is the last that encloses the Atma.

Besides them, there are the five states of existence of consciousness—viz. the Jagrat or waking state, the Swapna or dreaming state, the Sushupta or deep sleep state, the Turiya or the post-deep sleep state of Samadhi, and the Turiyateet or the transcendental state of Smadhi at its pinnacle.

The five *grosser forms* of Kalaa are the five elements of creation such as earth, water, fire, air and sky. Since all of these are part or fraction of the same Brahm, they are all the various Kalaas of Brahm. The entire living creation is manifested from these five Kalaas because the grosser forms or elements are the building bricks for the gross body of the creature, and the subtler forms such as the different Prans infuse life in this gross body and live inside it in a subtle and imperceptible form.]

41. Brahm, the supreme creator in his role as Brahma, the grandfather of creation and patriarch who has created the visible world, has his symbolic residence in the heart of a man, Vishnu (the protector and sustainer) in the throat, Shiva (the concluder) in the palate or back of the mouth near the glottis, and the great Lord called Maheshwar (here referring to the supreme transcendental Brahm) in the forehead (in the region of the cerebrum) (41).

[Note—The symbolisms are easy to understand. The heart is the seat of all emotions and sentiments, and of such qualities as love, infatuation and affection. When one falls in love with someone, one's 'heart' is involved in the entire process. So the heart is the symbolic habitat of Brahma, the creator, because the process of creation is replicated by a man in his love making exercise in which the heart plays a dominant role. Besides this, the heart is also the abode of the pure consciousness called the Atma. This heart is the subtle heart and is said to be like a lotus. This is therefore the abode of Brahm, the Supreme Being in the form of the Atma.

The throat is the location of two vital functions of the body—it is through it that food passes down the gullet into the intestines to be digested and nourish the body, and it is through here that the wind pipe passes that takes air inside the body during inhalation and brings polluted air out of the body during exhalation, thereby helping the man to remain alive. Since Vishnu is assigned the duty of sustenance, nourishment and protection in creation, his abode here is understandable.

When a man is about to die, his glottis shuts tight and he is unable to eat or drink, and neither can he breathe due to shutting down of the trachea. His tongue clings to the roof of the mouth and virtually acts like a cork shutting tightly the neck of the bottle. This biological phenomenon is metaphorically represented by the presence of Shiva at this point of the body. This is because, one, Shiva is the patron God of death and conclusion of creation, and second, this is equivalent to doing the 'Khechari Mudra' which is the toughest form of Yoga which liberates the practitioner's Pran or his vital life-forces from the shackling effect of the gross body and provides him with liberation. This liberation is called 'Kaivalya Mukti' in the sense that there is no reverting to the gross body any more and the liberation is final. This is also called

‘dissolution’ of the Atma and its final merger with the supreme Atma of creation. Refer Dhyān Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 78-92.

Finally, the brain is located at the top of the body in the head, and it is the seat of knowledge, wisdom, erudition, skills, expertise and scholarship, virtues deemed to be synonymous with those who are wise, learned and enlightened. Therefore, it is the symbolic seat of Brahm. The Dhyān Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 26-32 describe the symbolic location of these Gods of the Trinity in the context of Yoga.]

42. At the tip of the nose, the ‘Achut¹’ is said to have his abode, while at the root of the nose (i.e. at the base of the nostrils where the two eyebrows meet) is established the ‘Param Pad²’. There is nothing better than the Param Pad because it is the best and the most exalted stature or abode or state of existence (as it represents the state of enlightenment and self-realisation as well as Brahm-realisation) (43).

[Note—¹The word *Achut* refers to one that is immaculate and dignified, one who is exalted and firmly established in his dignified form, one who is steady and unwavering in his high pedestal, one who cannot be demoted or downgraded—here referring to the supreme transcendental Brahm as visualised by ascetic while meditating.

²The *Param Pad* literally refers to a stature that is supreme and the highest state of existence of a man. It is the highest pedestal on which a man can stand. It refers to being enlightened about the true nature of the pure conscious self and of Brahm. With this realisation, a man is said to have reached the highest citadel of spiritual achievement that has been described by the scriptures as his ultimate goal in life.]

43. The disembodied supreme divine Being (Brahm) should be visualised as being established at a distance measuring twelve fingers width above the tip of the nose, while the all-pervading and all-encompassing ubiquitous supreme Lord (Brahm) is envisioned as being present in the ‘Sahasraar Chakra’ (a swirling subtle energy center located in the head having a serrated saw-like edge with thousands of sharp points)¹ (43).

[Note—¹In other words, the practicing ascetic should visualise the supreme transcendental and formless Brahm as being present in the area around the head. Brahm is synonymous with wisdom, erudition, knowledge and enlightenment as it is omniscient and all-knowing. Brahm is the cosmic Consciousness and the Absolute Truth of creation. Brahm has the form and contours of the sky element amongst its numerous forms and contours. Brahm’s symbolic manifestation in a visible form, complete with its dazzling splendour and life-giving and life-sustaining virtues as the celestial Sun at the cosmic level, and the pure consciousness or the Atma at the individual level of the creation. That is why a glowing halo of light is iconographically depicted around the head of self and Brahm realised persons. This halo around their heads is indicative of the presence of Brahm there as clearly said in the present verse.

Does it mean that Brahm is not present there in those who are not self-realised or Brahm-realised? No, that is not the case—just as the cloud in the sky blocks out the shine of the Sun, the spiritual impurities that cling to such people prevent this light of Brahm from shining through.]

44. In spite of the mind of an expert ascetic wandering from place to place and his eyes flickering from one object to another, he internally remains steady in his meditation (as described above in verse nos. 41-43).

[Note—That is, a true ascetic is one who has disassociated himself from his gross body and its organs. What his external body does is of no concern to him. He remains unruffled by its overtures and its waywardness. In other words, he might behave like

an ordinary man but internally he is completely at peace with himself and lost in constant meditation and contemplation. His physical eyes might flicker from object to object because it is their natural habit, but he has reined in his internal sight so much that it is fixed on one target that is Brahm or the Absolute Truth; he sees nothing but this 'truth'.]

45. This is an esoteric, an enigmatic and a mystical knowledge (about Brahm). It is superior to any other thing or knowledge. There is nothing better than it; there is no knowledge superior to it (45).

46. One should acquire unadulterated knowledge that is like the rejuvenating elixir called Amrit. With the help of this Gyan or eclectic knowledge and erudition, one can attain eternity because this truthful knowledge would him the correct path, wizen him about what actually consists of the 'truth' instead of getting lost in the maze of 'apparent truths', make him aware of the concept of eternity and imperishability, along with the pitfalls to guard against in his spiritual pursuit. It would teach him to reach the correct goal following the correct path.

This is the greatest secret that must be diligently researched and contemplated upon to arrive at its core essence and unravel its mystery (46).

[Note—The mysterious entity that is the goal of all spiritual endeavours is known as Brahm. The path to this enigmatic Brahm is shown by the Upanishads and explained by the Guru or teacher. The competent teacher is like an expert archer who can shoot the arrow right in the bull's eye. In other words, the competent teacher can lead the spiritual aspirant straight to the spiritual goal without wasting time and energy in a wild goose chase and sort of leading the way by holding the hands of his ward till the destiny is reached. But all this pre-supposes that the teacher must be an expert himself.]

47. This eclectic, enigmatic and mystical knowledge pertaining to the supreme transcendental Brahm should not be divulged even to one's own son or disciple who is incompetent and unsuitable to accept such knowledge (for he would misuse it or wrongly understand it, thereby causing his own ruin as well as that of his forthcoming generations by passing distorted versions of the real thing). It should be imparted to those who are faithful to their Gurus and serve them devotedly. [This does not mean that even though a son or a disciple is incompetent and generally ineligible for imparting such eclectic and secret knowledge is given it just because he has been serving his teacher diligently. But the sincerity of service and the time he spends in close proximity of the teacher would enable the latter to judge his intelligence and general mental caliber along with other virtues necessary for imparting such divine knowledge. The teacher would have ample opportunity to weigh his character and sincerity and steadfastness of purpose.] (47).

48. This eclectic and divine knowledge should be divulged only to those who are devoted and diligent and sincere, and not to anybody else. If anybody violates this sanction and willfully divulges to unworthy candidates, then such persons would go to hell (i.e. would have to suffer the ill effects of such violations), and would never be able to achieve further success in his own spiritual enhancement (48).

[Note—The restrictions imposed in verse nos. 47-48 are basically intended to guard knowledge from falling into wrong and irresponsible hands because that would be catastrophic for the society at large and for the future of that knowledge itself.]

49. No matter to which section of society or phase of life one belongs, whether he is a Brahmachari (a celibate student or adult), a Grihastha (a householder), a Vaanprastha (a person who has retired from active household life and leads a life of renunciation and usually spends time wandering in pilgrim centers), or a Sanyasi (a friar, mendicant, monk or hermit), no matter where he lives—if a person understands the eternal and irrefutable essence of existence, the absolute and universal ‘truth of the Spirit’ that is one, irrefutable, immutable, eternal, imperishable and non-dual, he is deemed to be knowledgeable, wise and enlightened. Such a person is entitled to be called a ‘Gyani’. [All other sorts of knowledge pertain to the artificial and perishable world and hence are not sustainable and eternal like the knowledge that relates to the ethereal Spirit and the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm at the larger macrocosmic level of existence, or as Atma at the microcosmic level of existence.] (49).

[Note—This is a great observation having a wide ramification. It follows that even a householder who seems to be engrossed in his daily routine can be as erudite and enlightened as a monk who lives a cloistered life in a monastery, or a hermit meditating in the forest, if this householder has understood and realised the truth and the essence of what the scriptures preach. Otherwise, the monk and the hermit are no better than him; rather they may be worse off.]

50. This eclectic and divine knowledge is so potent and effective that even though a man might be indulgent in this material world and engrossed in its enjoyment, he still can hope to find redemption and an auspicious destiny for his soul after his death by following the fundamental tenets of this knowledge and having its holistic awareness. [This is because, as it is mentioned above in verse no. 44, he would remain oblivious of what his body is doing, and on the contrary remain ever submerged in meditation and contemplation internally. It is what is present inside that matters rather than what is on the outside, because the outside is superficial, transient, non-reality and illusory.] (50).

51. Those who are so highly enlightened, wise, erudite and Brahm-realised that they do not see any difference between the formidable evil consequences of murdering a Brahmin and the astounding boons got by doing the great Aswamedh Yagya (the sacred ritual of the fire sacrifice called the ‘horse sacrifice’), i.e. who treat them alike and remain unmoved and calm under both the circumstances, who neither wail and feel distressed when having to suffer the horrendous pains and torments caused as punishment for murdering a Brahmin, nor do they exult and rejoice in the blessings and good fortunes bestowed upon them for doing the great horse sacrifice—such excellent persons are deemed to be truly exalted.

They are called ‘Prerak’, i.e. the ones who are truly inspiring and motivating for others; they are called ‘Bodhak’, i.e. the ones who are truly enlightened, knowledgeable, wise, erudite and sagacious themselves and can make others who come in their contact equally so; and they are called ‘Moksha-Daayak’, i.e. the ones who are truly empowered and competent enough to bless others with the boon of finding liberation and deliverance for their souls. [This is because only those who themselves know the subject well can teach others correctly; only who know the path themselves can show it to others. Since such persons are experts in this spiritual field and have a first hand experience and knowledge of it themselves, they are indeed eligible and competent to teach others. It is wise and advisable to shun the others for they are imposters who would do more harm than good.] (51).

52-53. In this world, all true teachers come under these three categories. The 'Prerak' are the ones who show others the auspicious and righteous path to be followed; they inspire and motivate and egg-on their followers to follow this path. In fact, their own lives are living examples to be emulated; they show the auspicious way and the eclectic rewards to be had by following this path.

The 'Bodhak' makes others aware of the intricacies of the various aspects of this path, guides them and teaches them the smallest issues that are relevant, enlightens them about the real goal of life, and acts as a constant companion and friend to help them in solving all their problems that they might encounter off and on.

The 'Moksha-Data' is the one who gifts the best and the most excellent gift that can be given to someone, i.e. the gift of 'Moksha', the treasure trove of emancipation and salvation, the blessing that enables the disciple to reach the true final goal of life, and it is the breaking of the fetter that shackles him to the endless cycle of birth and death, to liberate him from the fathomless pit of ignorance and delusions in which he is presently trapped. With the knowledge imparted to a spiritual aspirant by a wise, selfless, enlightened and competent teacher, and under his able guidance and inspiration, the disciple is able to attain the aim of freeing himself from the fetters that shackle him to ignorance and its attendant delusions, thereby liberating his soul and delivering him from the torments of bondage and serfdom to the gross body and the world with its horrors and impertinence. Armed with this knowledge, the aspirant is able to attain the supreme bliss and reach the highest stature in life.

Oh Gautam!¹ Now you listen about a symbolic way of doing a sacred sacrifice in the context of the body² (52-53).

[Note—¹The word 'Gautam' pertains to any enlightened ascetic, sage or seer belonging to the lineage of the exalted legendary sage Gautam. It is like a surname adopted by the followers of sage Gautam.

²The symbolic fire sacrifice where the oblations are offered internally to the deity which in this case is the supreme Brahm residing in the subtle heart of the worshipper as his Atma is elaborately described in Pran Agnihotra Upanishad also. This latter Upanishad is Chapter 29 of this volume. This philosophy does away with the necessity of doing elaborate fire sacrifices in order to attain some spiritual goals such as seeking emancipation and salvation, as well as general welfare.]

54. By doing this symbolic sacrifice in the body itself, one is able to attain an exalted stature that is eternal and truthful, that is imperishable and wholesome. He is successful in observing, in experiencing and witnessing, the presence of that attributeless and infinite entity resembling a Bindu (a 'dot' or point source) from where the fountain of eternity and bliss springs forth as being located in his own body and nowhere else in the outside world (54).

[Note—There are a number of Upanishads which deal with Yoga and which show how the ascetic is able to have a first hand experience of Brahm in his own body. This experience translates into extreme state of blissfulness and ecstasy. It leads to the eclectic state of Samadhi, a trance-like state during which the ascetic is unaware of the external world as well as of his own body itself though he apparently remains fully awake, but is actually in a perpetual state of highest elation and ecstasy obtained by being in constant contact with the pure consciousness residing in his own bosom which in turn makes him unbothered about or indifferent to anything else.

The word 'Bindu' means a dot, a point source, a fountainhead, a well-spring. Here it refers to the single-point source from which sprouts the fountain of extreme bliss and ecstasy in the ascetic's own self, and this 'Bindu' is his Atma or pure consciousness which makes him aware of his true conscious 'self'. This Atma is Brahm personified, and this Brahm is a fathomless ocean of beatitude and felicity of

stupendous magnitude. So why would he be so stupid as to keep splashing around in the slush of this artificial and deluding world once he has found such a treasury of eternal and truthful bliss, peace, ecstasy and happiness?]

55. The day and the night should be treated as the two ‘Ayans’ of the year, i.e. as one half of a year, the period of either the summer solstice or the winter solstice respectively. During the course of a period of time consisting of a day and night, one should practice Yoga (meditation, especially Pranayam) consisting of the three steps of Rechak, Purak and Kumbhak for at least one Prahar in each phase. [The word ‘Prahar’ refers to a period of three hours. Therefore, the total time spent on Pranayam should be three hours in the day time and three hours after sunset, totaling a period of six hours daily. Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 67.]

This would be symbolic of doing Yoga for one fourth period of one’s life if the whole year is regarded as a metaphor for one life cycle. In other words, a wise and learned aspirant should spend at least one fourth life on meditation and contemplation to ensure his spiritual welfare (55).

[Note—The terms Rechak, Purak and Kumbhak are collectively called Pranayam exercise of Yoga, and they have been elaborately described in Yoga Upanishads. Briefly they mean as follows—(a) Rechak refers to the exhalation of breath; (b) Purak refers to the inhalation of breath; and (c) Kumbhak refers to keeping the breath trapped inside the body between the other two phases.]

56. [The following verses now describe how to go about it.] To begin with, the aspirant should reverentially pronounce the two Mantras (OM + Hans, or OM + So-a-Ham) and perform the preliminary worship in the prescribed manner. He should reverentially bow and adopt the different Mudras (postures) of Yoga (meditation) to worship and honour the Divinity (represented by these two Mantras) (56).

[Note—Verse nos. 2-8 assert that OM is the Mantra for the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm, while verse nos. 16, 20-26, 34, 60-65, 78-79 stress that the Mantra is Hans because it refers to the consciousness residing as the Atma inside the living being.]

57. Oh Son! The Sun God is symbolically worshipped and his blessings invoked by doing the fire sacrifice in the form of repeating the Mantra (So-a-Ham)¹.

True, steady, honest and irrefutable knowledge of the Truth and Reality ensures that the devotee obtains oneness with his chosen deity whom he worships and honours. This form of liberation and deliverance of the soul of the aspirant is called ‘Saujya Mukti’ whereby it becomes one with the cosmic soul of the creation just like a drop of water is irrevocably merged and inseparably dissolved in a bigger body of water (such as the ocean) when this individual drop of water is dropped into the latter² (57).

[Note—¹When a fire sacrifice is done, each oblation is accompanied by saying a Mantra. This Mantra ought to be specific for the deity who is being worshipped through the fire sacrifice. In the present case, the deity is the Sun God who is a personification of the Supreme Being as it showcases some of the eclectic and divine virtues of the latter—such as its matchless splendour, radiance, glory, life-sustaining qualities, light and creative dynamic energy etc. The Sun is the most powerful and potent visible manifestation of Brahm as compared to other entities that are visible in this world.

The Sun is like the celestial hub around which the wheel of life revolves as is evident from the fact that life would be unsustainable, untenable and unthinkable without the sunlight. This metaphysical fact is symbolically represented by the solar

system where all the planets revolve around the Sun. Without the Sun, these planets would sort of lose their foothold in the vast void of the cosmos and would be lost forever.

From the angle of the fire sacrifice, the Sun is like the cosmic cauldron where the Supreme Being performs the sacred fire sacrifice in order to sustain this world. It resembles the fire pit because anything coming near the Sun would turn into ashes in a jiffy, and there is no chance of retrieving it later on.

So when the wise and enlightened aspirant does the internal fire sacrifice with the conviction that each breath is an oblation to the eternal fire of life burning inside his own body as the consciousness and other life factors, then the automatic sound of 'Hans' made by the breath as it comes in and goes out as clearly described earlier in verse no. 16 would be like chanting of formal Mantras during the external forms of the fire sacrifice. Again, since breathing is a constant and unbroken exercise, with this conviction he would be literally doing an eternal fire sacrifice to honour and worship the Supreme Being. That is why internal fire sacrifice is deemed to be much better and spiritually elevating than the external forms of it.

²The *Sayujya Mukti* is one when the aspirant seeks to become one with the chosen deity whom he worships. In terms of Upanishads, this oneness means that the individual Atma of the creature would merge with and become one with the supreme transcendental Brahm which is the cosmic Consciousness. From the perspective of Yoga, this would mean that the Pran or vital winds of the practitioner leaves the body and merge with the cosmic wind element present outside the gross body when these vital winds are able to travel up to the Brahm Randhra at the top of the head and exit from there as a result of Pranayam and other Yoga exercises.]

58. There is so much benefit in the practice of Yoga (mediation and contemplation) that the effort made in this direction is very worthwhile. So, one should diligently and constantly practice Yoga with unwavering steadfastness (58).

59. One should constantly do Yoga using the Mantra as prescribed in this Upanishad and thereby remain perpetually engrossed or submerged in a trance-like state obtained as a result of such meditation and contemplation exercise.

The supreme and transcendental form of Divinity (i.e. of Brahm) is obtained by the help of Gyan (true, irrefutable and incisive knowledge of the absolute reality and truth). [That is, Brahm is such an entity that can be known only by deep insight and sharp intelligence, almost like the case where only the brightest students are able to excel in science and engineering streams in college and do high quality research in science.] (59).

60. In the body of all living beings, the imperishable and eternal Divinity is always present in the form of the 'Hans' (i.e. in the form of the divine Swan symbolising the pure consciousness or the Atma or the soul that is present in the creature).

This Hans (i.e. the pure conscious Atma) is the ultimate Truth, and this Hans is an embodiment of divine Shakti (powers, energy, vitality, prowess and strength) that is present in any creature. [In other words, without this Hans or Atma the body would be lifeless and would not show any of the signs of life, vitality, prowess and strengths that it is famous for and known to exhibit. It would be like a lump of dead flesh.] (60).

61. This word 'Hans' is the great saying of the Vedas; it is the maxim and axiom proclaimed by the Vedas; it is the assertion of the Vedas.

This Hans is Rudra (Lord Shiva) personified, and it is the Supreme Being himself (61).

[Note—The word *Hans* refers to the eclectic Mantra ‘So-a-Ham, meaning ‘I am that essence’, or more elaborately ‘I, in my truthful form as the pure consciousness known as the Atma, am that essence known as Brahm’, or ‘I and Brahm are one’. Here the word ‘I’ refers to the Atma or pure consciousness. The Vedas endeavour to enlighten a person about his true ‘self’ and remove ignorance from his mental horizon. They preach the Truth of existence, about who the aspirant actually is, what is the true goal of life, how to reach it, how to get rid of miseries and problems of life and find permanent deliverance from them, how to obtain happiness and bliss that is permanent and best etc. When the spiritual aspirant discovers to his astonishment that the exalted stature that is obtainable by doing elaborate fire sacrifices and other religious rituals is easily obtainable by him by turning inwards, by meditation and contemplation that lead to him discovering his own divinity and holiness in the form of the Atma, he exults in joy and spontaneous ecstasy. He would literally dance in joy at having discovered a pitcher of eternal happiness and peace hidden inside his own bosom rather than somewhere outside.]

62-63. Amongst all the Gods, the Hans is the most exalted God called Maheshwar. Right from any point on the earth to the far reaches of the infinite directions, right from the first letter of the Sanskrit language, i.e. the letter ‘A’ (implying the beginning of creation) and extending to the last letter ‘Ksha’ (indicating conclusion of the creation, because the word ‘Ksha’ stands for decay and ruin)—it is the same Hans representing the pure consciousness, the ultimate Truth and the supreme Brahm that pervades throughout the creation represented symbolically by the alphabets of the language.

Nowhere is any Mantra (which is an esoteric and mystical group of letters or words or phrases used to worship or pay tributes to a deity) preached or nowhere does it have any meaning or even an existence if there is no Maatrikaa¹ in it (62-63).

[Note—¹The *Maatrikaa* of a Mantra are the various Sanskrit letters or alphabets that collectively form the text of the Mantra. The word Maatrikaa literally means ‘a little mother’. Since the Mantra represents the cosmic divinity known as the supreme transcendental Brahm in its numerous manifestations known as various Gods, the letters are called the Maatrikaas because they empower this Mantra with the stupendous mystical powers that this Mantra possesses much like Brahm employing his cosmic dynamic energy to enable him to initiate and then sustain and develop this creation, and even bring about its conclusion.

Brahm initiated this creation with the help of his cosmic dynamic powers and energy represented and encrypted in the Beej Mantra. But as it happened, the unfolded creation had numerous Gods and Goddesses. These Gods actually symbolise the various aspects of Brahm’s cosmic powers and authority, and the Goddesses represent their empowerment and strength to give effect to their mandate. This is a classic case of delegation of authority.

Mere letters and words or phrases of the Mantra would be neutral if not given their powers, or if they are not ‘empowered’ and ‘enabled’ much like Brahm which was a neutral entity until it empowered and armed itself with the cosmic dynamic energy, the necessary strength and authority to enable itself to initiate the process of creation. So, the Maatrikaa or Beej Mantras are the empowering aspect of the main body of the Mantra.

Each Mantra has two components—subtle and gross. The subtle part is its ‘Beej Mantra’ which is like the seed from where the huge tree grows. The gross part is the larger and extended part of the Mantra having a number of letters or words or phrases. The Beej Mantra consists of a consonant and the vowel sound attached to it

with a dot on top to indicate its point-source of cosmic energy as well as to indicate its anointment as the chief component of the Mantra. The dot is called the Anuswar, and it produces the nasal sound in association with the vowel sign preceding it. For example, in the Mantra 'Hans' as described in the Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse nos. 62-63, the Beej Mantra is the Sanskrit consonant 'Ha' + the vowel sound of the letter 'A' with a dot on top—producing the sound equivalent of 'hunt + *suns* or *sons*' = 'hans'. Since this word 'Hans' refers to the cosmic transcendental supreme Brahm and its counterpart as the Atma or pure consciousness present in the body of an individual creature, the letter 'Ha' represents Brahm, while the letter 'Sa', which is a sibilant sound following the main Beej Mantra, means 'like that' or 'like it' referring to the Atma because the Atma is 'like that Brahm'.

The Beej Mantra is like the 'seed or root' from which the rest of the Mantra evolves and is said to derive its mystical and stupendous powers and potentials. This Beej Mantra is like the seed having the tree secretly present in it, and the Mantra would then be like the fully grown-up tree. Even when grown, the tree needs the root to anchor it and derive its nourishment from the ground. Hence the two epithets 'seed' and 'root' used to describe the Beej Mantra. Each deity has a specific Beej Mantra dedicated to it, and one Beej Mantra may apply to more than one deity.

In Hinduism, meditation and contemplation upon a chosen deity is done by the help of a Mantra as a specific formula dedicated to invoke its powers as well as to concentrate the mind and its various faculties on the deity along with aiding the process of meditation and contemplation. This is done by doing Japa which involves repetition of the given Mantra. In fact, Japa is an integral part of any religious exercise, even for success in Yoga because it helps to harness the latent and dormant energy in the body by focusing the mind on the purpose at hand. The Beej Mantra is used for its concentrated energy and strength alongside its ease of use and usefulness in offering oblations or doing Anga Nyas (which is establishing the divine powers of the deity on the different parts of the body to purify them, empower them and strengthen them with dynamic energy and holiness associated with the Mantra).

In metaphysics, the supreme Brahm is the deity worshipped, and his Manta is OM which is a monosyllabic word. The Brahm Vidya Upanishad however describes the Mantra as 'Hans' because it refers to the pure consciousness called the Atma as a manifestation of Brahm in the body of the individual creature, and repetition of this Mantra is like establishing a union between the two of them and reminding the spiritual aspirant that his 'true self' is the Atma which is none other than the Supreme Being known as Brahm. That is why there are a number of Yoga Upanishads that extol the virtues of this Hans Mantra during the process of various meditation and contemplation exercises.

The single point source of everything in existence is indisputably Brahm represented by the Beej Mantra. If the letter of the Beej Mantra represents this Brahm, then the dot and the vowel sign of the Beej Mantra are like the dynamic powers, energy and authority of Brahm. The extended part of the Mantra would then be equivalent to the revelation of Brahm in the form of myriad Gods representing one or the other virtues and qualities of Brahm, and their divine counterparts called the various Goddesses would represent the powers and authority vested in these Gods by the supreme Authority so that they can carry out their assigned duties.

In Tantra form of occult worship, the Supreme Being is worshipped as a divine cosmic Shakti or cosmic Mother which is actually the cosmic powers and dynamic energy of the supreme Brahm that is responsible for the creation coming into being, its development, growth and sustenance, and is even responsible for its conclusion. If the Supreme Being is regarded as the cosmic Male, then the opposite force, the cosmic Female, is envisioned as the Shakti, or the dynamic energy and vital powers, potentials and authority of this Supreme Being. The cosmic Male provided the vital spark of life in the form of the cosmic Consciousness which is like the 'sperm', while the cosmic Shakti is the female counter-part, called the 'Prakriti' which received this

‘sperm’ and nourished it in its womb to produce the offspring in the form of this vast creation. It was in the Prakriti’s womb that the creation was conceived, developed and grew to emerge as the mysterious creation which is as mystical and enigmatic as its father, the Supreme Being. Obviously, the cosmic sperm would have been wasted if it was not accepted by the comic Mother known as Prakriti.

In Tantra philosophy, the Supreme Being is known as Mahadeva or Shiva, and the female part or Shakti is known as Uma or Parvati. In the language of the Upanishads or Vedanta, the same Supreme Being is known as the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic gross body of the supreme transcendental Brahm from which the entire creation sprouted like the tree from a seed, and the cosmic Shakti is called Maya or Prakriti. The Maya is nothing but the Viraat Purush’s dynamic powers that brought about the beginning of creation, sustains it and would finally conclude it; the Prakriti is the womb where the creation conceived and developed. The embryo is the Hiranyagarbha which is the subtle body of Brahm, and this embryo developed and revealed the Viraat Purush.

So, if the given Mantra is regarded as a personification of the given deity, then the Maatrikaa would be its energy and dynamism that is latent and inherent in it. The Mantra would lose its powers and potentials in the absence of the Maatrikaa just like the Supreme Being needed the power of the Shakti to create the world.

The word Maatrikaa literally means a ‘little mother’. It is given the same reverence that one would give to a mother because it is the mother that gives shape to the body of the offspring—in this case the main body of the Mantra. Shorn of the Maatrikaa, the Mantra would be meaningless and powerless.

The Beejnighantu text (Beej = seed Mantra; Nighantu = dictionary) written by Bhairav lists 50 such Beej Mantras and describes what they stand for. Another text known as Beej-vidhaan has 75 lines in the poetical style called the Anushtup Chanda describing the Beej Mantras like Hrim, Strim, Aim, Krim etc. representing different deities such as Aindri, Vaamekshana, Saraswati, Kali etc. respectively. Similarly, the Ekakhar-kosha of Purshottamadeva lists the Beej Mantras of various Gods and Goddesses, such as ‘A’ for Vasudeo, ‘Aa’ for Pitaamaha (Brahma the creator of the visible world), ‘Pa’ for the Wind God called Pawan, ‘Saa’ for Laxmi the goddess of wealth as well as for Shiva the third God of the Trinity. Another text called Mantraarthaa-bhidaan by Varadaatantra also lists the Beej Mantra such as ‘Haum’ for Shiva, ‘Dum’ for Goddess Durga, ‘Krim’ for Goddess Kalikaa, ‘Hrim’ for Goddess Bhuvaneshwari, ‘Klim’ for Kaamdeo-cupid, the patron god of love and passion, ‘Gam’ for Ganesh, ‘Kshraum’ for Narshingh, the half-lion and half-man incarnation of Vishnu, etc. According to Maatrikaanighantu by Mahidas, the Beej Mantras and even the word Mantras of certain chief deities are as follows—‘A’ stands for Shrikantha (Shiva, the one with a blue-tinged throat), ‘Keshava’ for Krishna, ‘Vaata’ for the Wind God of Pawan, ‘Ka’ for Maya, ‘Ma’ stands both for Vaikuntha, the abode for Lord Vishnu who is the second of the Trinity Gods and is responsible for sustenance of creation, as well as for Mahaakaal, one of the names of Shiva, ‘Ya’ stands for Yamuna etc.

The *Brahm Vidya Upanishad* of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, verse no. 63 asserts that no Mantra has any value if there is no Maatrikaa in it. To quote—“Nowhere is any Mantra (which is an esoteric and mystical group of letters or words or phrases used to worship or pay tributes to a deity) preached or nowhere does it have any meaning, value or even an existence if there is no Maatrikaa in it (63).”

This Upanishad has elaborately described the ‘Hans Mantra’ in its various verses, e.g. verse nos. 16, 20-28, 34, 60-64, 78-79. In the present case, the Mantra is ‘Hans’ referring to Brahm in the form of the Atma or pure consciousness present inside the body of the spiritual aspirant.

Refer also Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 21-22.]

64. The magnificent splendour and the stupendous glory of this divine Hans (i.e. the pure conscious Atma or the supreme Brahm) are central to all the eclectic virtues and glories that all the honourable Gods in creation possess. This Hans occupies an exalted stature amidst the Gods and is the focal point around which all the Gods of this creation exist¹.

The aspirant should meditate in the Gyan Mudra while remembering Lord Shiva in his 'Dakshin Mukhi' form² (64).

[Note—¹That is, this divine, self-illuminated and glorious entity is seated like an Emperor surrounded by all the Gods as his attendants. This is a figure of speech to emphasise the following points—(a) All the Gods derive their powers and strengths on the authority of the supreme Brahm who is central to their existence. (b) Brahm is at the center of the entire creation much like the hub of a wheel, and all the different Gods and Goddesses represent the different attributes, virtues and qualities of Brahm. They have spread out like the branches of a tree, and if the tree is not there these branches would also not be there. (c) These Gods owe their existence, powers, strength, authority and virtues as well as their importance, value and significance to one single point source called Brahm. They revolve around this central axis just like the planets do around the sun. (d) If Brahm is the seed, the Gods are the huge colourful tree with multifarious shape and size. This is the picture at the macrocosmic level. At the micro level of creation, the creature is a representative of the cosmos, while his Atma which is pure consciousness and his 'true self' is the central point of his existence because without the Atma his existence is not feasible. The various Gods represent the different functions of the body and they therefore reside in the respective organ carrying out those functions. That is why the Hans—the aphorism for this Atma—is central to the Gods because without the Atma the body and its Gods would be meaningless.

²The *Gyan Mudra* in relation with the word Dakshin Mukhi refers to the sitting posture adopted by Lord Shiva while he meditated facing south. It also might mean 'with a bowed head' because the word Dakshin in Sanskrit means downward facing. In ritualistic forms of worship, this direction is the location of Yam God, the god of death whose controller is Shiva. The word Yam also means self control and self restraint. Hence, meditating with total self control and restraint over the restless organs of the body is called Gyan Mudra with a Dakshin Mukhi dimension.

An entire Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition is dedicated to this south-facing form of Shiva, and it is called 'Dakshin Murti Upanishad'. It is Chapter 18 of this volume.]

65. The aspirant should remain established in a perpetual state of Samadhi which is a trance-like state of blissfulness and eternal ecstasy. He should remain contemplative and meditative while in this state. This would create an aura of divinity around him which would shine and glow like the light emanating from a piece of crystal (65).

[Note—The enlightened spiritual aspirant is compared to a crystal because he is as pure and untainted as the latter. The crystal has no light of its own but shines due to reflection and refraction of light that falls on its surface. Similarly, the aspirant physical body has no light of its own but it reflects the inner light of holiness and divinity of the Atma that shines through his inner self as well as the light of wisdom, enlightenment and knowledge that he possesses. The divine glow around him indicates the purity of his self and the fact that this purity enables the glow of Brahm to be reflected from him. Since light is reflected in all its purity from a clean surface, and gets faint when reflected from a dirty or tainted surface, the fact that the aspirant is uncorrupt and holy shows in the glow of divinity around him. Again, only a plain mirror without any surface distortions would reflect perfect light, the holy and self-realised aspirant reflects the entire divinity and glory of Brahm without distorting it.

In fact, this is the reason why it is said that a self-realised person is Brahm personified because he is a perfect image of what Brahm has been visualised to be.]

66-68. The aspirant should always contemplate upon this divine Hans (Swan) honourably enshrined in the central part of his body, i.e. in his subtle heart.

The meditation that is done using the five principal vital winds such as Pran, Apaana, Samaana, Udaana and Vyan, along with their coordination with the five organs of actions of the body (such as hands, legs, mouth, genitals and excretory) is said to be very effective.

If this coordination between the five organs of action and the vital winds is extended to include the other minor vital winds such as Naaga, Kurma, Krikala, Devdutta and Dhananjaya, then the results are simply astounding, they are extremely effective.

The Shakti is the center in the body where, as its name suggests, the subtle fire element and the dynamic energy of creation are located. [This 'Shakti' is the center of subtle energy in the body, which is the coil like Kundalini located at the base of the spine.] On the other hand, the energy of the Sun is symbolically located in the Naabhi Chakra (which is the subtle energy center located in the region of the navel) (66-68).

69-70. In the beginning, the aspirant should practice the Mudra (meditative posture) called 'Bandha'¹.

The fire element has three subtle forms and three symbolic locations in the body. Thus, the fire element in the first letter 'A' (of the divine ethereal word OM) has its location in the tip of the nose and in both the eyes. The fire element in the second letter 'U' (of the divine ethereal word OM) has its location in the heart. And finally, the fire element in the third letter 'M' (of the divine ethereal word OM) has its location in the middle of the two eyebrows.

The energy and vitality, the strength and stamina of the Pran Shakti or the vital winds present in the body should be injected in these fire elements. [It is like igniting the latent and dormant fire element that is inherently present inside the body at these three symbolic sites where the fire pit of the sacred fire sacrifice that is being symbolically done by the medium of Yoga as mentioned in verse no. 54 is located by blowing air or vital wind into it.]

The Brahm Granthi (the knot or specific site where Brahm is said to have his seat) is said to be located in the region at the tip of the nose as well as in the eyes. Similarly, the Vishnu Granthi (where Vishnu is said to have his base) is located in the subtle heart² (69-70).

[Note—¹The *Bandha Mudra* pertains to the Baddha Aasan. It is described in Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, verse no. 40. It is literally a closed or tied form of Padmasana when, after sitting in a normal or common form of Padmasana posture, the big toe of the left foot is held by the right hand, and that of the right foot is held by the left hand. [In this posture, the hands are taken behind the back, and the clasping of the toe of the opposite side is done from behind. To facilitate this posture, the spine will have to be curved backwards a bit. The hands and legs are virtually 'bound or tied' to each other. That is why it is called 'Baddha' or tied or closed form of Padmasana.]

The *Benefits of Mudras*—The Varaha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 5, verse no. 68 says that the various Mudras of Yoga, in association with the different Bandhas, are able to provide freedom from all sins if practiced mildly, and reward the ascetic with complete liberation and deliverance if

done for a prolonged period of time and at a higher level of concentration with due diligence.

²The word Granthi means a node, a nodule or module or knot. It also symbolises the center of power and authority because it is the nodal point from where all the authority needed for governance spread out. It is also like the seat of power and authority of a king, much like the strong fortress from where he rules over the kingdom. The Granthis mentioned in this Upanishad should be seen in this context. They represent the nodal points in the body where the Trinity Gods have their symbolic residence, and it is from here they control the functioning of the body of the individual as well as everything that he thinks and does. If the individual is regarded as the microcosm of the entire creation, then the Atma would be the supreme Brahm, and the various patron deities of the organs would be the different Gods of creation.

Brahm is synonym of Gyan which is knowledge of the truth and possession of the highest degree of erudition, sagacity, enlightenment and wisdom. Since these are the functions of the brain located in the head, the seat of Brahm in the *Brahm Granthi* is said to be here. Knowledge helps to remove the darkness of ignorance, i.e. it is like symbolic opening of the eyes so that the man can see the truth the light of enlightenment and wisdom. Therefore the eyes are also the locations of Brahm Granthi.

In the same vein, Vishnu is the sustainer, protector and nourisher of the world. Compassion, graciousness, love, mercy, benevolence, magnanimity, kindness etc. are some of the eclectic virtues that must be present in a person who is responsible or charged with looking after a huge and extended family which consists of all sorts of members. Since these virtues are the functions of the heart, Vishnu's seat or *Vishnu Granthi* is located here.]

71-74. The Rudra Granthi (the symbolic site of Lord Shiva) is said to be in the central point or tri-junction of the root of the nose and the eyebrows¹. All these three Granthis (Brahm, Vishnu and Rudra Granthis) are ruptured or broken by the help of the 'Akchar Vayu', the eternal, imperishable, infinitely powerful and invincible wind or air element².

The creator Brahma has his symbolic abode in the letter 'A' of the divine and ethereal word OM. Similarly, the sustainer and protector of creation Vishnu has his symbolic abode in the letter 'U', and the concluder Shiva in the letter 'M'. Beyond them is the supreme Brahm (who is present in the word OM formed by all these individual letters and thus incorporates all of them in his self)³. [Refer verse nos. 4-6 of this Upanishad.]

[Now the Yoga exercise is being described.] The throat should be constricted (i.e. the breath should be stopped), the astounding cosmic dynamic energy that is the progenitor of all other energies and which is located in the Kundalini should be activated, and the tongue should be pressed in the mouth. Then the Naadi (i.e. the tubular duct or the most important nerve in the body passing through the center of the spinal cord) which has sixteen roots branching out from it at its base (like a huge banyan tree), which moves upwards from the lower part of the body (i.e. the base of the spine) to reach the point called the 'Trikoort' (a reference to a mountain with the same name, literally the mount with three summits; here referring to the point in the head where the three primary Naadis, the Pingla, the Ida and the Sushumna, meet), which has three dimensions or forms (as Pingla, Ida and Sushumna), which knows about the location of the Brahm Randhra (the hair-like slit on the top of the skull from where Brahm is said to have entered the body of the man at the time of creation) because it goes up to that point, and which is very fine and subtle, should be activated.

Along with the activation of this Naadi, the trapped energy in the Kundalini should be unlocked and the Prans or vital winds too should be made active. This results in the creation of the right instrument or weapon that symbolically has the same stupendous potentials and astounding strength possessed by the Trident held by Lord Shiva, is as strong, potent and invincible as the Vajra (the weapon of Indra, the king of Gods, with which he controls the world), which has all the glories and potentials inherent in OM (because this word symbolises the four aspects of creation and stands for the four aspects of divinity as mentioned above—i.e. Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva and Brahm).

By using this potent and powerful instrument, the ascetic should ease the energy of the Kundalini through the Naadi (Pingla, Ida and Sushumna) and take it up to the Trikoort. [Here, the tri-junction of the base of the nose and the meeting point of the two eyebrows is being referred. This is the area of the cerebrum.]

This method should be used by him to conquer or rupture the 'Sashi Mandal', or the realm of the Moon God. [In other words, he should be able to exercise absolute control over his Mana or mind and heart because the Moon God is the patron god of the Mana in the man.] (71-74).

[Note—¹The word 'Rudra' implies anger and wrathfulness. When one becomes angry, the site where *Rudra Granthi* is located becomes furrowed or crooked or cocked as one frowns and cocks his eyebrows in annoyance and anger. Rudra is one of the forms of Lord Shiva's form which is synonymous with anger.

²This can be imagined in physical terms also. The constant repetition of the Mantra 'So-a-Ham' generates high vibrations in the subtle wind element present inside the body so as to activate it. The energy of these vibrations then focuses the activated air during meditation on these knot-like Granthis much like a high velocity jet of gases that are so powerful that they help to lift a heavy rocket from the ground. This jet of vital airs present in the body strikes these Granthis violently, unstucking them from their moorings and cracking them open.

³Refer verse nos. 2-9 above.]

75. The aspirant ascetic should practice the most potent form of breath control exercise called 'Vajra Pranayam' (literally meaning the Pranayam which has the potentials and powers that are equivalent in their effect to the invincible and strong weapon of Indra, the king of Gods, called Vajra; hence this form of Pranayam is infallible) by closing all the so-called nine doors¹ of the body (to ensure that the vital winds finds no way to escape and can be focused on the activation of the Kundalini and the Sushumna Naadi)². He should have a cheerful mind and sit in a comfortable position. That is, there should be no element of stress and discomfort, as it would cause hindrance in concentration and act as a distraction for the mind and the body. With this preparation, the ascetic should literally ride the Pawan or the wind/air element³ (75).

[Note—¹The symbolic nine doors of the body are the following—two ears, two eyes, two nostrils, one mouth, one anus, and one urethra. Refer Shwetashwatar Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, 3/18.

²As has been envisioned in the previous verses, there is lot of pressure needed to be built to push the subtle divine energy from the bottom of the spine where the Kundalini is located right up to the top of the head where the Trikoort and Brahm Randhra are located, and more than that is the effort needed to rupture the various knots called the Granthis. If there is any leak in the body, the vital air would not be able to develop sufficient pressure to accomplish this great task. More importantly from the metaphysical point of view, the closing of the nine openings of the body is to emphasise the fact that total self-control is needed if one were to succeed in one's

spiritual efforts. Half hearted and less than complete commitment would be like a leaking balloon.

³In other words, he would feel as light as someone floating in air or riding an air vehicle. The body will feel light and lose its grossness much like a balloon filled with hot air. Since the air inside is trapped because of closure of all exit points, it gets heated up and consequentially become lighter and tends to move up inside the body. This helps to levitate the body.]

76. [This verse outlines the benefits of doing meditation in the way prescribed above.] The aspirant is able to hear the cosmic vibrations known as Naad in the region of his Brahm Randhra, the Shankhini Naadi appears to rain nectar or elixir of bliss and ecstasy called Amrit, and since the subtle lotus of six petals has been slit open, the light of enlightenment that was hidden in it now comes to the fore. [This lotus enclosed the Atma in its petals, and once these petals have been slit open, the inherent enlightenment of the pure consciousness shines in the subtle space of the heart to light up the entire inner self of the ascetic.] (76).

77. The Supreme Being or the great Lord of creation who is established in all the mortal creatures should always be reverentially worshipped and duly honoured. He is present in them as their pure consciousness or Atma, is an embodiment of Gyan or truthful knowledge, wisdom, erudition and enlightenment, and is free from any of the ailments or faults or shortcomings¹ that normally afflict every creature in this world in lesser or greater degree (77).

[Note—¹The various Faults that afflict the creature in this world have been classified under different categories, and are variously listed as being broadly of six, five, four, three, two and one types. The terms used to describe the various faults or shortcomings have been described at the end of this listing. Now let us see them one by one.

(a) The *six faults* or shortcomings of the body are the problems associated with this gross world that has a physical origin, takes a birth and ultimately ends or dies. Naturally they are not applicable to the supreme Lord who does not take birth and does not die. These so-called 'Vikars' are the following—(1) problems associated with birth, (2) problems associated with growth, (3) problems associated with consequences of deeds done and actions taken by a creature in this world, (4) problems associated with gradual decay and decline of the body and its functions, (5) problems associated with old age and its attendant horrors, and (6) problems associated with the ultimate destruction and end of everything that relates to the creature. One will observe that the life of a creature is a continuous graph of sorrows, sufferings and pains of one or the other kind. It is only when the creature realises the truth of existence and who he really is that he begins to disassociate himself from the body and the world, and thus is able to break free from this seemingly interminable cycle of horrors. Refer *Mudgal Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse no. 6 of Rig Veda tradition as well as *Adhyatma Ramayan* of Veda Vyas, Lanka Kand, Canto 3, verse no. 29.

According to the *Varaha Upanishad*, canto 1 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, there are *six Urmis* or faults associated with a creature. They are the following—Ashanaaye (hunger), Pipasa (thirst), Shoka (grief and sorrows), Moha (delusions), Jara (old age) and Mritu (death)—refer also *Mudgal Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse no. 7 of Rig Veda tradition.

There also *other six faults* that are considered as *enemies* of a man—Kaam (worldly passions, lust, desires and yearning), Krodh (anger, indignation, spite and wrathfulness), Lobh (greed and rapacity), Moha (ignorance based delusions, worldly infatuations, attractions and attachments), Mada (egoism, arrogance, haughtiness and

hypocrisy) and Matsarya (envy, jealousy, malice and ill-will)—refer *Mudagal Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse no. 4 of Rig Veda tradition.

(b) The *five faults* or shortcomings of the body—According to *Mandal Brahmin Upanishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, Brahmin 1, section 2, verse nos.1, there are following—viz. (1) Kaam (worldly lust, desires, passions and yearnings), (2) Krodh (anger, indignation, spite, wrathfulness), (3) Asthma or obstruction of breath, (4) Bhaya (fear of physical harm), and (5) Nidra (sleep, lethargy, indolence, drowsiness, sluggishness and lack of alertness especially when doing some important or dangerous work requiring concentration of mind, vigilance and alertness of the faculties) (verse no. 1).

How to overcome them—Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 1/2/2 describes the method to overcome these faults of the body in these words—“These faults which translate into spiritual impediments can respectively be overcome by the following methods—viz. to be without any desires whatsoever, to be forgiving and tolerant, to eat less and moderately, to be strong, brave and courageous, and to constantly devote time and energy in contemplation and meditating upon the essential and true nature of things, called Tattwa Sevanam (i.e. to keep the mind from lying idle and instead keep it occupied in introspection and engrossed in deep thoughts of what constitutes the reality and truth) (verse no. 2).”

According to *Ram Charit Manas* by Saint Tulsidas, Aranya Kand, Doha 39, Chaupai 2/1, there are *five shortcomings* in a creature and they are the following—Krodh, Kaam, Lobh, Mada, and Maya.

(c) The *four faults* that are associated with a creature’s temperament and natural inclination and mental bearing have been described in detail in *Ram Charit Manas* by Saint Tulsidas, the greatest epic ever penned in the realm of devotional literature which is suffused and soaked in the philosophy of the Upanishads at the same time. This great treatise has the following take on the four faults or shortcomings that afflict all the creatures in this creation—(1) Baal Kand, Doha 285, Chaupai 1/2 states that the four faults are Mada, Moha, Krodh, and Bhram. (2) Doha 43, Chaupai 3/1 says that they are Kaam, Krodh, Mada and Moha. (3) Baal Kand, Doha 112, enumerates them as Shok, Moha, Sandeha, and Bhram. (4) Baal Kand, Doha 128 says that they are Moha, Matsarya, Mada, and Maan. (5) Aranya Kand, Doha 43 lists these four faults as Kaam, Krodh, Lobh and Mada. (6) Aranya Kand Doha 44, Chaupai 2/1 enumerates the four faults as follows--Kaam, Krodh, Mada and Matsarya.

(d) The *three faults* that afflict the creature, according to *Ram Charit Manas* by Saint Tulsidas, Aranya Kand, Doha 38/A, are the following—Kaam, Krodh and Lobh

(e) The *two faults* associated with the creature that prove his great *enemies* are the following according to *Ram Charit Manas* by Saint Tulsidas, Aranya Kand, Doha 43, Chaupai 5/1—Kaam and Krodh.

(f) The greatest fault however is *one*, and it is ‘Moha’ (delusions and its attendant attractions towards this world and its charms, leading to attachments, infatuations and a sense of belonging to it). This Moha is compared to the dark night in *Ram Charit Manas* by Saint Tulsidas, Baal Kand, Doha 116, Chaupai 3/1, and Aranya Kand, Doha 93, Chaupai 1/2. Moha is like a moral disease that afflict all creatures and eat them up like cancer—Uttar Kand, Doha 121, Chaupai 15/1; Moha makes everyone blind—Uttar Kand, Doha 70, Chaupai 4/1.

So, briefly the various ailments that afflict the creature in this world can be summarised as follows—*Kaam* (worldly desires, lust, passions etc. and the attending greed, yearnings and aspirations that they create in their wake); *Krodh* (anger, indignation, wrathfulness and a sense of vengeance when desired results are not obtained and aspirations are not fulfilled); *Lobh* (greed, rapacity and yearnings); *Moha* (delusions that create a sense of attachment, infatuation and belonging with this world and attractions towards the material charm that its sense objects offer, along with their pleasures and comforts); *Matsarya* (envy, jealousy, malice); *Mada* (arrogance, false pride, hypocrisy and haughtiness); *Maan* (self pride and ego); *Maya*

(ignorance based delusions, illusions, misconceptions and their attending hallucinations); *Bhram* (confusion and doubts caused by ignorance of the actual truth, which lead to perplexities and vexations); *Shok* (the feeling of regret, contrition, grief, sufferings, torments, miseries and sorrows); *Ashanaaye* (hunger); *Pipasa* (thirst); *Jara* (old age and weakness); *Mritu* (death); *Bhaya* (fear of any kind, such as physical harm); *Nidra* (sleep, lethargy, indolence, drowsiness, sluggishness and lack of alertness especially when doing some important or dangerous work requiring concentration of mind, vigilance and alertness of the faculties); *Sandeha* (doubts, skepticism and lack of confidence in some truth such as doubting the authority of the scriptures and their tenets and maxims).]

78-79. All spiritual aspirants who have a gross body (and of course are wise and enlightened) should constantly contemplate upon and visualise the ubiquitous presence of the supreme Lord who is faultless and immaculate, who is all-pervading, all-encompassing and omnipresent in this creation. While doing this, he should constantly repeat the divine eclectic Mantra 'Hans-Hans'. [In other words, the aspirant should constantly remind himself that he is no one else but the supreme Brahm himself personified. This is because another form of the Mantra is 'So-a-Ham', meaning 'that is me'. Refer verse nos. 16, 20-28, 34, 60-64.]

This type of Japa (repetition of the Mantra) done constantly and involuntarily is called 'A-Japa Japa', i.e. repetition of the Mantra in an involuntarily way and without being consciously aware of it being done at all¹.

This type of Japa involves a coordination of the Pran and Apaan winds. [This is because inhalation of breath during the Purak phase is known as the Pran, while the exhalation done during the Rechak phase is called Apaan.] Since a man breathes roughly twenty one thousands time during the course of a day, this is the number of times this Mantra 'So-a-Ham'² is automatically repeated (78-79).

[Note—¹It is called 'A-Japa Japa' because this repetition is done involuntarily and without any special effort or attention paid to its repetition. The practitioner is not even aware that he is repeating any Mantra because it is directly linked to the normal breathing process which is an involuntary and an automatic biological process done constantly and without break, even while a person sleeps or goes about his daily chores of life—refer verse no. 16 and its note. The prefix 'A' indicates negation, and therefore this repetition of the Mantra Hans is not regarded as doing a Japa in the conventional sense when special attention is focused on repeating any Mantra during some religious ritual or practicing Yoga. It is automatic and involuntary. So when the spiritual aspirant has risen to a level of awareness and enlightenment when he becomes aware of the spiritual importance of each breath that comes in and goes out of his body as representing the two limbs of the Mantra for Brahm, i.e. the letters 'Ha' and 'Sa' or the combined word 'Hans', he is deemed to have become Brahm-realised. Only then can he say that he is repeating the Mantra 'So-a-Ham' meaning 'that Brahm is me as my true self known as the pure consciousness or Atma'.

²The eclectic Mantra 'So-a-Ham' has been described in a number of Upanishads. For instance, Krishna Yajur Veda's Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 131-133; Shuka Rahasya Upanishad, verse no. 20; Sam Veda's Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 83.]

80. The practitioner of Yoga should always meditate upon the symbol of Lord Shiva, called a Lingam, at three places—viz. as a 'Adho-linga' (i.e. as an inverted or downward facing Lingam) in the front of the Kundalini¹, as 'Pashim Linga' (i.e. as a Lingam facing to the west direction, or to the left hand side, or one that is rear-facing) at the place where the subtle filament of light burns in the body (i.e. in the heart

region, because it is here the flame of consciousness burns as the Atma), and as the 'Jyoti Linga' (i.e. as a self-illuminated source of light) in the middle point of the eyebrows (which is said to be the site of the third eye of enlightenment and wisdom) (80).

[Note—Refer Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 168; Canto 2, verse nos. 9-11 which describe the presence of the Shiva's Lingam—the symbol representing Lord Shiva—in the body of the man in the course of discussing Yoga.]

[Verse nos. 81-110 are the truthful statements made by a self-realised person who has discovered the great spiritual Truth about himself. It must be noted here that the pronoun 'I' that is constantly used in each verse is not being used for the body but for the Atma or pure consciousness that is the true and real identity of the spiritual aspirant who is making each statement. The observations made in the following verses have an excellent resonance in other great Upanishads belonging to the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition—such as the Tejo Bindu Upanishad in its full Canto 3 and in Canto 4, verse nos. 1-30, Canto 6, verse nos. 32-39, 58-72, as well as in Sarwasaar Upanishad, verse nos. 16-21. The statements made herein below mark the pinnacle of enlightenment and realisation of the ultimate Truth that inspires the spiritual aspirant to feel so exulted and ecstatic that he is unable to withhold his sense of elation at this discovery, and become so overjoyed with it that he exclaims as follows—]

81. I cannot be demoted or degraded from my exalted stature; I am not fallen and degenerate.

I am beyond comprehension and thoughts (i.e. I am so mysterious, esoteric and enigmatic that I just cannot be fully understood).

I am beyond the limits of logic and rationality (i.e. no one can understand me by applying logics of the material world and try to prove or disapprove my existence in some science laboratory as if I were some material object or some animal species from an alien planet).

I am without a birth (because I am eternal, imperishable and infinite).

I do not have any (spiritual and inherent character) deformities symbolised by such external signs as wounds or tumors (i.e. I am perfectly healthy and without any scars or blemishes in my immaculate character and nature).

I do not have a gross body, and therefore I do not have any organs or any fears that come with the possession of a body (such as from old age, enemies, diseases, pains and other such torments that have a direct relation with the body) (81).

82. I am without words and forms (i.e. I cannot be described in words; I have no physical attributes and features; my true form has no physical dimensions which words can hope to describe or express). Therefore, I am beyond the perception of touch and the sense of feeling (that is associated with anything gross and physical, simply because I have no forms).

I am non-dual, immutable, universal and uniform. [This is one of the reasons why I can't be precisely and correctly described, because each word and each phrase used to describe me would be limiting me, but that would be erroneous as I am limitless and infinite. Each word or phrase has more than one meaning when used in different contexts, whereas I am one whole indivisible single Unit. Further, how can anything that has no form be of two types, or be 'dual'? That is why I am 'non-dual'.

Again, Truth is always one and not two, another reason of my being 'non-dual, uniform, universal and immutable'.]

That is also why I am without the gross perceptions of taste and smell. [This is because I have no gross body with the organs that can taste or smell. I am non-dual, so there is no separate thing that has a taste which is tasted by someone else, and neither is there some thing that emanates a smell that can be smelled by someone else.]

I am an embodiment of eternal and primary elixir of creation called Amrit. [This is evident in the fact that after the previous creation came to an end, everything else perished except me. Thus, I must be something on which death has no effect, and such a thing is called Amrit because it is an ambrosia of eternity and imperishability.] (82).

83. I am imperishable and do not decay or come to ruin. I am without a body and its organs. I am therefore not subjected to the decay of the body and the effects of old age. I have no dimensions, forms, shapes, fractions or aspects. [All this is simply because I am formless, eternal, infinite and imperishable as well as universal, uniform, immutable and non-dual.]

I have no Pran (physical life) but still I can speak (i.e. I have manifested myself in the subtle world as the faculty of speech).

I am so mystical, esoteric and enigmatic that I am beyond thoughts and comprehension. [Refer verse no. 86.]

I do not do any deeds (because the deeds are done by the physical body and I am not the body but the subtle, sublime and pure consciousness which is absolutely distinct from the physical gross body) (83).

84. I dwell inside all the creatures and know their inner thoughts and feelings. [That is why I am called 'Antar-yaami', i.e. one who lives inside and knows the inner secrets.]

I cannot be caught hold of or grasped. [That is, neither can I be physically held because I have no gross body, nor can I be understood and grasped by the mind because I am the most mysterious entity in creation.]

I do not need any directions; I do not have any directions. [This is an excellent example of playing around with words. I do not need any directions implies that I know everything and therefore do not need any advice or guidance; it also means that I need not be told where to go or in which direction to proceed simply because I am all-pervading and omnipresent entity. Similarly, I have no limiting body or form which has any sense of physical direction as north or south. Since I am an all-pervading, omnipresent and ubiquitous entity, the concept of having any direction where I am not present does not apply to me. The various directions of the compass have a limited dimension in space and area, a notion that is not applicable to me.]

I have no attributes or defining qualities or characters or features.

I do not have any clan, lineage, caste or creed; (and this is because) I do not have any physical body. Hence, I do not also have the organ of sight called eye, or the organ of speech (called the tongue and mouth) (84).

85. I am invisible (because only gross things can be seen, but I am the invisible ethereal 'spirit'). I have no colours or distinguishing marks that puts me into one or the other classes in the society. I am immutable, indivisible, one and wholesome. I am therefore most strange, mysterious, enigmatic and esoteric, and therefore beyond comprehension and grasp of the mind.

I cannot be heard or seen. I am an entity that is worthy of deep research, pondering and contemplation.

I am eternal and infinite, something that never dies because it is immortal and imperishable (85).

86. I am not the wind or the air element, and neither am I the sky or fire elements. [That is, I should not be judged by weighing me or measuring me against or comparing me with these elements simply because I have a non-gross and subtle body. Though these elements along with others are my manifestations, but it is not the other way round.]

I do not involve myself in promiscuous behaviour (i.e. I do not violate the rules of propriety, probity, righteousness and auspiciousness; I am faithful and steadfast in my beliefs and convictions).

I am unknown and cannot be known in entirety. [Refer verse no. 83.]

I have no birth (because I am eternal and infinite).

I am smaller than the minutest (because I am smaller than the tip of the hair follicle—see verse no. 14), and without any faults or shortcomings of any kind (86).

87. I am free from the effects of the three Gunas called Sata, Raja and Tama¹. I am beyond their reach. I am therefore free from the effects of Maya²; I do not possess the element called Maya (i.e. I am free from the delusory effects caused by these three Gunas as well as by ignorance of the truth).

I am myself experienced and well versed in everything (and therefore cannot be led astray by false charms and enticing allurements proffered by Maya). At the same time, I am an entity that can be experienced (as the ultimate Truth, pure consciousness and infinite bliss that is obtained upon self-realisation).

I am infinite and fathomless.

I am not the material object of the world that can be pursued by the sense organs of the body (87).

[Note—¹The *three Gunas*—The character of all the living beings in the entire creation is dependent upon three primary qualities called the Gunas. They are Sata, Raja and Tama.

(a) The *Sata Guna* is the best of the three qualities present in any creature. It is a positive quality and is marked by a propensity for following the path of nobility, auspiciousness, probity, propriety, virtuousness, holiness and righteousness. Creatures that have a predominance of Sata Guna are inclined to do selfless service, be benevolent, merciful, kind and gracious, have coolness of head and a rationale and balanced mind, be contented, have humility and piety etc. Such creatures are devoted to good values in life and have a desire to acquire knowledge that would help them reach higher spiritual goals in life.

This Sata Guna is marked by high standards of ethical and moral existence that makes the bearer of such qualities highly respected in society. Such people have a spiritual dimension to their personality. This quality is spiritually uplifting and gives a divine halo to those who possess it and practice it.

The Vasanas that have the Sata Guna or quality dominant in them are like a veil covering the lamp or like a smoke covering the fire. A slight breeze will remove this smoke. Similarly a little bit of prayer and meditation will remove the Satwic desires; its removal requires the least effort.

(b) The second quality is the *Raja Guna* and it makes a man more attracted to this material world and its charms, and less spiritually inclined. The Raja Guna is the medium quality marked by a greater percentage of worldly passions, desires and attachments and their natural offshoots in a creature. It makes a creature inclined

towards the material things of the gross world and their enjoyments, towards creation of wealth, its enhancement and protection, and generally having a desire for growth, development and expansion etc. It covers such qualities as worldly yearnings, passions, a stormy nature, agitated behaviour, ambitions, selfishness, expansionist tendencies, a desire to acquire, retain and develop such acquisitions even to the detriment of one's long term spiritual welfare and even if such actions cause pain to others. All these pertain to this materialistic world. Such qualities give worldly fame and prosperity. If these qualities are judiciously mixed with the Satwic qualities, then they provide the person the better of the two worlds, both in terms of worldly fame as well as spiritual well being.

The Vasanas that have the Rajsic Guna or quality dominant in them can be compared to dust on a mirror. In this case some dusting and rubbing is needed to clean the mirror; a greater effort is needed as compared to the case with Satwic quality.

(c) The third quality is called the *Tama Guna* and is the meanest and the basest of the three Gunas. It is a demeaning quality in a creature that leads to his downfall and perpetual entanglement with things that are considered improper and unethical. It creates an inclination for committing all sorts of sins, misdeeds and demeanours. It leads the creature towards negativity and inspires him to acquire negative qualities such as various vices, evils, sins, perversions etc. It makes him inclined to be greedy, rapacious, haughty, arrogant, lustful, intoxicated, vile and wild to the extreme. Such a creature with a predominance of Tama Guna has utter disregard for propriety, noble virtues and ethics, for righteousness and morality.

In brief, it is the most degrading, denigrating and contemptible of the three characteristics in a person, and leads to such behaviour which is utterly immoral, denigrating and depraved, marked by grossness, crassness and recklessness. It therefore leads to his downfall, ignominy and ruin as well as ignorance, delusions, gloom, inertia, anger, frustration etc.

The Tamsic Guna or quality is like the embryonic membrane that covers the foetus in the womb. They cannot be removed easily and require great diligence, effort, persistence, dedication and careful handling requiring time and patience. It is the basest and the lowliest of the three characteristics, and the worst type to possess.

The Vasanas that have the Tama Guna in dominance are regarded as the 'bad Vasanas' or better still the 'worst type of Vasana' that any individual can have.

The varying quantity and intensity of these three in any given individual would decide his specific character and how he is inclined to deal with the world and a given circumstance. The various permutations and combinations of these three qualities create a particular nature of an individual, giving him his individuality and his special personality which are unique to him; they determine his temperament, behaviour, thought process, et al. Two individuals having the same external form of the gross body might look very much alike but they vary immensely in their nature, habit, temperaments, inclinations, behaviour, thinking, outlook, the way they act and do their deeds, the way they tackle the problems of life, the level of their wisdom and intelligence, their personality and their general way of living.

This is also the reason why it is believed that a creature has to roam in 84 Lakh wombs or forms of life; it is only a metaphor—it does not mean an actual and countable specific number of births that the creatures have to take, but only symbolise the huge possibilities of individual characteristics that are determined by the differing ratios of these three Gunas, and the immense number of individuals that exhibit these characteristics in this creation.

The three Gunas that determine the individual character of the creature, that determine his 'individuality' as compared to the general character of the group to which that individual belongs, are like the *isotopes* in chemistry. The isotope refers to the phenomenon wherein one of two or more atoms of the same chemical element that contain the same number of protons but different numbers of neutrons in their

nuclei and therefore have the same atomic number and chemical properties but different mass numbers and physical properties. For example, two brothers have the same genes and the same inheritance, but the presence of the three Gunas in different ratios between them changes their personality and thought processes. One may be a highly righteous man while the other might be just the opposite. Their parents are the same, their upbringing is the same, they have attended the same school and ate the same food, but there is a deep chasm when it comes to their character as individuals.

Since each individual is like an independent piece of mosaic that completes the entire picture in conjunction with other such pieces, this individual creature's nature and character helps to determine the overall shape of the creation. These Gunas keep the creation in a state of constant change, because numerous creatures die every moment and new ones are born. The Supreme Being has to be constantly on the alert because of this flux.

The various permutations and combinations of these three qualities create a particular 'nature' of an individual giving him his individuality and his special characters which are unique to him; they determine his temperament, behaviour, thought process et al. Two individuals having the same external form of the gross body—e.g. two men—might look very much alike but they vary immensely in their nature, habit, behaviour, thinking, outlook, action and deeds, wisdom and way of living. This is what is meant when it said that a creature has to roam in 84 Lakh wombs or forms of life; it is only a metaphor—it does not mean an actual, countable specific number that there are actually and physically 84 Lakh types of bodies of living beings; it only symbolically refers to the huge possibilities that are possible with these three 'Gunas' and their different combinations that can imaginably produce a myriad variety of creation that can be created with these three basic qualities and their various sub classes of qualities.

The proportion of the three Gunas decides the nature, natural temperament, tendencies, habits and inclination of the creatures. For example, a person with a greater proportion of 'Satvic' (noble) characteristic will be considered nobler than a man with a greater proportion of 'Rajasic' or 'Tamsic' qualities. So we can say that sages, seers, prophets, scholars and generally enlightened persons have a high degree of 'Satvic' qualities in them; kings and householders who live a noble life are example of those with higher amount of 'Rajasic' quality in them; while sinners, killers, drunks, rowdy elements, cheats etc. are those people with higher 'Tamsic' quality in them. These Gunas have direct bearing on the personality of a man.

The first quality of Sattva is concerned with creation and enhancement of knowledge and wisdom. For this, one has to remain alert and vigilant like Brahma. The 'Jagrat state' also corresponds to that state when the creature is awake and interacts physically with the external world, imbibes whatever knowledge and information that comes to it, gains experience, and physically reacts to that knowledge and information. Further, such people are regarded as seniors in society, and they are best depicted in the form of the old patriarch Brahma the creator. They remain so engrossed in the world that they forget who they actually are, what their true identity is, and the very basic fact that what they are thinking to be real is actually not.

Next comes the 'Swapna state' in which a man dreams, and it is a metaphor for imagination and visualization of things based on the experience and knowledge gained during the Jagrat state. In this state a man lives and does things in a virtual manner in a virtual world of dreams. He sustains and nourishes his imaginations, fantasies and conceptions in a world of dreams which is far away from the harsh realities of life in the physical world. He suffers and enjoys in his dreams, then when he wakes up, he sometimes forgets what that imaginary world was like, but at other times there have been incidents wherein he has got new insight and new inspiration while he was dreaming. This is how Vishnu sustains and nourishes the creation created by Brahma. For all practical purposes, a dreaming man appears to be in a state

resembling the state of Samadhi, or a state when an aspirant is in deep meditation and engrossed in contemplation, because he remains aloof and oblivious to the external world, and remains absolutely motionless. But this state is temporary, because he would revert back or wake up to the Jagrat state. That is why Lord Vishnu, who represents this quality of Raja, is depicted as perpetually reclining contemplatively on the bed of the coiled legendary serpent floating on the celestial ocean of milk called Kshirsagar. Since without a vision and imagination one cannot grow, develop and rise, Vishnu is regarded as a maverick player of fantastic tricks in order to sustain and enhance his interests of looking after the creation. Out of these Trinity Gods, it is Vishnu who assumes so many forms and adopts so many tricks to do the needful.

The third quality of Tama is represented by Shiva, and that is why he shows certain traits which are so typical of this quality—viz. being short tempered, and destroying at the shortest notice; his external behaviour and attire also represents the excess of this lowest quality in him. The Sushupta state that he represents stands for being totally oblivious of the external world, and remaining in total bliss. This is exactly how Shiva has been depicted—he remains in a perpetual state of meditation, completely indifferent to the external world, unconcerned and detached from the attractions of the enchanting outside when he can find complete bliss inside his own bosom. The Tama quality marks the presence of ignorance in a greater ratio, and this is depicted by Shiva when he remains ignorant of the niceties of worldly behaviour, notwithstanding his exalted stature of being the greatest amongst the Gods.

²Maya—The word Maya briefly means something that is deluding and ensnaring, something that is not the reality but gives an impression that is just the opposite. *Maya* is a word which has two parts, Ma + Ya. The first half means a 'mother; a progenitor; something that creates', while the other half refers to the 'notion of doubt, of either this or that; the notion marked by uncertainty'. The word 'Ma' also means 'to measure, mark off, by any standard; to show, to exhibit, to display; to infer, to conclude; to be formed, built, made of'. Therefore, the composite word Maya refers to a situation which harbours or creates uncertainties, where it is uncertain whether what is said or understood or seen or witnessed or experienced is actually the truth or not. It is virtually the 'mother of all confusions, doubts and perplexities'. It therefore refers to something or some situation which creates or produces perplexities, doubts and confusions, something that is not real; that which is deluding, illusionary, deceptive, mirage-like and deceitful, and is caused by the ignorance about its truth and reality; something that has no substance or pith; displays no certainty and leads to wrong inference. The term Maya is used to define this entire complex phenomenon at once. Hence, Maya is a synonym used for all that is deceptive, faulty, false, deluding, ignorance-based, illusionary, imposturing, deceitful, invisible and super-natural in the sense that it defies all logic and understanding; all that which has no reality or substance in spite of appearing to be for real; all that is hollow and lacks gravity though appearing to be solid and dense. It creates hallucinations in a creature's mind leading him to believe that what he sees is the truth. It is the deluding and magical powers of the supreme transcendental Lord that hides the reality and creates an imaginary world of deceptions and misconceptions.

Maya has three basic constituent qualities. Hence it is called *Trigunmayi*, i.e. one which has the three Gunas or qualities. These three Gunas or qualities are—Sata, Raja and Tama as described above.

The basic idea here is that Maya is like a transparent coloured sheet which covers the supreme 'truth' in the creation. Since it is transparent, it assumes the attributes of the 'truth' that it covers, because for all practical purposes an ordinary man is unable to see that veil because of its transparency. But at the same time, being tinged by different Gunas, the view of the 'truth' as seen through the veil of Maya gets tainted or distorted consonantly. This is a simple way of understanding what is called 'illusion and Maya vis-à-vis the Truth and Reality'. Maya nevertheless hides the truthfulness of the Truth, and instead lends its own attributes and characteristics to

that Truth known as the 'Nirgun Brahm' by the Upanishads when the latter is observed through this veil, while at the same time assuming the glorious attributes of Brahm itself. So ignorant fools think that the Maya is the real thing, whereas they are actually seeing the 'veiled truth' as observed through this covering of Maya, because the actual 'truth' is hidden from view by this transparent sheet which has lend it its own colour and hue to it . As a result, that Nirgun appears to have some attributes, and it thereby becomes 'Sagun', or the one with attributes and characteristics, by the interference of Maya.]

88. I am non-dual, immutable and one. I am complete and wholesome. I have no outside or inside; I am neither outside nor inside. [That is, since I have no physical body, there is no cause for the existence of concepts of outside and inside, as this demarcation can happen only when there is a physical boundary enclosing a particular area of space, such as an empty pitcher or room. Refer verse no. 84.]

I have no ears (because I have no physical body).

I am not even huge and long (because anything that has no physical dimension cannot be measured).

I am un-manifest and without visible characteristics and attributes.

I am free from any disease or faults that ordinarily afflict all the creatures of this creation. [Refer verse no. 81.] (88).

89. I am a non-dual entity that is an embodiment of infinite beatitude and felicity, and of enlightenment, erudition and wisdom.

I am faultless and without any taints or blemishes.

I have no desires and yearnings. I am not engrossed in or entangled with anything; I have no attachments with and attractions towards anything pertaining to this material world.

I am not the doer of anything (because the deeds are done by the body and not by the Atma which happens to be my 'true self and identity').

I am a non-dual entity (that need not do anything because there is nothing besides this entity in this creation) (89).

90. I do not do anything that is done out of ignorance and lack of proper and correct knowledge.

I am not perceived by application of either the Mana (mind) or the Vaani (speech). [That is, I am beyond the reach and grasp of both the Mana as well as the Vaani. I cannot be understood by application of the mind and its various faculties, and I cannot be described and limited by words.]

I have no small fraction; I do not come under the category of things that are small or limited in scope, or that can be measured by a scale that is applicable to worldly things (for I am vast, fathomless and measureless; I am infinite and endless)¹.

I am free from all grief, sorrows, miseries and agonies of all kinds.

I have no alternatives and no parallels.

I do not have to subscribe to any specific way of life revolving around or recognised by some special type of fire². [In other words, the eclectic and divine entity that is being referred to in these verses does not come under the purview of any of these fires and their related things. It need not conform to any particular way of life revolving around a specific type of fire, or observe a set of sacrosanct rules or perform any of the rituals involving a specific type of fire to be regarded as holy, righteous, divine and auspicious. Even without subscribing to any particular type of divine fire, it is nevertheless holy, divine, pure, auspicious and righteous.] (90).

[Note--¹This is easy to understand—we do not measure the distances of far away stars and galaxies in meters or centimeters. They are measured in light years—the distance traveled by light in one year which is a standard measure for astronomical distances. Likewise, we cannot weigh the planets in grams or kilograms. In other words, the supreme transcendental entity that is the subject matter of these verses as well as the Upanishads in general cannot be measured by a measuring tape with a mundane worldly perspective, for it is super-human, outwardly and transcendental.

²There are five special types of *fires* which are related to five types of circumstances or events in the life of a man. They have been elaborately described in Chandogya Upanishad, canto 4, section 10 to 13. They are—(a) ‘Garhyapatya’ (the fire of the household hearth), (b) ‘Dakshinagni’ (the fire used as a witness to making charities or any other religious festivity), (c) ‘Ahawaniya’ (the fire to invoke the Gods during a ritualistic sacrifice), (d) ‘Sabhya’ (the fire of the Vedic period which was continuously lit) and (e) ‘Awasathya’ (the fire of the later Smriti period). Worship of the three important fires have been described in Chandogya Upanishad, canto 2, section 24, while canto 5, sections 4-10, 19-24 explain their great symbolic metaphysical significance.

The Garhyapatya fire—This is the householder’s fire. A householder has land and farm representing ‘earth’ in which he grows food. This food is grown with the help of the light of the Sun, and it is cooked in the fire of the fire place in the house. Hence, the Garhyapatya fire, or the householder’s fire, is intrinsically present and is implied in these 4 entities. It is an integral part of these four. The earth has the ‘fire element’ because without heat and warmth, no seed would germinate and no life can survive on this earth. The food has fire present inherently in it because it is the energy inherent in food which helps to energise the creature that eats it. The presence of heat in the sun does not need to be explained because it is very evident.

The Dakshinagni fire—is a witness to making of charities when some water is poured as libation to the Gods. It signifies that the Gods are offered water to drink. To give water to the thirsty is the greatest form of charity. Therefore, this fire is symbolically present in water, and when it is poured, it signifies that the heat produced by sins committed by the person has been doused. Charities and donations make a man famous and renowned, hence the allusion to directions of the earth. His glory shines like the bright moon and he is called a star among human beings. He is the most exalted amongst his peers and compatriots even as the moon is most prominent amongst the stars in the sky.

The Ahawaniya fire—is lit to invoke Gods, and the Gods live in the heaven; hence the reference to the sky, heavens and electric. Since Pran is the best form of the vital winds, the allusion means that the Gods are the most exalted forms that exist in creation. The ‘electric’ is a metaphor for immense strength, potent and power, which of course the fire possesses. This inherent quality of Electric that it possess most stupendous powers and strength is likened to the presence of Brahm in it even as the great power and strength present in a man is due to the Atma or Pran present in him. Even as a man is useless without the presence of Pran in him, the Electric would lose its importance if there was no Brahm present in it which gives it its punch and strength.

The following are also regarded as the five fires—(i) The Sun, (ii) The Lightning, (iii) The Terrestrial fire, (iv) The Master or Lord of the household, and (v) The Chief Priest.

According to Garbho-panishad, paragraph 5 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, the body of the living organism is called ‘Deha’ or body because it harbours the Fire element in it.]

91. I do not have a beginning, middle or end. I am like the sky (i.e. endless, fathomless, measureless and infinite). [Refer verse no. 98.]

I am the pure conscious Atma. I am that eternal, cosmic and all-pervading Consciousness which is a measureless treasure of beatitude and felicity. [Refer verse no. 92.] (91).

92. I am an embodiment of Anand (bliss and joyous abundance). I am like Amrit (the elixir of life that provides both eternity and bliss). [Refer verse no. 91.]

I am established in my Atma. I am an entity that is the inner-self of all living beings as their conscious Atma (soul).

I am 'Atma-Kaam', i.e. I am fully contented with my Atma and my self. I am like the supreme Atma (the cosmic Consciousness or the supreme Brahm) that is like the sky (i.e. I am as vast, infinite, eternal, measureless, fathomless and featureless as the sky) (92).

93. I am Ishaan (Lord Shiva, the emblem and insignia of divinity and holiness). I am worthy of worship and reverence. I am the best and the most exalted Purush (i.e. I am the Viraat Purush—the macrocosmic gross body of Brahm from whom the rest of creation evolved—personified). I am, therefore, the best, immaculate and the most exalted entity in creation.

I am merely a witness to whatever that is happening in this world (because I am not involved in this world, I am neutral, and I am not a doer of anything, so I simply watch everything like a dispassionate observer who is not at all concerned about the consequences of the happenings).

I am beyond everything and every considerations; I am transcendental and even beyond its definitions (93).

94. I am the only one of my own kind; I have no parallel.

I am a 'Kavi', i.e. I am an expert in words and expressions; I am well lettered and well read.

I am the Lord who presides over all deeds and judges them (because I am the Supreme Being personified).

I am the cause of all causes (i.e. I am the one who is behind everything that has a cause, and I am the seed that is at the root of all causes giving rise to myriad happenings in this world).

I am the implied secret meaning behind everything mysterious, enigmatic, esoteric and mystical (in the sphere of mysticism, theology, metaphysics and spiritualism). Indeed, I am secret and keep myself secret.

I am the hidden eye which empowers the visible organ of the eye to see things. [In other words, I am the subtle power and authority that actually 'sees' things, and use the external organ of the eye as merely an instrument to aid me in seeing them. This is because I wish to remain secret and behind the curtain. I am the subtle faculty of seeing that resides in the eyes and empowers them to carry out the function of 'seeing'.] (94).

95. I am eternally blissful and happy.

I am the one who infuses life and consciousness to all others. [In other words, I am the Atma which injects consciousness and life in the gross body of all the living beings. Without me, they would all be dead and lifeless.]

I am a treasure and fountain of enlightenment and knowledge, of wisdom and erudition. [Refer verse no. 93.]

I am not only illuminated but am an embodiment or a fount of the best form of illumination in existence (95).

96. In the dark, I am like a secret witness to everything. [In other words, no one should think that if he does anything in the dark or in secret, if he acts surreptitiously and deceitfully, he can hoodwink me who am the consciousness and the Atma. That is why it is said that the Lord watches every deed of the man, whether done overtly or covertly.]

I am the basic essence of the word Turya, i.e. I transcend all planes of existence and am beyond all definitions. [The 'Turya' is the fourth state of transcendental existence when the ascetic goes beyond all awareness of the existence of the world.]

I am beyond the reach of darkness. [That is, darkness in any form can have no effect on me, it cannot touch me, and it cannot cast its gloomy shadow upon me. 'Darkness' is connected to anything that has a negative connotation, such as ignorance, delusions, falsehoods, illusions, deceit, conceit, etc. It is negativity in all its dimensions. Thus, this stanza means that the divine entity being referred to here is not at all affected by any of the things that come within the definition of Darkness. The untold reason behind it is that I am eternally 'self-illuminated', and where there is light there can be no darkness of any kind, physical or otherwise. Refer last stanza of verse no. 95.]

I am a glorious living embodiment of Divinity and Godliness. I am farsighted and can be 'seen', or witnessed and experienced by those who have farsightedness. [That is, the pure conscious Atma is not perceivable by all and sundry. Every Tom, Dick and Harry cannot know it or see it. It requires a lot of deep insight and erudition, a lot of patience and self-control, a lot of diligence and sincerity to even have a glimpse of one corner of this divine and esoteric Godhead. After all, the words 'supreme and transcendental and beyond comprehension' etc. cannot refer to the mundane, the known and the routine.]

I am that eternal and steady Truth that is at the foundation of sight, that gives meaning and substance to what is being seen, that proves that what is seen is actually the reality and the truth, that it cannot be false because it is actually 'seen' first hand. [In other words, one can see things that have an existence, and not things that have no existence. The latter would come under the category of 'imagination of the deluded and hallucinating mind'. The mirage seen in the hot desert comes under this latter category. Even the world of material sense objects that are perishable come under this class. But there is another dimension to this world which is not so easily seen but is nevertheless the 'real and truthful thing', and it is this entity that is being referred here. It is the ultimate 'Truth' called the Consciousness without which nothing would be seen in the first place, whether real or unreal. This concealed entity is the truth in the form of consciousness that forms the foundation upon which the activity called 'seeing' and the faculty of sight are rested. The proof of this lies in the fact that a man from whose body consciousness or Pran has left, i.e. a dead man, never sees anything in spite of the fact that the eye is still there in the body as much as is the brain in the skull of the same body. These two entities that had been seeing everything clearly a while ago become unable to do so now because the consciousness or Atma, also called by its synonym the Pran, has left the body. So we deduce that the function of seeing was not done by either the eye or the brain but by something else. And this 'something else' is the 'consciousness' (Atma) that injects and activates the factor of 'life' (Pran) into these and other organs of the body.] (96).

97. I am eternal and omnipresent; I am present in every moment of life. I am innocent, guiltless, taintless and faultless.

I do not do anything; I am a non-doer of deeds (because all the deeds are done by the body and not by the pure consciousness).

I am without any blemishes and dark taint of any kind; I am flawless.

I am pure and immaculate. I have no alternatives and no parallels. [Refer verse no. 98.]

I have no family and lineage from which I could draw my name, fame and renown, my mystical powers, authority and divinity. [The word 'Nirakhyaat' means name, fame, renown, a description of some royal family, family lineage, or legion of saints. In other words, I have no parent from whom I could have my birth and from whom I could derive or inherit my fame and powers. I do not depend upon anyone else's legacy. What I am is my own being, have my own unique character and virtues, and I do not depend upon someone else to acquire some kind of greatness and divinity, some kind of mystical powers and authority. My divinity, holiness and godliness etc. are a part of my inborn and inherent attributes, virtues and abilities.]

I am steady and unwavering; I do not fluctuate; I do not undergo any change (like the waxing and waning phases of the moon) (97).

98. I am without any faults and taints of any kind (refer verse no. 97). I am eternally and infinitely pure, uncorrupt and immaculate. I have no definable and delineable attributes and qualifications. I am detached with and non-involved in everything.

I have no gross organs of the body (because I am formless and an ethereal spirit). [Refer verse no. 91.]

I am the ultimate controller and regulator of everything. I am neutral and dispassionate.

I have no Kalaas (i.e. I have no fractions or characters that can be definitely be delineated, defined and understood; I am one single non-dual entity that has no fractions and separate aspects) (98).

99. I am the supreme Purush (i.e. I am a personification of the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic revelation of the supreme Brahm, and from whom all the other Gods as well as the rest of creation came into being, and who has revealed himself in the image of the man). Hence, I am the most ancient and traditional supreme transcendental Parmatma (i.e. I am the Supreme Being himself who is the most ancient in the sense that he existed even before the creation came into being).

I am a fathomless and infinite ocean (treasure) of knowledge, wisdom, erudition and enlightenment (Paraavar). I am wise and enlightened enough to crush all delusions and deceit that might be created out of falsehoods and ignorance (99).

100. I am the best Amrit (the eternal elixir of life and wisdom; the ambrosia of eternity and bliss that is drunk by the Gods) and the most ancient and complete supreme Lord. [That is, I represent that elixir which gives eternal life and beatitude because I am the Supreme Being, the undisputable Lord of creation himself personified.]

I am a personification of wholesome and complete bliss and happiness (because I am Amrit personified). I am an embodiment of that knowledge and enlightenment which is one and non-dual, which has no two meanings or aspects (that can cause any kind of confusions or vexations as to which one of them is the 'truth').

I am the evident truth in the form of the consciousness that resides inside the inner self of all living beings. I have only one subtle and sublime form that never changes, and that has only one divine contour (as the 'consciousness'). All of them are nothing but me (100).

101. I am an expert who has specialized knowledge, erudition and wisdom (Pragyaataa).

I am very calm, tranquil and peaceful.

I am the splendorous and self-illuminated entity known as the Parmeshwar (the supreme Ishwar, the Lord God) who is like the sky (i.e. is fathomless, infinite, endless, imperishable, attributeless, without any qualifications, all-pervading, all-encompassing, all-incorporating etc.). [In other words, I glow with a divine light emanating from my being which has given the rest of the world its light. Of course it is the 'consciousness' which lights up the world and makes it alive for the creature to enjoy it. Who would have liked to live in a dark and gloomy world with fearful ghosts and hobgoblins for company?]

Beyond the definitions and debates of what constitutes Dvaitya (dual concept of creation) and what is Advaitya (non-duality), I am neutral and the only entity that is worthy of research, contemplation, meditation and deep ponderings. [Obviously, when one comes in contact with such a mysterious entity that cannot be defined and which does not come under any known classifications or categories, an intelligent and inquisitive mind with an adventurous spirit would not leave it alone but delve deeper and deeper until one is able to unravel its secrets. In the realm of metaphysics and spiritualism, such researchers with adventurous spirits were ancient sages and seers who did not flow with the tide but dared to go against its overwhelming push to unravel the greatest secrets of creation. This discovery they revealed to others in the form of their teachings enshrined in the Upanishads.] (101).

102. I am intelligent and intelligence personified. I am the Lord who takes care of, sustains and protects all the mortal creatures called Bhuts—i.e. I am 'Bhutpaal'.

I am the 'Bhagvan'¹ who is not only enlightened and splendorous but also an embodiment of the virtues metaphorically represented by 'light' with its brilliance, radiance, dazzle and splendour. [That is, as a divine entity that has all the positive, glorious and divine virtues which are collectively symbolised or represented by the single umbrella-like all-inclusive word 'light', as opposed to 'darkness' which would signify negativity, dearth and all lowly qualities, I glow with its divine halo which radiate out from me to light up the surrounding world and remove the darkness that is so foreboding and fearsome. Had it not been for me, the world would have been plunged into the nether world of destruction and decay. That is why I am called 'Bhutpaal', or the one who takes care of all the living beings by the virtue of my divine powers of knowledge, wisdom and erudition alongside astoundingly virtuous qualities such as compassion, benevolence, magnanimity, kindness, mercy, equanimity and graciousness.]

I am called Mahadev—i.e. the great Lord precisely for the aforesaid reasons.

I am great and majestic (because I not only possess astounding virtues but also put it to good use by benevolently taking care of this creation and its creatures).

I am the one who is also known as 'Maha-Gyea', i.e. one who is most knowledgeable, most omniscient, most wise, most erudite and most enlightened.

I am indeed the Maheshwar, i.e. the great Ishwar, the great Lord. [Incidentally, Lord Shiva is also known by this name of Maheshwar. The reason is that amongst the

pantheon of Gods he is said to be most enlightened, a completely detached and self-realised Godhead, and a renunciate ascetic who remains perpetually in the state of meditation and contemplation in the remote snow covered mountains, away from the entrapments of the material world and its accompanying spiritual upheavals, perplexities and dilemmas.] (102).

[Note—¹The word 'Bhagwan' refers to an enlightened being who possesses certain divine qualities not possessed by ordinary human beings, and which are even difficult for the Gods to have. The word has two parts—'Bhag' and 'Wan'. The 2nd part 'wan' means 'one who possesses', while the 1st part 'Bhag' means 'one who is like the receptacle or womb' that harbours the following six qualities or virtues—(1) to have 'Aishwarya', which means to possess all the virtues that come under the category of having majesty, powers, wealth, fortune, opulence, flourish, supremacy, sway, dominance, glory, grandeur, omnipotence and other divine faculties in existence (सम्पूर्ण ऐश्वर्य); (2) to have all Dharma, which means to possess all virtues that come under the ambit of righteousness, probity, propriety, virtuousness, and nobility of thought and conduct (सम्पूर्ण धर्म); (3) to possess all the glories and majesties that come under the definition of the word Yash, i.e. to have great fame, glory, majesty and renown (सम्पूर्ण यश); (4) to have Sree, i.e. to possess all wealth, prosperity, pomp and circumstance, to have prestige, dignity, respect, honour, splendour and glory, as well as all other factors associated with those qualities mentioned in serial no. 1-3 above (सम्पूर्ण श्री); (5) to have complete and comprehensive Gyan, i.e. to have true, deep, incisive, complete and all-incorporating knowledge, erudition, wisdom, skills, expertise and enlightenment (सम्पूर्ण ज्ञान); and (6) at the same time to have immaculate and the highest degree of Vairagya, i.e. to have complete renunciation, detachment, indifference and dispassion towards everything in this world (सम्पूर्ण वैराग्य). Hence, anyone who is endowed with the above six divine, eclectic and exemplary qualities, is called a Bhagwan.]

103. I am free from all encumbrances. I am 'Vibho'¹.

I am worthy to be invited, welcomed and accepted (i.e. I am an honourable, dignified and divine entity that all wise men should invoke, welcome, accept and show respect to; I am worthy of spiritual pursuit).

I am all-pervading and all-encompassing, being omnipresent, all-inclusive and ubiquitous.

I am the best form of the cosmic element called 'Vaishwanar'².

I am Lord Vasudeo³ (one of the names of Vishnu, the sustainer and protector of creation, signifying his lordship over all the essential elements in Nature, called the Vasus of which there are eight in number, created to help sustain the forthcoming creation).

I am the cosmic eye of the whole world (Vishwa Chakshu) by which it sees everything. [This refers to the consciousness that uniformly resides in the bosom of all living creatures. It is this consciousness that injects life and awareness in their gross body. Without consciousness, the body would not be able to 'see' any thing. The word 'see' is a symbolic way of saying that the body lives and becomes aware of the existence of this world and its myriad creatures due to the presence of this single factor called consciousness or Atma inside it, because only a living body 'sees' and not a dead body. The word 'see' also means that the conscious factor present inside the body always warns the creatures and endeavours to show the right path to the

creature and prevents him from going wayward. This is called the 'inner voice of the conscious' which tells one not to follow the unrighteous and inauspicious path. Refer last stanza of verse no. 94.] (103).

[Note--¹The word *Vibho* means 'one who is omniscient, omnipresent, all-pervading, magnanimous, eternal, almighty, omnipotent, majestic and powerful Lord of all'.

It is an epithet usually used to describe the virtues of Lord Vishnu who is regarded as being synonymous with both Brahm, the attributeless and infinite Supreme Being who had manifested as Narayan, as well as the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic gross body of this creation. He is also called the 'Chief Purush', the virtual commander-in-chief of this creation or the President of the institution known as creation. Whether a male or a female occupies these high seats of power, the terms commander-in-chief and president are applicable to them both.

(ii) 'Vibho' refers to Brahm while the word 'Purush' refers to Lord Vishnu in the form of Viraat Purush. It is due to the joint efforts of Brahm and the Viraat Purush that this creation has come into being.

(iii) The meaning of the word *Vibho* depends upon the context in which it is used. For example, in Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 68, and Canto 7, verse no. 36 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, it is the Atma that is called the *Vibho* for it possesses and exhibits all the glorious virtues of Brahm. Earlier, verse no. 67 of this Canto calls the Atma as a manifestation of Vasudeo, one of the names of Vishnu. When these two verses are read together, the inference becomes obvious—that is, the word is applicable to any entity that exhibits the divine and glorious virtues that characterize the supreme transcendental Brahm, the Supreme Being and Lord of creation. Here, both the Atma as well as Vishnu are honoured by the title of *Vibhu*.

²The *Vaishwanar*—the word *Vaishwanar* has many connotations as follows —

(i) It is the fire used in sacrificial rituals. (ii) The microcosmic pure consciousness that resides inside the body of the creature, providing it with life, vitality and energy which helps it to digest food. (iii) Vedanta says that it is the pure consciousness that is a fraction of the Supreme Consciousness, and it resides in the body of the creature even as the Supreme Consciousness resides in the macrocosmic vast body of Nature or creation. It is representative of the supreme, transcendental entity that is the Lord and the primary cause and the governing authority of the whole creation. (iv) Since the creatures have myriad forms, it has as many forms as the creatures themselves, incorporating all of them in it. Hence, it is also called 'Viraat Purush' (which means the vast, colossus, all incorporating, all-pervading, almighty form of the microcosmic Atma of the creature as well as the macrocosmic Atma of the creation; it is measureless, infinite and eternal). This is the subtle form of 'Vaishwanar'. (v) The gross manifestations of this 'Vaishwanar' is the 'Annamaya Kosh' or the food sheath which is one of the five sheaths enclosing the Atma of the creature. This is because, as the *Vaishwanar Agni* (fire), it helps in digestion of food. (vi) Its state of existence is defined as the 'waking state of consciousness'. (vii) The word also means — relating to or belonging to all men, omnipresent, known and worshipped everywhere, universal, general, common, complete, immutable, full in number, a collective noun for all the Gods, one who is all commanding and almighty.

(b) The *Vaishwanar Fire (Agni)*—The legendary 'fire element' has a very prominent place in the scriptures. The Fire God or *Agni* appears in the Vedas as follows—Rig Veda—1/1; 1/12; 4/5; 5/1; 6/7-9; 7/1, 3-6; 12-13; 8/1, 23, 39; 10/1-7; 12/1-122 etc.; in Sam Veda—1-51; 53-55 etc.; in Yajur Veda—1/5; 2/4; 7/24; 18/72 etc.; and in Atharva Veda—6/119; 8/3; 12/3.

Since it was the first born amongst the various Gods, it was called 'Agni' meaning the one who comes first, that which precedes others. It is the inherent 'fire' element present in all the living creatures that distinguish them from non-living creatures. It is all-pervading and omnipresent, and infuses life to all the creatures

(Kaushitaki Brahmin, 4/3; Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 5, Brahmin 9, verse no.1). This fire helps in digestion of food (Shatpath Brahmin, 148/10/1).

He is the foremost amongst the Gods worshipped on earth (Shatpath Brahmin, 6/1/1/11). He is compared to the Sun in the heavens. He has 7 tongues representing the 7 colours of the rays of the Sun or the colours of light (Rig Veda, 1/146/1; 3/6/2). Since he provides nourishment to the Gods by accepting the offerings made to the sacrificial fire at the time of fire sacrifices, he is deemed to be their sustainer and father (Rig Veda, 1/69/1). Other names of the Fire God called Agni or Agne are the following—Vishwavedus, Kavi, Kavikratu, Jaatvedus, Vaishwaanar, Tanunpat, Matrishwa and Naraashansa. It is believed that he was born from the mouth of the Virrat Purush (Rig Veda 10/90/13).

According to some texts, the fire element has *three* legendary forms—viz. the ‘Agni’, which is the terrestrial fire on earth represented by the word Bhu, the ‘Jatvedas’, which is the fire of the sky represented by the word Bhuvaha, and ‘Vaishwanar’, which is the fire of the heavens represented by the word Swaha (Brihaddevatakaar, 1/67). The term appears in the Rig Veda approx. sixty times and is more often than not synonymous with both life as well as the fire element.

³Vasudeo—These *Vasus* are the various patron Gods who preside over the essentials of life; they are eight in number—Vishnu is the sustainer, Shiva who is the annihilator, Kuber who is the treasurer of the wealth of the Gods, the Sun, Water, Fire, Wealth represented by gems and gold, and ‘Ray’ representing glory and fame. The element ‘Fire’ is the most potent, prominent and essential force in creation, because without fire the world would freeze to death. Hence, the Fire-God is said to be the chief amongst the Vasus. The ‘fire’ element is the active force in creation and is primarily responsible for kindling the cosmic cauldron that set in motion the process, and once having set it in motion it then sustained it and would finally annihilate it by burning it to cinders. On the other hand, Lord Vishnu is the passive force of creation represented by his other form of Viraat Purush which is the primary male aspect of creation. Lord Vishnu, who is the sustainer of the creation, is the Lord of Laxmi who is the Goddess of wealth, and is the supreme creator because Brahma, the old patriarch of creation who created the visible world and its creatures, was himself born atop the divine lotus that emerged from the navel of Lord Vishnu. Lord Vishnu utilizes the services of Laxmi who is the personification of the active forces of creation to create, sustain and annihilate the world. The Vasus are symbolic Gods who represent those essentials aspects of creation without which life would be difficult to conceive and sustain and finally conclude.

The eight Vasus are the patron Gods who provide succour and a dwelling place for the whole creation. They symbolise those primary necessities of life without which existence is not possible. They are— (i) Kuber (the God of wealth and prosperity), (ii) the Sun God (who provides energy and food) and his rays and radiance (i.e. sunlight and the energy that it provides), (iii) Shiva (the concluser or annihilator of the creation), (iv) Vishnu (the sustainer), (v) the Water God (called Varun), (vi) the Fire God (called Agni), (vii) any body of water such as a pond, a river etc., and (viii) holy and pious people (who give advice and guidance to the creatures of the creation). According to Brihad Aranyak Upanishad 3/9/3, the Vasus are the following—Fire, Earth, Air, Antariksha (the space of the solar system), Aditya (Sun), Duloka (heavens), the Moon, and the Nakshatras (the stars and the planets).

According to Purans, the eight Vasus are the following—Dhruv, Dhar, Som (the sap of an elixir-providing plant called Som which is used during religious ceremonies as sanctified liquid offered to the Gods), Aapha (water), Anil (wind), Anal (fire), Pratush and Prabhas.

These eight Vasus are the semi-Gods who symbolise the various types of assets needed to sustain this world. They therefore represent such assets as jewels, precious stones and gems, gold and other forms of wealth and property. Vasus also refers to the fire and water elements as well as their grosser forms as the terrestrial fire and

water bodies such as ponds and lakes; to the virtue of radiance, splendour and glory; to the ray of light; to Kuber (the treasurer of Gods), Shiva, Sun, Vishnu, and a simple and pious gentleman.]

104. I measure more than the dimension of the cosmos or universe; I mean more than what is conventionally and traditionally meant and understood by the word cosmos or the universe. My definition and existence is much far ahead and beyond of what is known as the cosmos or universe. I do not come within their conventional and traditional meaning. I cannot be implied to mean anything coming within the ambit of the known and the unknown cosmos.

I am more huge, more vast and more colossus than the entire Vishwa (cosmos, universe, world at a macrocosmic level). [And that is why I am called the 'Viraat Purush'.] As such, I am the macrocosmic Lord Vishnu who is the creator and controller of the entire cosmos (creation). [This refers to the Viraat Purush who is the macrocosmic gross body of the invisible supreme Brahm from whom even the creator of the visible creation, i.e. Brahma the patriarch, was created. This Viraat Purush when he decided to initiate creation assumed the role of Vishnu, and then from his navel emerged the old patriarch of visible creation, i.e. Brahma. The two, Viraat and Vishnu, are interchangeably used. The word 'Viraat' literally means vast and colossus, something that has an infinite dimension and implication. Refer verse no. 99.]

I am pure, uncorrupt and immaculate (Shuddha).

I am the auspicious and the life-infusing cosmic sperm that has injected life in the otherwise life and inane cosmos. This cosmic sperm represents the grand and glorious virtues of life such as vitality, vigour, stamina and strength which mark this vibrant and colourful creation. This I do in my role of Vishnu, the creator and nourisher of the creation.

I am an embodiment of the virtues of peace, tranquility, serenity and calmness.

I am eternal, uniform and infinite. I am Shiva (i.e. I am auspicious, righteous, truthful, beautiful, realised, enlightened and renunciate) (104).

105. I am the Atma that resides in the inner self of all the mortal living beings called Bhuts. I am eternal and omnipresent, being ubiquitous and ever present everywhere at all times. I am traditional, primeval, ancient and primary.

I remain firmly and majestically established, and shine in my own divine glories (105).

106. I reside in the bosom (the inner self) of all the living beings as a fount of light representing their Atma (pure consciousness), and as such I am their Lord. [This is the microcosmic view of the Atma because it pertains to an individual creature.]

All the mortal creatures that have life have their existence in me. [This is the macrocosmic view of the Atma. This statement conforms to the concept of Vedanta that everything in existence is a tiny fraction of the vast cosmos which consists of the body of the supreme Brahm in his manifestation of Viraat Purush much like the individual hair follicles on the body of a man in relation with his entire body.] This is because I am ubiquitous, all-pervading and omnipresent in all spheres of time and eras (106).

107. I am a witness to all; I am a witness for all (refer verse no. 103). I am the Atma which universally lives in all the living beings (as their soul and pure consciousness).

I (pure consciousness) am the mystical entity that is the secret behind all life forms in this mortal world (because without me nothing would live and feel anything).

I bring out and highlight the individuality and the glorious potentials of all the organs of the body (because it is due to my presence in the body that these individual organs perform their designated tasks which are so magnificent and astonishing). But at the same time, I am absolutely separate and distinct from them; I do not have any organ of my own (because I am the ethereal and eternally free Spirit and disembodied cosmic Consciousness which do not have any grossness in them and neither do they need any gross organ to showcase their stupendity and astounding divine glories). [Refer verse no. 98.] (107).

108. I transcend the three states of existence of a creature. [These three states are the waking state, the dreaming state and the deep sleeping state of existence of consciousness, i.e. I am in the fourth state called the Turiya state which is a state of complete bliss and ecstasy.]

I am gracious, kind, benevolent, munificent and magnanimous towards all.

I am the supreme Parmatma, the Supreme Being and the cosmic Soul of the creation who is eternally and truthfully blissful, joyous and happy (refer verse no. 99, 102). I am dear to all and all are dear to me (108).

109. I am nothing but Anand (bliss, happiness and joy) in its true, undiluted and eternal form (refer verse no. 92, 94, 100).

I am self-illuminated and a treasury as well as a fount of pure consciousness (refer verse no. 99).

I am an embodiment of truth; I am indeed truthful (refer verse no. 96). I possess mystical powers, and therefore I am called a 'Siddha'.

I am the Atma or soul of all (living beings). [Refer verse no. 106.] (109).

110. I am like a base and foundation for all living beings (because no one can live without the Atma or consciousness and Pran or the vital spark of life in him).

I am an embodiment of that truth that is established in all of them (as their Atma).

I can cut through all fetters (of ignorance and delusions that have tied the creature to this world of falsehood and illusions) and unshackle all the creatures to provide them with liberation and deliverance (because I am enlightened and wise, I am knowledge and erudition personified, and therefore eminently qualified to do so).

I can devour all that have come into existence (because I am the end of creation and have revealed myself as Lord Shiva, the God of conclusion).

I see and observe all (as I am the supreme Lord of creation and nothing is unknown to me or hidden from me because I am omniscient and all-knowing, I am omnipresent and all-pervading, and therefore nothing happens without my presence and knowledge). [Refer verse no. 84.]

I am the one who experiences everything on behalf of all the creatures (as their conscious Atma or self).

A person who is aware of these facts about me and my truthful nature and form (i.e. about the pure consciousness Atma or soul) is the one who truly a wise Purush (a wise and enlightened man). This is the teaching of this Upanishad (110).

-----Shanti Paath-----

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Chapter 17

Yogtattva Upanishad/Yogtattvo-panishad

The name of this Upanishad itself indicates what it is about. The word has two components—Yog and Tattva. ‘Yog’ means meditation as a means of bringing about a union between the soul of the individual and the Soul of the creation, to establish harmony between two entities that have been artificially separated though they are inherently the same. Tattva means the essence and principle of anything. Hence, the combined meaning is clear—the text strives to establish a unity between two inherently divine entities which are essentially and by principal one and the same but been inadvertently and erroneously separated from one another. They yearn to be reunited into their original non-dual form as the Principal entity that is the Absolute Truth of creation.

This is a revealed Upanishad as it was taught or preached by Lord Vishnu, the sustainer and protector of creation, when Brahma, the creator of the visible creation, approached the former to advise a method by which the creatures of this vast colourful creation that was being unfolded by him could free themselves from the clutches of ignorance about the reality of existence and find the correct path that can ensure their liberation and deliverance. So Vishnu taught Brahma about the essential features of Yoga, its benefits and its different aspects. Regular practice of Yoga enables the practitioner to be able to break free from the unending cycle of miseries and transmigration, and instead find liberation and deliverance from it.

It describes the concept of Kaivalya (the ‘only one’) and stresses that Yoga is the best path leading to it. In the realm of Yoga, it deals with five types, i.e. Mantra Yoga, Laya Yoga, Hath Yoga, Raaj Yoga and Purna Mano Yoga, and narrates their various aspects. It goes on to outline the daily norms and codes of conduct to be followed by an ascetic, and the subtle signs which indicate that he has achieved success in his spiritual pursuit. Such a person acquires mystical powers that are divine and godly. He is able to witness the light of consciousness lighted in his inner self and find permanent liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death.

It also outlines the symbolic location of the five primary elements, viz. earth, water, fire, air and sky, in the body and their personification in the form of the various Gods or deities that are worshipped and revered in Hinduism.

This Upanishad is very similar to Yogshikha Upanishad which is Chapter 21 of this volume. Whereas the teacher in the present case, the Yogtattva is Lord Vishnu, the teacher in the case of Yogshikha is Lord Shiva. Other Upanishads of the Krishna Yajur Veda greatly related to this Upanishad are the Tejobindu, Dhyani Bindu, Brahm Vidya and Varaha to name a few of them.

-----Shanti Paath-----

Please see appendix no. 1 for the meaning of this Shanti Paath.

1. I shall describe the essential principles and tenets of Yoga with the all round welfare of ascetic and spiritual aspirants in mind so that they can have a guideline to show them the correct path. It is so potent that hearing it, studying it and implementing it (its principles) in one's own life can bless one with the ability to destroy, overcome or neutralise the bad consequences of one's sins and misdeeds (1).

2. Lord Vishnu is known as the primary and most ancient 'Maha-Yogi' (the great patriarch of ascetics who followed the tenets of Yoga diligently himself and is deemed to be the prime and most ancient teacher and exponent of this philosophy).

He is also known as the 'Maha-Bhut' because he is the primary and most ancient cause of all the Bhuts, i.e. all the primary elements (earth, water, fire, air and sky) that exist in this creation and from which the rest of the creation has come into being (or moulded from); he is the greatest of all the Bhuts; he is the progenitor of the Bhuts.

He is also known as 'Maha-Tapa', i.e. the one who does severe penances for the welfare of others and to keep himself pure by observing the strictest and harshest laws of austerity, probity, propriety nobility, auspiciousness and righteousness which entail a lot of sufferance in their wake.

In the path of essential Truth and Reality, in the path that is true and holy, the path that is free from all deceit and delusions, he is like a lighted lamp. [In other words, he is like a light that shows the correct spiritual path to all the followers just as a lamp shows the path to others by its light by removing the darkness.] (2).

[Note—Refer verse no. 120 in this context.]

3. The old patriarch and the creator of this visible creation, Lord Brahma, went to Lord Vishnu, the lord of the entire creation (visible and non-visible), bowed his head reverentially before him and said, 'Oh Lord of the entire world! Please preach to me all aspects of Yoga, complete with its eight branches called 'Ashtaanga Yoga'' (3).

4. Hearing this, Lord Hrishikesh (Vishnu) replied to him, 'Alright. I shall narrate that 'Tattva' (principle, essential, fundamental and basic knowledge) that you seek to know. Listen attentively. All the creatures are bound or trapped in the web or net weaved by Maya¹ (delusions) out of the two opposing threads called Sukha or comforts and happiness, and Dukha or a motley collection of assorted sorrows and miseries that together cast a magical spell of delusions upon the creature and keep him trapped (4).

[Note—¹The concept of Maya: Refer also to Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse no. 87 and its note (Chapter 16), and Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 33 and its note (Chapter 14).]

5. This path or way is the only one which can take the creature across the hurdle of death and lead it to liberation and deliverance from the web of Sukha and Dukha created by Maya that had shackled the creature in its iron-like grip, providing him freedom from the endless cycle of birth and death along with its attendant agonies such as old age and diseases (5).

6. The supreme stature that a creature can attain, the best destiny for the creature that is one of its own kind, is not obtainable easily by following any other path or method other than the one described here. Even wise and erudite ones who try to follow so

many different paths shown by so many different scriptures become perplexed and confused. Their intellect gets bogged down in this quagmire from which they find hard to extricate themselves (6).

7. That supreme stature and spiritual achievement is so enigmatic and esoteric that even the Gods fail to fully grasp it and describe it, or even mention anything about it in a cogent manner. Say then, how is it possible for the scriptures to do so? How is it possible for them (the scriptures) to definitely and with certainty describe the subtle and sublime Atma which is immanent, self-illuminated, quintessential and enlightened cosmic Consciousness when even the divine Gods—who are much senior to ordinary mortals, who have attained their Godly stature because they had risen above the mundane and acquired certain divine qualities not available to others, and therefore have become more enlightened about this Atma that is quintessentially present everywhere—cannot do so. These Gods have become Godly in the first place because they had realised the presence and glory of this eclectic divine entity known as the Atma, but still they are unable to tell anything about it. (7).

8. This Atma is without any Kalaas (portions and aspects, because it is one single immutable non-dual whole). It is without any worldly faults, filths, taints and blemishes. It is calm, tranquil and serene. It is beyond everything and all transcends all definitions. It is free from all physical and moral ailments that afflict the creatures (because such things happen to someone who has a physical body and who is involved in the affairs of the world, but the Atma is an ethereal spirit, unattached and uninvolved).

But the irony is that such an immaculate and pristine pure entity, i.e. the Atma, gets soaked and drenched in the after effects of deeds that are categorised as either good (auspicious, righteous, noble, proper and correct) or bad (the opposite of what is good) when it assumes the role of a Jiva (living being)¹ (8).

[Note--¹This is because the Atma assumes an identity as a 'Jiva', i.e. a living being that has a gross body, and is therefore subject to all the problems associated with the latter and conditioned by all the characteristic qualities of it. The Atma now loses its independence and its primary ethereal and spirit form; it becomes limited to the body, conditioned by it and influenced by it. This Atma-with-a-body, the Jiva-Atma, receives information from the outside world through the medium of the gross body and its organs, and acts according to it, thereby becoming conditioned, influenced and biased. It would lose its pristine and independent nature of 'self thought' and 'self action'. Since it has to live in this world which is deed-oriented, it cannot remain idle and must do this or that. Each deed done would leave a trail of consequences, either good or bad. This would compel the Atma to suffer the effects of the deeds and get affected just like a passenger of a chariot is tossed about and hurt when the vehicle in which he is traveling is itself rocking and swinging from side to side; the passenger cannot remain immune to the way the chariot moves. See verse nos. 12-13 below.

The virtuous attributes and eclectic characteristics of the pure conscious Atma have been narrated in a number of Upanishads—(a) Krishna Yajur Veda's Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse nos. 81-110; Tejo Bindu Upanishad, Canto 3, verse nos. 1-51, 60-64, Canto 4, verse nos. 2-30, 69-79, Canto 5, verse nos. 1-75, 90-96, Canto 6, verse nos. 1-72. (b) Shukla Yajur Veda's Adhyatma Upanishad; Subalo-panishad, Canto 3, 5, 7 (verse no. 1), and 9 (verse no. 16); Paingalo-panishad, canto 4, verse no.18. (c) Rig Veda's Atma-poojo-panishad. (d) Atharva Veda's Atmo-panishad.]

9. Now the natural question arises as to why and how that Atma—which is said to be transcendental, beyond all concepts and notions, eternal and infinite, omnipresent and

all-pervading, an embodiment of Gyan (enlightenment, wisdom, erudition and sagacity), and without any tinge of Maya (delusions and misconceptions caused by ignorance and deceptions)—becomes a Jiva (a living being or creature having a gross body and subject to all the taints and shortcomings associated with this gross body and the world in which it lives)? (9).

10. [This verse briefly summarises the first moments of creation, and is akin to all the Upanishads that deal with the genesis of creation.]

In the beginning, that principle primary and primordial ‘essence’ (Tattva) was absolutely placid and calm¹.

Then there were minute and almost imperceptible ripples in it just like the ones in water, indicating some subtle and secret activity². This caused the element of Ahankar³ (the sense of pride and ego) to emerge in it.

This activity resulted in the formation of the primary cosmic egg which had certain Gunas⁴ (inherent qualities, attributes, virtues and characteristics) that would determine the specific nature, temperament and personality traits of the creature that would finally emerge from this egg when it hatched. [These Gunas were like the chemical ingredients in any fluid that determine its fundamental qualities and characteristics. They would determine the underlying subtle and basic nature, the basic temperament and character traits of the offspring, i.e. the creature, which would emerge when the egg hatched finally upon maturity.]

Besides the above, the yolk of the egg had as its basic constituent ingredients the five primary elements called ‘Panch Maha Bhuts’ (which are sky, air, fire, water and earth). These elements determined the basic texture of this yolk that would determine the form which the offspring (creature) would get when the egg finally hatched⁵ (10).

[Note--¹There is a play on the word *Tattva* here. We speak of a flower’s *Tattva*, i.e. the volatile liquid extracted from the flowers and used as various scents and perfumes. It is called the ‘essence’ of the flower. Even the nectar is called ‘essence’ or *Tattva* of the flower. The oil extracted from seeds and herbs are also called their *Tattva* or essential extracts. The common factor in all these is the ‘liquid or fluid’ nature of the *Tattva*. It is this reason why life is said to have emerged in water, a fluid and elixir of life and vitality, the ‘essence’ or *Tattva* that sustains and protects life. The primary essence of creation was not some liquid as we understand the term; it was ‘ethereal’, more like the air or wind element, resembling more closely to the something that fills the outer space above the surface of the earth. It must be understood that though ‘air’ does not exist outside the atmosphere of the earth, it is not an absolute vacuum, for there is something that lies between any two celestial bodies or planets, separating them and preventing them from colliding with each other. All celestial bodies are dipped in this cosmic liquid which is like a ‘volatile essence’ drawn from flowers. It is ‘volatile’ because it is never the same, and that is why we say that the creation is continuously and perpetually changing and evolving. Had it not been so, had that *Tattva* been a solid, everything in creation would have been cast in one fixed mould for eternity.

²According to the philosophy of *Tantra Shastra* dedicated to the worship of divinity in the form of Shiva and Shakti, the process of creation took the following initial steps. Before anything came into being, Brahm, the supreme consciousness and the ultimate truth of creation, known as Shiva, was established in his own radiant effulgence or self-illumination symbolising his splendid glory, majesty and divinity. Hence he was called ‘Prakash’, literally meaning light. When he decided to deliberate and actually started the process of deliberation in order to start the process of creation, there was a subtle ‘spandan’ or a slight throb or imperceptible movement

which transformed into a vibration. The waves generated by this initial vibration developed in the cosmic ether and gradually coalesced with each other to give rise to higher waves of higher amplitudes. This produced the cosmic sound called the Naad. Since the creation was conceived in the bowl of the cosmic ether, the energy of the initial sound was focused at a central point, called the focal point or the dot or 'Bindu'. This Bindu contained the combined powers of both the male Shiva and the female Shakti like a dicotyledonous seed which produced the two separate entities called Shiva and Shakti. The union of these two resulted in the unfolding of the rest of the creation. Thus it will be observed that whatever exists in this creation can be traced back to this primeval Naad. Hence, the latter is called 'Shabda Brahm', or the Brahm as sound. Therefore it is very natural to assume that all Mantras dedicated to any divine entity and consisting of the sound element (because Mantra consist of letters and words, and are chanted or repeated to make them effective) has its origin in this Shabda Brahm and gets its powers and energy from this Shabda Brahm. In other words, the Mantra contains in itself the essential meaning, form and spirit of the deity whose Mantra it is and which is being worshipped and invoked. Constant repetition of the Mantra generates so much energy in due course of time that the deity being worshipped is revealed. This is because the sound has great powers and energy as is evident when reverberation of sound waves and the resonance created by them are so powerful and forceful that they can shatter sheet glass in windows when an explosion occurs near a building.

³This is because that Tattva thought to itself 'well, I have life in me; I can show activity; I can move; I am not dead'. This factor of 'I' was the root of Ahankar. That is why even today, the word 'I' is associated with ego, pride, vanity, arrogance and haughtiness, collectively called Ahankar.

⁴The three characteristic qualities inherently present in the creature, in different ratios, are the three thought textures which bombard the mind. These three thought textures are manifestations of the 'Vrittis and Vasanas' (inherent tendencies or desires) of the creature which mire its pure conscious Atma or soul as a covering or veil. These three basic qualities or *Gunas* which are inherent in all the living beings determine their nature, habits, temperaments and inclinations which in turn decide the behaviour, personality and outlook of each individual in this world.

(a) *Sata Guna* or quality is the best quality present in a creature and it is marked by a predominance of auspiciousness, righteousness, virtuousness and noble qualities. It is marked by such high standards of ethical existence that have, as their characteristic features, such qualities as coolness of head, peace, contentedness, humility, devotion, wisdom, mercy, compassion, creativity, selflessness, service, righteousness, virtuousness, holiness and nobility of thought and action etc. As is evident, these qualities are the best qualities that one can have in him; they have a spiritual dimension to them; they are spiritually uplifting and give a divine halo to those who practice them. This quality creates an inherent affinity in a creature towards things in life which are of high moral value and uplifting for the soul rather than things which are demoting and denigrating for the spirit.

The *Sata Guna* or quality is the veil covering the soul like a smoke covering the fire. A slight breeze will remove this smoke. Similarly a little bit of prayer and meditation will remove the Satwic desires; its removal requires the least effort. It is the foremost and the best amongst the three characteristics of a creature such as good and positive virtuous such as righteousness, creativity, noble deeds and thoughts, the positive qualities of service, benevolence, mercy, devotion, wisdom, holiness, piety etc.

(b) *Raja Guna* is the medium quality marked by a greater percentage of worldly passions, desires and attachments and their natural offshoots in a creature. It covers such qualities as worldly yearnings, passions, a stormy nature, agitated behaviour, ambitions, desires, selfishness, expansionist tendencies, desire to sustain etc. All these pertain to this materialistic world, and they create an inherent affinity in a creature

towards the material world of sense objects and their enjoyments rather than the world of spiritualism. In other words, those creatures who have this quality as a dominant trait are more inclined towards the world as compared to those creatures who have the Sata quality in a greater density. Such qualities give worldly fame and prosperity. If these qualities are judiciously mixed with the Satwic qualities, then they provide the person the better of the two worlds, both in terms of worldly fame as well as spiritual well being.

The Rajsic quality or Guna can be compared to dust on a mirror. In this case some dusting and rubbing is needed to clean the mirror; a greater effort is needed as compared to the case with Satwic quality. Rajsic tendencies are the second best quality which produces worldly desires, ambitions, passions, selfishness, various obsessions, desire to sustain and expand etc.

(c) *Tama Guna* is the third quality which is the meanest and basest of the three types of qualities in a creature. It is marked by evilness, perversions and sinfulness. It is the most degrading, denigrating and contemptible of the three characteristics in a person, leading him to such negative traits as sins, vices, perversions, greed, avarice, haughtiness, pride, lust, attachments, yearnings, intoxication, wild behaviour, promiscuity, evils, utter disregard for anything which is righteous, ethical and noble etc. This quality creates an inherent affinity in a creature towards things which are very mean and lowly, which are totally sensual and pertain to the immediate gratification of the sense urges without any thought to what would be their consequences in the long run. In brief, behaviour which is utterly immoral, denigrating and depraving for the creature, marked by grossness, crassness and recklessness of demeanors. It is the lowest and meanest of the three qualities leading to a person's downfall, ignominy and ruin.

The Tamsic quality or Guna covering the soul is like a foetus in the womb covered by the embryonic membrane—they cannot be removed easily and require diligence, effort, dedicated and careful handling requiring time and patience. It is the basest and the lowliest of the three characteristics, the worst type to possess, and is marked by such negative traits as sin, evil, perversions, immorality, vices, misdemeanors, anger, inertia, delusions, deception, gloom, ignorance et al.

Since each individual is like an independent piece of mosaic that completes the entire picture in conjunction with other such pieces, this individual creature's nature and character helps to determine the overall shape of the creation. These Gunas keep the creation in a state of constant change, because numerous creatures die every moment and new ones are born. The Supreme Being has to be constantly on the alert because of this flux.

The various permutations and combinations of these three qualities create a particular 'nature' of an individual giving him his individuality and his special characters which are unique to him; they determine his temperament, behaviour, thought process et al. Two individuals having the same external form of the gross body—e.g. two men—might look very much alike but they vary immensely in their nature, habit, behaviour, thinking, outlook, action and deeds, wisdom and way of living. This is what is meant when it said that a creature has to roam in 84 Lakh wombs or forms of life; it is only a metaphor—it does not mean an actual, countable specific number that there are actually and physically 84 Lakh types of bodies of living beings; it only symbolically refers to the huge possibilities that are possible with these three 'Gunās' and their different combinations that can imaginably produce a myriad variety of creation that can be created with these three basic qualities and their various sub classes of qualities.

The proportion of the three Gunas decides the nature, natural temperament, tendencies, habits and inclination of the creatures. For example, a person with a greater proportion of 'Satvic' (noble) characteristic will be considered nobler than a man with a greater proportion of 'Rajsic' or 'Tamsic' qualities. So we can say that sages, seers, prophets, scholars and generally enlightened persons have a high degree

of 'Satvic' qualities in them; kings and householders who live a noble life are example of those with higher amount of 'Rajasic' quality in them; while sinners, killers, drunks, rowdy elements, cheats etc. are those people with higher 'Tamsic' quality in them. These Gunas have direct bearing on the personality of a man.

To understand how the three Gunas affect the Atma, let's take two examples—that of a hot piece of iron glowing red with heat, and the potter moulding various pots from the same clod of earth.

The supreme pure conscious cosmic Atma subjects the Bhoot Atma of the individual creature to the 'radiation' of these 'Gunas'. These 'Gunas' are the three basic qualities present in all the creatures in different permutations and combinations. These 'Gunas' effect the 'Bhoot Atma' differently based on a number of factors—such as for example, the present status of the 'Bhoot Atma' vis-à-vis its past deeds, their cumulative affects, the caliber of its mind and intellect, the position it occupies in the ladder of spiritual evolution, its willingness to change or subject itself to the effects of such radiation etc.

The concept can be understood differently also. A piece of iron, when heated, shows the heat as a 'red hot glow' which fully pervades the iron piece and becomes an integral part of it. The whole piece appears to be one whole mass of something which is red, hot and glowing. When beaten by a hammer, the iron piece bends and can be shaped into any shape. Each new shape, when heated, will show the same glow of red hot fire inside it. Similarly, the Atma provides consciousness to the creature, making it active and lively, subject to receptions of stimuli in the form of various perceptions originating in the external world and received through the organs of perception present in the gross body. The 'heated' body (i.e. the Bhoot Atma made active by the Atma) now becomes susceptible to change (from the impact of the three Gunas) much like the heated piece of iron being hammered by the hammer. The 'hammering' by the three 'Gunas' (the inherent qualities present in every creature) help to cast the individual creature into various moulds or shapes having different characteristics. Even as cold iron is not easily malleable, the creature without the infusion of life injected into it by the Atma is as good as dead and is the least malleable. Here, the allegory is simple—the creature is the iron, the glowing consciousness is the fire, the impinging 'Gunas' is the blow of the hammer, and the Atma is the iron smith.

The wheel of the potter moulds the clay into various shapes, but the driving force of the wheel is the potter. Similarly, the three 'Gunas' mould the characteristic of the creature, but the Atma is the authority, the potter in this allegory, who drives the three 'Gunas'. Just as the potter is not the wheel, the Atma is not affected by the three 'Gunas', it is just an instrument, an implement to shape the character of the creature. Again, even as a wheel is needed by a potter to give shape to a shapeless clod of clay, the Atma needs the three Gunas to mould the characters of the creatures that constitute this creation.

And important point to note here is that 'Ahankar' (ego, false pride, arrogance, haughtiness, hypocrisy and the sense of 'I') is the root cause of demoting even the most exalted of souls to an existence equivalent to that of an animal. This is stressed in Jabalu-panishad of Sam Veda tradition which stresses that 'Isha' or the supreme Lord of creation had to become a 'Pashupati', Lord of animals, just because Ahankar cast its dark shadow on him. An exalted soul too becomes demoted as an animal if he has Ahankar in him.

The concept that 'I' is the body and not the 'pure conscious soul' leads to ignorance-based ego (Ahanakar). The constant concept of I vis-à-vis the body and this world leads to the sense of possessiveness in the creature. 'Pure consciousness' mired by ego becomes 'a conditioned consciousness' and fails to remain pure. This is why ego (Ahankar) has been likened to a minister of the king. It directs and regulates the actions of the consciousness which, under its influence, loses its independence. This 'conditioned consciousness'—working through the mind-intellect-ego combine

is called, inter-alia, 'Chitta'. The word also means memory. Hence this memory acts as a referral library for the intellect. The latter falls back on it and rely on it whenever it is in doubt. The quality of books in the library guides the student; similarly, the quality of inherent tendencies stored in the library of Chitta directly affects the inputs of the intellect, and through it, the mind and successively down the hierarchy to the body and its organs of perception and action.

Although the soul has nothing to do with this command chain, but for all practical purposes the Atma/soul is deemed responsible for it because of its sovereign nature. So, the sincere seeker/aspirant should delineate this conscious from the rest of the chain and break the nexus between them so as to allow the glory of the pure consciousness of the soul to shine through like the splendorous sun breaking through from behind a curtain of clouds. It is like removing the various veils or covers from around the candle so that its light shines through the darkness of the room and illuminates all the corners of it.

How the three Gunas were used by Brahm to create this world has been beautifully described in Paingalo-panishad, 1/7 and 2/3. Canto 2, verse no. 3 describes how Sata and Raja were used, while Canto 1, verse no. 7 narrates the use of Tama. The concept of Gunas affecting the Atma has been elaborately dealt with in various Upanishads, for example the Maitrayanyu Upanishad, 1/11, 2/5, 3/5, etc. of the Sam Veda tradition.

Besides the three primary Gunas, we have six other Gunas as follows—(i) Sham (शम—having self restraint and control; having peace, tranquility, serenity and quietness; being able to suppress desires, yearnings and natural instincts and impulses); Dam (दम —tolerance, forbearance, fortitude); (iii) Upriti (उप्रिति—renunciation, detachment, dispassion, indifference and non-involvement); (iv) Titksha (तिष्ठिष्ठा —endurance, patience, fortitude, sufferance, equanimity); (v) Samadhan (समाधान —solution, answer, lack of confusion or doubts, clarity of thoughts and conception); and (vi) Shraddha (श्रद्धा —having faith, belief, conviction, reverence and devotion).

⁵This is like the case of a building where its physical structure is determined by the physical grosser dimension of the construction materials used in its construction, such as bricks, steel, cement, sand, mortar, wood, iron, the paint used to colour it etc. Besides this, there is a subtle dimension of construction that depends upon the quality and not the quantity of these materials. Together they determine not only the exterior façade, the physical shape and presentation of this building but its inherent strength and quality. Then other factors come into play, such as the intention for which it was made and how actually it is being used, how it is looked after, who lives in it, how does it effect the surrounding landscape, what general ambience it has, whether it is foreboding and awe-inspiring or is welcoming and inviting, whether it is airy, lighted and comfortable or not, and such other small and big things. These are its hidden subtler qualities.

Likewise, the basic ingredients used at the time of conception of the creature in the cosmic egg, i.e. the ratio of the basic Gunas and the proportion of different elements would determine how each creature would become a unique sample even as no two buildings can ever be exactly the same in the true sense, for subtle variations are sure to creep in because of the nature of its independent construction work. That is also the reason why no two creatures are alike.]

11. That inherently pure, uncorrupted, supreme and transcendental Atma known as Parmatma, when it allowed itself to be submerged in or affected by such worldly notions as having Sukha and Dukha (i.e. when the Atma began to feel happy and sorrowful as a result of it erroneously identifying itself with the gross body and the material world which tossed it between the emotions of having elation and joy on the one hand, and threw it into the pit of distress and dismay, inflicting untold miseries to it on the other hand) it began to be called a Jiva Atma. This is how the Parmatma, the

Supreme Being, came to be known as the Jiva, the living being. [The word ‘Jiva’ literally means something that is alive, that lives, whereas Parmatma means the supreme Atma, the supreme consciousness. The former word in practice refers to all the living beings in this creation, including plants and animals, while the latter word refers to the Lord of creation, the God of all the gods.] (11).

[Note—The genesis of creation described here in very brief is elaborately explained elsewhere in the Upanishads, such as in the following ones--(a) Rig Veda tradition—Aiteriyo-panishad; Mudgalo-pansishad, Canto 2-4; (b) Sam Veda tradition—Chandogyo-pansishad, Canto 3, Section 19; Canto 4, Section 17, verse nos. 1-3; Canto 6, Section 2-10; (c) Shukla Yajur Veda tradition—Trishikhi Brahmin, Canto 1; Painglo-pansishad, in its Canto 1 and Canto 2, verse no. 1-10; Subalo-pansishad, Canto 1-2; Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 1, Brahmin 1-2, 4-5; Canto 6, Brahmin 4; (d) Krishna Yajur Veda tradition—Shwetashwetar Upanishad, Canto 4; Taittiriyo-pansishad, Valli (Canto) 2, Anuvak (sub-canto) 2 and 6.]

12-13. [These verses describe how and why the otherwise immaculate and non-dual single entity known as the Atma begins to appear to have numerous forms and exhibit as many varied characteristic traits as there are creatures of various genres and personalities, each so different from the other that no two are alike. Refer to Garbha Upanishad, para 3 which describes sixteen faults that surround the Atma; to Dhyana Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 93/1-93/15 which uses the beautiful analogy of the Atma enclosed in a symbolic Lotus with tinted petals in the subtle heart of the aspirant and from where it looks at the world through these tinted petals, thereby not only distorting its view of the world but also allowing itself to be ‘coloured’—or getting corrupted, tainted and influenced by the myriad impure qualities that are the general characteristics of this world.]

Some of the numerous faults, weaknesses, imperfections, blemishes or shortcomings that affect the character of a Jiva (living being, the creature), causing it to be blighted and preventing his pure and uncorrupt self, the Atma, from retaining its primarily untainted, pristine pure and immaculate character, nature and form which is one and non-dual, called the ‘Kaivalya’ state of its existence, are the following—Kaam (worldly desires, passions and lust), Krodh (anger, indignation, spite and wrath), Bhaya (fear and consternation), Moha (attractions, attachments, delusions, infatuations, longing), Mada (arrogance, haughtiness and intoxication), Raja (the second of the three qualities creating worldly tendencies and desires related to this world), Janma-Mritu (the cycle of birth and death and its attendant horrors and agonies), Kripantaa (being stringy and miserly, specially in the field of religious duties such as giving alms and making charities, or supporting such activities; the word would cover miserliness of thoughts in the sense that one does not give the correct knowledge to others out of jealousy), Shok (sorrows, grief and agonies), Tandra (being sleepy, indolent, lethargic, lazy, careless and showing lack of energy and alertness), Kshudha (hunger, both physical such as for food and the insatiable desire for sensual gratification, as well as emotional such as the insatiable longing for worldly things), Trisha (desires, wishes and yearnings pertaining to the world) [12], Trishnaa (thirst, ambition, avarice and greed; the word is usually used in the negative sense; it pertains to a man’s insatiable desire and greed for worldly things), Lajjaa (shame, dishonour, ignominy), the constant fear of Dukha and its attendant Vishaad (i.e. being constantly tormented by the fear of sufferance from sorrows and grief of all kinds and the attendant agonies and miseries, distresses and a sense of despair and hopelessness and haplessness), Harsha (to feel elated and happy, to be glad and

joyous, to feel cheerful and exhilarated by certain situations which seem to be in favour, such as on receiving some good news), etc.

It is only when the creature is freed from the tainting effects of all these faults, blemishes, imperfections and shortcomings that the Atma can realise its one and non-dual pure conscious form, the state of existence called 'Kaivalya'¹ (12-13).

[Note--¹These shortcomings, blemishes or defects cast a shadow on the character of the Jiva, causing a blight on his character and inherently pure form, and makes it appear that his Atma, which is his true identity, has these respective shortcomings or defects or imperfections in it. In other words, the immaculate Atma appears to be blighted and tainted. This is because the Atma of the Jiva allows itself to be affected by any or all of these faults and imperfections, forgetting that this is not its true nature but an illusionary scenario created by ignorance of the truth of its primary nature, which is leading it to delusions and its attendant problems. Each fault or imperfection or defect or shortcoming enumerated in these two verses, in association with others and acting in coordination with them in various permutations and combinations create an infinite array and variety of traits of character, temperaments, habits, personalities, attributes, virtues and qualities in all the creatures. The resultant effect is that there is no similarity between any two of them. Thus, the Atma, which is one and the same in all the creatures, appears to be of as many varieties as there are number of creatures. It assumes a dual and varied form; it becomes multifarious and diverse; it loses its non-dual, indivisible and immutable nature. In other words, it has become tainted and full of faults associated with the worldly creature; it has lost its pristine purity and singleness.

The 'perfect' Atma has thus become 'imperfect'; the 'untainted' Atma has been 'tainted'.

Some of the Upanishads that describe these faults or imperfections that afflict the Atma are Mudgal, Canto 4, verse nos. 4, 6 of Rig Veda; Varaaha, Canto 1 of Krishna Yajur Veda; Mandal Brahmin, Brahmin 1, Section 2, verse no. 1 of Shukla Yajur Veda.]

14. [The following verses describe the ways to overcome the different faults and shortcomings enumerated above.]

Now I shall narrate to you the ways by which one can overcome the negative effects of the various faults, shortcomings, impurities and imperfections that taint the Atma. Say, how can Gyan (knowledge and wisdom) devoid of Yoga (meditation and coordination of the theoretical metaphysical knowledge with its practical spiritual application) ever be useful and successful in providing stable and permanent Moksha (emancipation and salvation, liberation and deliverance) to the creature and his soul from the torments of the trap in which the Atma has been allowed to fall due to ignorance? (14).

[Note—The Mandal Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, 1/2/2 describes the method to overcome these faults of the creature.

Various Upanishads enumerate different Vikaars which are the numerous faults, imperfections, impurities and taints that affect the primary nature and characteristics of the Atma of the creature and impinge upon his behaviour, thinking, temperament etc.

The Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 10-11, lists the nineteen Vikaars or faults and shortcomings in the character and mental setup of the creature which prevents the latter from becoming one like the supreme Lord of creation because they act as drags on its spiritual upliftment, pulling the individual's soul towards this mundane world rather than going higher to reach for the sky of spiritual achievement. The Garbha Upanishad, in its paragraph no. 3 outlines the sixteen faults or flaws that the creature has.

The Shaarirako-panishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 17, describes the eight 'Vikaars' or faults, shortcomings, imperfections and blemishes that cast a shadow on the primarily pure and immaculate nature of the Atma at the micro level of creation, as well as on Nature at the macro level of creation.

The Mudgal Upanishad, Canto 4, verse no. 6 of Rig Veda tradition as well as Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas, Lanka Kand, Canto 3, verse no. 29 list six Vikaars.

And the Mandal Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, Brahmin 1, section 2, verse no.1 list only five Vikaars.]

15. Similarly, Yoga devoid of Gyan also cannot bestow Moksha. Therefore, those desirous of obtaining Moksha (i.e. those who wish to break free from the cycle of birth and death and its attendant miseries and torments, those who wish to attain emancipation and salvation for their self) should strive to establish a synergy, a harmony between both Gyan and Yoga. That is, they should employ both Gyan and Yoga in a well coordinated and synchronized manner to reach their spiritual goal (15).

16. It is out of Agyan (lack of correct and true knowledge about the reality; ignorance) that the world appears to shackle the creature. And therefore Gyan (true and correct knowledge as well as erudition and wisdom) is the instrument that can free one from this illusion of shackle and the cause of it, the world.

Gyan is the primary instrument needed not only for obtaining liberation and deliverance from the world and its attendant delusory affects, but also to wisely use the techniques of Yoga and put them to good effect in this direction. It was Gyan that had helped the initiation of creation at the very beginning itself (because to start anything as technical and complicated as the unfolding of this vast and mysterious creation with all its fine intricacies, one needs to be not only aware with its detailed process but be an expert and fully conversant in it besides having a practical knowledge of it in order to successfully proceed with it and attain the desired objective). Gyan is the medium by which one can successfully reach one's destination and accomplish one's objectives in life (which in the present case is obtaining Moksha for the soul, attaining spiritual upliftment and enlightenment leading to one's liberation from the fetters of delusions and ignorance that had trapped the soul in their net). It is Gyan that distinguishes the wise and enlightened creature and sets him aside from the rest of the multitudes (16).

17-18. [These verses emphasise what constitutes real and truthful Gyan. Refer Niralambo-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, verse no. 14 which also describes what truthful Gyan is and what Agyan is.]

That Gyan (knowledge, erudition, wisdom, enlightenment and awareness) with the help of which one can know about one's truthful 'self' as well as unravel the profound mysteries of existence, is called the real and truthful form of Knowledge.

This Gyan helps one to learn about and experience such unique and eclectic spiritual concepts as Kaivalya¹ (the supreme stature of existence which is the one of its kind and the most exalted state of existence when nothing but the non-dual consciousness is discernible everywhere in the world by the enlightened creature), Param Pada (the supreme stature beyond which there is nothing better; the state of Kaivalya and Param Pada are synonymous and like describing the same thing using different words to highlight its various virtues or characteristics because both describe the same exalted state of non-dual existence of the consciousness or Atma of an

enlightened ascetic), Nishkal (one that has no variations and fractions; one that has no Kalaas or separate forms and attributes; one that has no imperfections, faults, blemishes and taints), and Nirmal (pure and pristine, immaculate and uncorrupt, untainted and without any blemishes, clean and free of any impurities). This true form of the Atma, or pure conscious 'self' of the creature, is an embodiment of true and eternal bliss and happiness.

True Gyan entitles one to know the truth and reality of the origin, the present establishment and the conclusion of this world, along with the underlying 'consciousness' and 'life-infusing and life-bearing factors' that brings all this about. [This is because only 'living' entities would take a birth, live a life and die. Since this does happen in this world, therefore there must be some imperceptible and hidden element that brings it all about. It is Gyan of the higher order that would enlighten the wise creature about this esoteric and mysterious element known as the pure conscious Atma that works a hidden dynamic force that turns the wheel of creation just like an ordinary science student needs to acquire expert knowledge and high skills to become a renowned scientist when he grows up and takes control of great projects of immense importance.]

Now onwards, I shall describe about Yoga (17-18).

[Note--¹The word *Kaivalya* means the 'only one' or the non-dual state. It is the supreme stature of existence which is the one of its kind and the most exalted state of existence when nothing but the non-dual consciousness is discernible everywhere in the world by the enlightened creature. There is non-duality and uniformity everywhere. It is a state of existence which is similar to the state of Samadhi in which the man goes about his daily life doing his chores in a routine way without getting emotionally involved in them and even remaining totally oblivious of what he is doing. He remains totally submerged in his inner self and thoughts. He appears in a virtual trance-like state of existence usually observed in realised ascetics and great philosophers. People regard such men as absent minded, but they are so much absorbed in themselves that they are not concerned with what others think of them. For them, the external world ceases to exist though they physically live in it and interact with it. This Kaivalya form of existence is tantamount to being liberated from the fetters that tie the creature to this body and the world because though he lives in the world he is totally indifferent to it; he is free from all worries, sufferings and sorrows as well as all forms of attachments, entanglements and involvements with the artificial and deluding world that are the usual features of an ordinary worldly man submerged in the world's entrapping charms. This state is comparable to the actual and physical liberation of the soul upon death when it is physically liberated from the bondages of the limitations imposed by the gross body; the only difference being that in the former case the man is alive and enjoys the privilege of having a body that allows the ethereal Atma to enjoy this physical world in a totally dispassionate and detached manner as if it is a neutral observer, while in the latter case he sheds the burden of the body altogether.

The Kaivalya state is considered superior because such a man lives a life of happiness and contentedness; he never suffers from any worldly miseries and worries; he treats the world around him as of no consequence, and remains indifferent to its deluding effects and their entanglements. On the other hand, the ordinary man might find emancipation upon death, but his life is a burden while he is still alive in it. Such a man has not truly understood the teachings of the scriptures; he has not understood the 'spirit' of spiritualism and metaphysics as enumerated by the Upanishads because their main aim is to give peace and tranquility to the tormented soul and help in its liberation from the deluding effects of the body and the world. This concept has been elaborately described in Mukhtiko-panishad of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition. The concept has also been described in other Upanishads, such as Subalo-panishad, Canto 13, verse no. 1, and Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, Brahmin 2, section 3, verse no. 1 of

Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, as well as Sarva-saar Upanishad and Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 4 of the Krishna Yajur Veda.]

19. From the practical point of view, Yoga has is said to have many branches¹, or it appears to possess many forms. [In other words, though Yoga is one composite science of spiritualism and its main purpose is to bring about a union or harmony between two units of the one single whole by removing imaginary disparities and false dichotomies between them which make them appear to be separate from one another, in order to facilitate understand of its finer nuances and comprehend it in its entirety it is broken up into smaller branches or sections or schools of thoughts and practice, giving the wrong impression that Yoga has so many forms or types. All this creates artificial distinctions between them. Resultantly, their main purpose is lost in futile debates, numerous paths and theories, and almost colliding philosophies.]

Some of the various types or branches of Yoga are the following—Mantra Yoga², Laya Yoga³, Hath Yoga⁴ and Raaj Yoga⁵ (19).

[Note--*Yoga* can be derived from two verbal roots—viz. ‘Yuj’ meaning to yoke, or to concentrate. Therefore it is that school of philosophy that helps a Jiva, the living being or the individual soul, to attain concentration on the Supreme Being or the cosmic Soul known as Ishwara. As the denser or more concentrated matter has a greater gravitational pull compared to the lighter and lesser denser one, the concentration results in the supreme Soul pulling the individual soul by the mere force of its attractive force so as to bring about the former plunging headlong into the latter to become one with it. This phenomenon is likened to the individual obtaining the state of Kaivalya or oneness with the Supreme Being so that only the latter is left behind and the former vanishes from existence for all practical purposes.

The word in several senses has been used first used in Rig Veda, 5/81/1.

The Philosophy of Yogdarshan in its basic metaphysical form has the following main elements. It accepts three fundamental realities—Ishwara, Purush and Pradhana or Prakriti. Purush is the individual soul of the living creature. They are of the nature of consciousness and are infinite in number. The existence of Ishwar, the Parmatma or Param Purush, can be known only through the knowledge of the scriptures. He is omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent. He is ever free from the shackles of Maya (delusions) and Prakriti (nature). He is the primary and fundamental essence of this existence, the initiator, the progenitor, the creator, the sustainer, the concluder and the final resting place of it. He is designated or known by the ethereal word OM. It is by his will that the Prakriti (Nature) possessing the three basic Gunas (Sata, Raja and Tama) metamorphoses into the rest of the creation.

The Purush, the individual soul or creature, somehow forgets his real nature and heritage or lineage as pure consciousness, gets absorbed and mired in delusion which accompanies Prakriti as her companion, and thereby gets trapped in the cycle of transmigration consisting birth and death and their attendant miseries and problems.

However when he practices the various steps of Yoga, such as following diligently the eight-fold path shown by Yoga, called the ‘Ashtaanga Yoga’, he gets above the mundane and breaks thorough the veil of delusions and ignorance cast upon it and realises his true nature and essence. This result in self-realisation, and like the brilliant emerging from behind the bank of dark clouds, the person sees the brilliant Truth shining amidst the dark bleak and mortal world engulfed in a mist of delusions and ignorance. He becomes freed from the ignorance-fuelled delusory world of perishable material things and becomes established in the ultimate ‘truth’. Since ‘truth’ is always one and not two, he is said to have attained the state of ‘Kaivalya’, the state of oneness that transcends the world of duality and delusions.

²*Mantra Yoga* refers to practicing Yoga through Mantra. It is that Yoga in which constant repetition of Mantras steadies the mind. The Mantra of the chosen deity is

used as the standard common denominator and as medium to focus the mind and attention while practicing the eight-fold path of Yoga as prescribed by Patanjali, the greatest exponent of Yoga philosophy. This Yoga is called Astaanga Yoga, the Yoga with eight branches or organs.

According to Vaayaviya Sanhita, which is an important work on Shaivism, there are five kinds of Yoga, and Mantra Yoga is the first amongst them. As stated above, it is that Yoga in which constant repetition of Mantras steadies the mind. When this is associated with Pranayam or breath control, it is called 'Sparsha Yoga'. This develops into a higher state called 'Bhaava Yoga' when the repetition of Mantra stops automatically and involuntarily, leaving only the feeling of tender devotion and spiritual ecstasy in its wake inspite on one living in this world. When one rises higher in this practice, the world completely disappears and there is no feeling whatsoever, a sort of 'neutrality' or 'zero' effect is obtained. This is called 'Abhaava Yoga'. At the last stage of spiritual evolution, the union with Shiva, the ultimate Truth and the embodiment of Yoga, is obtained. This state or stage is called 'Maha Yoga'.

³Technically, the *Laya Yoga* has two meanings. One with a purely metaphysical dimension is the dissolution of the Chitta or mind and its various faculties so much so that the practitioner remembers the supreme Lord even while going about his daily life and its chores simply because his mind is completely dissolved in the remembrance of the Supreme Being and it is the physical gross body that does the various deeds associated with the world, resulting in the person remaining absolutely oblivious of what he has done or whatever is happening around him. This has been asserted in verse no. 23 of this Upanishad.

According to another interpretation based on Patanjali's Yogsutra, it is called 'Kundalini Yoga'. This is the physical aspect of Yoga by which various techniques are employed to kindle the latent energy lying dormant in the coiled subtle energy center at the base of the spine, called the Kundalini, and spiritual evolvment is attained. This method has been described in detail all major Upanishads detailing the eight steps of physical Yoga.

⁴*Hath Yoga* is the Yoga that teaches how to bring about the union of Pran (the breath, the vital wind that resides in the upper part of the body) and the Apaana (the wind that moves down in the body and helps in digestion and excretion, the vital wind that lives in the lower part of the body) by means of strict following of the eight fold path of Yoga such as observance of Yam, Niyam, Aasan, Pranayam, Pratyahar, Dharna, concentration and visualization of the presence of the Supreme Being in the point of the forehead where the root of the nose meets the middle of the eyebrows, and Samadhi. These have been enumerated in verse no. 24-25 below. It teaches the practical aspects of spiritual Yoga.

⁵*Raaj Yoga*—Hath and Raaj Yogas are the two sides of the same coin. Neither is possible without the help of the other. The Raaj Yoga which deals primarily with the control of the mind ultimately leading to the state of Samadhi is the primary form of the two, and Hath Yoga is merely an instrument to aid it. Thus we see that the Yoga propounded by Patanjali is the one which is known as Raaj Yoga because it fulfills the objective and definition of Raaj Yoga.]

20. Yoga has been classified universally as having four main stages or states—Aarambha¹, Ghat², Parichaya³ and Nishpati⁴ (20).

[Note—¹The word *Aarambha* means to begin, the initial phases of Yoga. This refers to the preparatory stage of Yoga.

²The word *Ghat* means a pitcher. Hence this refers to the stage when the vital winds are held inside the body and allowed to mix with each other. See verse nos. 65-66 below.

³The word *Parichaya* means introduction, and it refers to the sudden realisation by the practitioner of Yoga about his own stupendous potentials and his own pure

consciousness about which he was hitherto oblivious. The ascetic is literally introduced to his own self. What he had known about himself previously was a distorted version of his true self, but Yoga has introduced him to his real and true conscious and powerful almighty self.

⁴Finally, the word *Nishpati* refers to the completion of Yoga with a definitive degree of certainty. The ascetic is not in any doubt about what he has learnt and experienced. Thus, he would remain steady and unfaltering in his state of self-realisation.]

21-22. The signs of these four stages or phases of Yoga (as described in verse nos. 19-20) are being mentioned briefly now. An aspirant who practices Japa (repetition) of a Mantra¹, complete with all its components such as Maatrikaa² etc., for a continuous period of twelve years is able to acquire knowledge of the various mystical powers and divine potentials known as Siddhis such as Anima³ etc.

But this type of Yoga is done by people of low category whose intellectual development and spiritual aspirations is not of the higher level that is to be expected from true spiritual aspirants. Therefore, they are treated as the lowliest class of spiritual aspirants⁴ (21-22).

[Note—¹*Mantra* is a group of mystical letters or syllables or words or phrases that are used as an aid to concentrate and steady the mind and focus one's energy towards the successful completion of the process of Yoga. It is the sound symbol embodying the form, the power and the consciousness of the supreme Brahm or its various manifestations as the deities worshipped.

²*Maatrikaa* is the part of the Mantra dedicated to Mother Goddess symbolising the esoteric and powerful forces of Nature. It is useful in igniting and activating the latent subtle energy trapped inside the Kundalini, the coiled energy center at the base of the spine. Refer Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse nos. 62-63 and its accompanying note for detail. This is Chapter 16 of this volume.

³The *Siddhis* are eight in number and are the mystical powers that come as a natural boon to the ascetic as part of his spiritual elevation. They give him super human powers and help him to accomplish astounding feats. Briefly these eight Siddhis are the following— (i) 'Anima' means the power to become microscopic or so minute that one becomes invisible to the naked eye; (ii) 'Mahima' is to have majesty, glory and fame; to be honoured and acknowledged for one's achievements, knowledge and skills; (iii) 'Garima' is to have weight, stature, dignity, decorum, gravity and significance, (iv) 'Laghima' is to have simplicity and humility; (v) 'Praapti' is to be able to attain or obtain anything wished or desired; (vi) 'Paraakram' is to have valour, ardour, strength, powers, prowess, potential and punch leading to triumph, glory and majesty; (vii) 'Ishwatwa' is to be able to have lordship or sway over others; and (viii) 'Vashitwa' is to be able to control and subdue others.

⁴This is because Mantras and Yoga should not be used to acquire powers that give worldly fame and wealth which usually come naturally to those people who have certain super-natural occult powers. People flock to them from far and near seeking their blessings for their worldly problems and then donate huge largesse to them if their wishes are fulfilled. This should not be the aim of either the use of Mantra or of Yoga. Their main target should be self-purification, self-enlightenment and the realisation of the truth about the world, about the meaning and reality of this existence, about one's own self and the consciousness residing in one's bosom. It should be aimed at providing a gateway to spiritual liberation and deliverance rather than assembling a crowd of followers and blessing seekers, for in the latter case the ascetic would be tied down to this world instead of finding freedom from it. The delusions of grandeur, majesty, power and authority that accompany all worldly praises and honours, the hallucination that all worldly charms, pomp and pelf cause are very overpowering. That is why if a spiritual aspirant employs Mantra and Yoga to successfully acquire the Siddhis and thinks that he had done a great job by

harnessing the potentials of Yoga and Mantra by the dint of his hard practice and sacrifice, then he is a man of a low intellect and wisdom.

[Refer verse no. 56, 76-79 in this context.]

23. The dissolution of Chitta or mind is called Laya Yoga. [See note to verse no. 19.] It has been said to be of millions of types. For example, it includes the remembrance of the attributeless and formless Supreme Being, the lord God called Ishwar, while one goes about his daily chores in this world, such as while walking, sitting, waiting, sleeping, eating etc. [In other words, while the Brahm-realised person does the chores of his daily life, his mind should remain focused on the supreme Brahm instead of focusing on the chore. The resultant effect would be that he would be doing them in a mechanical manner, not getting either emotionally involved in them, hoping to reap any rewards or fear any punishments from these deeds, nor even remembering at all what he is doing or is supposed to do. He is in a complete oblivious state of existence vis-à-vis the world, while perpetually remaining engrossed in the ecstasy derived from self-realisation and Brahm-realisation at the same time. His mind and sub-conscious are dissolved in the sense that they become non-existent and defunct; hence the Atma or the true 'self' of the aspirant is not subjected to being constantly disturbed and interfered by the numerous sensory inputs from the world which is now practically shut-off because of the dysfunctional mind. Since the sub-conscious is also defunct, the Atma is freed from any vestiges of such sensory inputs in the form of memory and its subtle nagging. With the mind shut-off, the creature virtually sees, hears, smells, tastes and feels nothing. Therefore obviously there is no memory of the world and its fascinating charms.

With this cleansing, the Atma wipes off all vestiges of its links with the material world which relies upon the mind to influence the Atma. In other words, the Atma is freed from the clutches of the world and its delusions.

As is obvious, such a man would be a total misfit for the society; his acts and deeds and behaviour would be un-conventional and irrational for the world. The resultant benefit would be that the world would stop bothering him, thinking that he is a lost case. This would free him from so much mundane botherations and the necessity of observing social niceties. His mind or Chitta would not be troubled by the problems of the body or the world.] (23).

24-25. Thus, the above describes what is Laya Yoga. Now listen to Hath Yoga. *Yam*, *Niyam*, *Aasan*, *Pranayam*, *Pratyahar*, *Dharna*, to visualise the presence of Lord Hari (Vishnu, the supreme Lord) in the center of the eyebrows (at the site where the so-called third eye of wisdom and transcendental knowledge is located; the area of the cerebrum), and the neutral state of Samadhi (when one becomes oblivious of the surroundings and remains in a state of perpetual ecstasy and bliss of self and conscious realisation)—these are the various limbs of Yoga that comes under the definition of Hath Yoga (24-25).

[Note—The terms used above need brief introduction. According to Patanjali who is considered to be the greatest exponent of Yoga, the latter consists of 8-fold path. These are briefly the following—(1) *Yam* or self restraint of the senses; (2) *Niyam* or observance of certain sacrosanct rules; (3) *Aasan* or postures for meditation; (4) *Pranayam* or breath control exercises for purification of the body and mind; (5) *Pratyahar* or withdrawal of the mind and its control; (6) *Dharna* or having a firm conviction, faith and belief on the sanctity and truthfulness of the chosen path; (7) *Dhyan* or contemplation and concentration of the faculties of the mind and intellect, such as visualizing the presence of the supreme Brahm in the point of the forehead

between the two eyebrows; and (8) *Samadhi* or a perpetual trance-like state in which the aspirant loses all awareness of the external world and even himself, and remains perpetually in meditation. These eight fold path of Yoga have been listed in Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 16, Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 12—12 ½ of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, as well as in Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 28-34, and Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 2-10 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition.]

26-27. The various Mudras (postures of the body while doing Yoga practice; the Vijay Tantra explains the esoteric meaning of Mudra thus—‘the company of the good leads to liberation and evil company to bondages; closure of evil company is termed as Mudra’.) and Bandhas (the closure of apertures of the body through which the vital winds could escape) are the following types—Maha Mudra, Maha Bandha, Maha Vedha, Khechari Mudra, Jalandhar Bandha, Uddiyan Bandha, and Mool Bandha. Besides these, there are three other Mudras such as Vajroli, Amaroli and Sahjoli.

With the help of these different Mudras and Bandhas, the ascetic should research, investigate and delve deeply into the esoteric and mystical aspects of Pranav (i.e. the supreme Brahm or cosmic consciousness represented by the ethereal word OM that is used during meditation as a Mantra and heard by the ascetic as a deep and resonating cosmic sound during meditation) by deeply inhaling breath, retaining it inside the body and gradually exhaling it (26-27).

[Note—The various *Mudras* and *Bandhas* have been described below in verse nos. 112-129 of this Upanishad.

Some of the other Upanishads that detail them are the following—Yogchudamani and Jabal Darshan (Canto 3) of the Sam Veda tradition, Trishikhi Brahmin and Mandal Brahmin (1/3/5 and 2/1/5, 8) of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, the Dhyan Bindu Upanishad (verse nos. 73-93), Brahm Vidya Upanishad (verse nos. 69-70), Yogtattva Upanishad (verse nos. 26-27), Yoga Kundalini Upanishad (Canto 1, verse no. 41-52; Canto 2), Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition (Canto 5, verse nos. 40-42), Varaaha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda (Canto 5, verse nos. 44-45), and the Amritnaad Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

28-29. Oh Brahma! Now listen to the salient features of each of the different elements of Yoga.

Restrain over food habits and eating little (i.e. abstaining from over eating, indulgence in food, or eating restricted items) is the main component of Yam.

Similarly, non-killing and non-violence is the chief tenet amongst all the Niyams of Yoga.

The four main Aasans (sitting postures adopted during meditation or Yoga) are Siddha¹, Padma², Singh³ and Bhadra⁴ (28-29).

[Note—¹According to Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, verse no. 49 ½, the *Siddhasan* or *Siddha Asan* (literally, a posture that bestows mystical powers, or a posture that only accomplished experts can do) is when the ankle of the left foot is tucked under the suture (which is a fold of skin between the anus and the testicles) and the right foot is placed on the top of the genitals. The body is kept erect in this posture. To sit in this posture, the two legs are first stretched out. The left leg is then bent at the knee and folded in so that the heel touches the genitals and the sole lies flat against the inner thighs of the right leg. Then the right leg is folded in and the heel is placed in front of the pubic bone right above the testicles, and the sole touches the inner thigh of the previously folded left leg. The two hands are stretched out and the outer side of the wrist of each hand is placed on the bent knee-joint of the respective side. The palm is opened and the thumb is touched by the bent first finger to form a virtual ring, with the remaining three fingers held straight out. The practitioner sits perfectly in a

ram-rod straight position, with the spine, the neck and the head in a straight line. The mental sight is fixed on a spot in front of the nose, and this state of intense concentration is maintained as long as is feasible for the practitioner. Then the legs are gradually unfolded and after some period of relaxation, the process is repeated with the opposite leg being folded in first and placed below the other leg. [It is believed that this posture is one of the best postures to be adopted for Yoga amongst the eighty four lakh (84×10^5) postures of meditation. The fact that there are as many numbers of Aasans as there are species of living beings is endorsed by *Dyanbindu Upanishad*, verse no. 42 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition. This Siddha Aasan is capable of cleansing all the seventy two thousand Naadis (ducts in the body), and is so-called because it is possible to access the divine source of cosmic energy trapped inside the body as well as experience the cosmic power of the kindled Spirit by employing this Aasan. The word 'Siddha' implies one who has acquired stupendous mystical and supernatural powers that are beyond the parameters of the physical and mundane world.

²The *Padma Aasan* according to verse no. 39 of Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, is to sit cross-legged so that the upper part of the feet (i.e. the opposite side of the sole) along with the toes of one leg is placed on the thigh of the opposite leg (i.e. left toes on the right thigh, and right toes on the left thigh), is called *Padmasan* (literally to sit in a lotus posture). [The soles would be pointing outwards while resting on the thighs and the body would be held erect—i.e. the spine, neck and head would be in a straight line. The hands, with palms facing upwards and resting one on the top of the other, are placed on the folded legs in front of and below the navel. The chin is drawn in and held tightly near the base of the Adam's apple at the pit of the throat. This sitting posture is said to dispel/ameliorate all diseases and counter or antidote all poisons. That is, this sitting posture is very beneficial for the body.

³The *Singh Aasan*, according to Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, verse no. 44, means to literally sit like a lion. It involves sitting in a posture so that the 'siwani', or the fold of skin between the anus and the genitals, called the suture, is pressed by the ankle bones of the opposite side, and the body is lowered on the legs which are bent or folded in from the knees, while the hands are stretched out and the open palms placed on the bent knee of the same side so that the fingers stretch out like a palm-fan with the open palm resting on the bent knee joint. [Usually in this posture, the mouth is wide open and the tongue protrudes out, while the eyes glare at some point in the distance or at the tip of the nose. This is how a lion sits. This posture makes the body resemble a sitting lion. This is a posture adored by ascetics (Yogis) and it is dedicated to the memory of Lord Narsingh, the half man and half lion incarnation of Lord Vishnu to liberate his great child devotee Prahalad from the torments inflicted upon him by his own demon father. Amongst the benefits of this Aasan is that it clears the voice and removes foul breath.

⁴The *Bhadra Aasan*, according to Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, verse no. 45, is literally to sit like a gentleman. It involves sitting in an erect posture by placing the two ankle joints under the buttocks on either side of the suture, i.e. the junction point of the testicles and the anus such that they (the two ankle joints) touch each other, and then using the hands to firmly clasp the soles of the feet of the respective side from the rear side of the buttock (i.e. left foot by the left hand and the right foot by the left hand). [This posture can neutralise the ill effects of all diseases which cause the production of toxins in the body or which are caused by administration of poisons or other toxins in the body; it helps to get rid of diseases as well.]

30. Oh the four-headed one (Brahma, the creator of the visible world)! Even at the beginning of Yoga practice, some hindrances come into play and try to deflect the aspirant from his spiritual path of purity and undisturbed meditation. They are laziness, indolence and lethargy, self praise and deriving pleasure in hearing about

one's own greatness and majesty, talking deceitfully and being cunning, wily, guileful, fraudulent and crafty. Other difficulties that arise pertain to the proper and sanctified way of using the various complicated Mantras that strain the mind and undermine its ability to concentrate on other aspects of spiritual pursuit (30).

31. A sincere, wise, erudite and enlightened spiritual aspirant should forthwith forsake the following as symbols of hindrance that create obstacles in one's spiritual progress and elevation—material objects and things in this world (symbolising money and wealth), women, uncertainties, fickleness and restlessness. They are like the mirage seen in the desert because they appear to be very attractive and charming on their face, but would only lead to his ultimate demotion, degradation and fall from his exalted stature, and nullify any gains that accrue to him due to the positive effects of Yoga (31).

32. Guarding against these pitfalls, the wise and the most exalted spiritual aspirant should sit in the Padma Aasan and practice Pranayam (breath control exercises).

For this purpose he should erect a small thatched hut with a small door and no other openings (such as windows). [This would ensure that he is not disturbed by outside noise and light.] (32).

33. Then it should be smeared and plastered with a paste made from cow dung and made clean and reasonably attractive and conducive to spiritual pursuit and practice of Yoga. As far as possible, it should be cleaned of pests and insects such as bugs, mosquitoes, spiders etc. (33).

34. It should be swept and kept clean on a daily and regular basis. Some pleasant scent or sweet fragrance such as perfumed incense sticks called Dhup and Indian Bedellium called Guggal should be used to keep the atmosphere auspicious, healthy, pleasant and generally conducive to spiritual pursuits and mental peace. This is done by burning them inside the hut (34).

35. The seat on which the practitioner sits for the purpose of meditation should not be too high or too low. For the purpose of making a sitting-mat, one should spread some cloth, hide of a deer or a mat made of soft Kush grass (a sort of dark green reed). He should sit in the Padmasan posture on it (35).

36-37. The body should be kept erect and one should bow reverentially to the chosen deity who is to be worshipped. The thumb of the right hand should be pressed against the Pingla Naadi (i.e. the right nostrils), thereby effectively closing it, and breath should be inhaled through the left nostrils and held inside the body. This is called 'Kumbhak' phase of Pranayam (36).

38-39. After that, the breath should be exhaled gradually and easily through the Pingla Naadi (i.e. through the right nostril by removing the thumb and letting the air escape). [This is exhalation is called Rechak phase of Pranayam.]

Then the air should be inhaled through the Pingla Naadi (i.e. the right nostril instead of the left by closing the latter this time) and withheld inside the abdomen for as long as the ascetic can (during the Kumbhak phase of Pranayam). Then it should be gradually let out (through the left nostril) in a gradual and easy manner during the Rechak phase.

In this way, the air should be inhaled through the nostril by which it was exhaled (then held inside the body for certain time and then exhaled through the nostril of the opposite side) (38-39).

40. The time taken to move the hand gradually around the bent knee in a clockwise manner is called 'one Maatraa'. [The word Maatraa refers to one 'unit' as this will become a standard for the time to be taken in going through the various steps of Pranayam as described in the following verses.] (40).

41-42. To begin with, the air (breath) should be pulled in through the Ida Naadi (the left nostril) in a period of time which is equivalent to sixteen Maatraas. Then it should be withheld within the abdomen during the Kumbhak phase for a time equivalent to sixty four Maatraas (i.e. four times the time taken for inhalation). Finally, it should be exhaled through the Pingla Naadi (the right nostril) in a period of time equivalent to thirty two Maatraas (i.e. two times the time taken for inhalation).

The process should be repeated, but this time through the Pingla Naadi (the right nostril). And then the repetition is done alternatively using once the Ida and then the Pingla (41-42).

43. The entire process is called Kumbhak, and it should be repeated four times a day—morning, noon, evening and midnight. The number of times it is done should be evenly spread over these four periods, and attempt should be made to do eighty Kumbhaks daily. [That is, twenty cycles of inhalation-withholding-exhalation of breath in one sitting. The total would be $20 \times 4 = 80$ cycles during one day.] (43).

44. By practicing the above procedure for three continuous months, the various Naadis are cleansed of their impurities (i.e. they are de-clogged and de-toxified). With this purification of Naadis, relevant signs that indicate that it has been successfully done begin to show in the body of the practitioner (44).

45-46. [What are those signs? This is being answered now.] These signs are the following—the body feels light, the hunger is increased because the energy of the digestive organs is activated, and the body certainly loses its excess flab. At this time, one should avoid or totally forsake the food that can or does create any kind of obstacles in one's practice of Pranayam (45-46).

47-48. [These verses enumerate certain things from which the practitioner of Yoga should be better beware.] Food which has high salt and oil content, which is sour, too hot, very dry, sharp and pungent, green raw vegetables, spices such as asafetida, being near a burning fire to warm oneself (as is usually done during winter seasons), any matter related to women, excessive walking, taking a bath very early in the morning, fasting or any other kind of thing or activity that can cause any undue discomfort to the body should be best avoided.

In the early stages of practice, the best food is milk and clarified butter (called Ghee). [This is because this provides sufficient energy and nutrition to sustain the body.] (47-48).

49. Other staple foods that aid in the practice of Yoga (meditation) are wheat, the kidney bean or black gram, and rice. If practice is regularly done and above

restrictions observed, one is able to acquire sufficient energy and stamina to hold the air (i.e. do Kumbhak) (49).

50. A stage is reached when the ascetic does not feel the need for Rechak or Purak (exhalation or inhalation). This state is called 'Keval Kumbhak', i.e. only holding of the breath. At this stage, Rechak and Purak should be forgotten. [The ascetic becomes so submerged in meditation and contemplation in due course of time that he becomes oblivious of what is happening to his body; whether it needs to exhale or inhale. All physical movements and activities of the body cease, metabolism comes to a virtual halt, and it becomes one like an inactive corpse. The ascetic remains submerged in the ecstasy obtained by self-realisation and deep concentration.] (50).

51. After an exalted ascetic is successful in mastering the art of doing 'Keval Kumbhak', nothing remains impossible for him in the three worlds. [That is, he acquires formidable mystical and super natural powers that enable him to do whatever he wants or successfully accomplish all his wishes in the entire world consisting of the terrestrial, the celestial and nether worlds. Nothing remains beyond his reach.]

Whatever sweat is produced during the practice of Yoga (i.e. Pranayam here) should be rubbed off on the body itself (instead of wiping it with a towel) (51).

52. When the ability to hold the air gradually increases, a stage is reached when the aspirant sitting in meditation has subtle vibrations in his body. The body begins to shiver and shake (like when one has fever) (52).

53-54. As practice progresses, one begins to act like a frog. Just like the frog jumps or hops and comes back to the earth to regain its original sitting posture, the practicing ascetic sitting in a Padmasan posture (i.e. the lotus posture) begins to jump off or hop from the ground. With the progress of practice, he begins to levitate from the ground and literally stays afloat in the air (instead of coming back to the ground)¹ (53-54).

[Note—¹The scientific reason is the vital airs present inside the body get heated up during protracted Kumbhak when they are trapped inside and not allowed to be let out. Heated air is lighter than ordinary air as is evident in the case of hot-air balloons. So the body, full of this heated air, begins to lift up from the ground. In the beginning it hops because the heating is not up to the mark, but when the air is sufficiently heated the lifting becomes permanent.]

55. An ascetic (Yogi) sitting in Padmasan posture who has sufficiently reached the state of control of the vital winds during the Kumbhak phase is able to remain lifted or levitated from the ground for a given length of time.

In this state he attempts and is also able to do other super human deeds and perform super human activities (55).

56. An erudite and wise ascetic is one who does not show off his mystical and super natural or super human capabilities and prowess. Instead of it, he should employ them to encourage and inspire himself to do better and rise higher in his spiritual stature. This would give him courage and moral strength to overcome small or big problems, and they would not be able to inflict any pain or misery of any kind upon him (56).

[Note—In this context, refer verse nos. 76-79 of the present Yogtattva Upanishad, as well as Canto 1, verse no. 160 of the Yogshikha Upanishad which is Chapter 21 of this volume.]

57-58. The ascetic's urine and stool output as well as his sleep or the feeling of drowsiness reduces to a bare minimum. [Since he has eaten and drunk precious little, it is but natural that the urine and stool would be reduced. Light meals and regular practice of Yoga exercises keep the body fit and trimmed, and since his stomach remains almost empty, his sleep and the sense of lethargy and sleepiness also reduces proportionately.]

He is freed from such bodily filth and discharges as muck (i.e. faecal matters, vomit, pus from festering wounds etc.), nasal discharges and mucus as witnessed during coryza (cough and cold), saliva that is in excess and needs to be spit out, excessive sweating, foul smell from the mouth etc.

By constant and diligent practice and gradual enhancement of his mystical powers, the ascetic is able to harness greater spiritual and physical energy, strength and stamina to attain great powers and authority (57-58).

59-60. In this way, the ascetic is able to obtain expertise in mastering mystical powers that are available but difficult to access in this world by ordinary mortal creatures. The result is that, with these divine and mystical powers and authorities, he is able to exercise control over all the living beings (called 'Bhu-chars') who move on the surface of this earth (such as other humans, animals, birds, insects, worms etc.).

Even such wild animals as tigers, 'Sharabhas' (i.e. the monkeys, deer, camels and birds and other such animals of these species), elephants, the white-footed antelope or blue bucks, lions etc.—every one of them can die by simply being hit by him. [These animals are very strong, cruel and ferocious. It is difficult to even come near them, impossible to face them single handedly and unarmed, to subdue them, and absolutely unimaginable to hit them with bare hands hard enough to kill them. But the ascetic acquires such stupendous powers that this almost impossible and super human task is actually possible for him; he can actually kill them by striking them with his unarmed and bare hands.]

The physical features of that ascetic become as attractive and charming as Kamdeo-cupid (who is considered as the most beautiful and handsome, most charming and passion-arousing God of lust, love and passion) (59-60).

61. He becomes so attractive and beautiful to look at that numerous women wish and become eager to have contact with him, enjoy his company and have a desire to establish relationship with him. But if any ascetic fulfills their wishes and has conjugal relationship with them, his sperms (symbolising his spiritual energy, strength, vitality and achievements) would be destroyed. [In other words, the ascetic is advised to avoid the company of woman at all costs.] (61).

62. So, he must not think of or fantasize about woman at all, and instead remain steady and diligent in his practice of Yoga. When he is able to retain his sperms (symbolising his maintenance of chastity and celibacy which preserves his vital energy and stamina), a sweet fragrance begins to emanate from his body (62).

63. After that, the wise ascetic should sit in a calm and lonely place and do Japa of the Mantra for Pranav complete with its three Maatraas (syllables or sounds). [This Mantra is OM and the three Maatraas are A, U and M, the three letters that constitute the basic sounds of OM.] This helps in destroying the sins of past lives (63).

[Note—In this context, refer to Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 6; Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 9-17 and Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse nos. 4-8 of the

Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, as well as Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 74-79 and Jabal Darshan Upanishad, Canto 6, verse no. 3-10 of the Sam Veda tradition which elucidate upon the concept of OM in relation with Yoga.]

64. This Mantra of Pranav (i.e. the Mantra OM of the supreme Brahm known as Pranav) is potent and powerful enough to remove all types of hurdles and obstacles that come in the way of one's spiritual progress, as well as all the numerous faults, weaknesses, imperfections, blemishes or shortcomings that affect the character of the ordinary Jiva (living being, the creature), causing it to be blighted and preventing his pure and uncorrupt self, the Atma, from retaining its primarily untainted, pristine pure and immaculate nature and form. [Refer verse nos. 12-13 in this context.]

By practicing it regularly one can acquire all types of mystical powers, called Siddhis, in a gradual manner. These super human powers become accessible to him and come under his command (64).

65-66. After this (i.e. after practicing doing Japa with the help of OM Mantra so that the various faculties of the body become properly tuned and acclimatized to achieve success in meditation involving more rigorous exercises), the aspirant should practice holding the vital winds or airs inside his body (i.e. he should practice doing Pranayam). In other words, the phase of 'Ghata' (literally to become like a pitcher full of air; the Kumbhak phase of Pranayam) becomes easy for him.

During this phase of Ghata (Kumbhak phase), a mixing takes place and a uniform homogeneity is established between the following—Pran (the vital air or wind in the upper part of the body; the breath), Apaana (the vital air or wind in the intestines and lower part of the body and responsible for digestion and excretion), Mana (mind), Buddhi (intellect), Jiva (literally the living creature, but for all practical purposes the Atma or pure consciousness of that creature because the Atma is its true identity), and the Parmatma (the supreme Soul; the Supreme Being; the cosmic soul). In other words, all dichotomy and apparent differences and distinctions between these units of creation are removed, they begin to work in concert, and an uniformity and sameness is established which eliminates the concept of duality by creating homogeneity and oneness in all the various units as mentioned above. That is, 'non-duality' is brought to the fore by removing all sense of duality¹.

The eclectic signs of this higher state of Yoga are being enumerated in the forthcoming verses (65-66).

[Note—¹To understand this phenomenon we can take a simple illustration. Suppose we have five types of water soluble salts, or any other chemical or thing for that matter. When they are put in a pitcher full of water and stirred, all the differences between them are permanently removed and the resultant liquid is a homogeneous mixer of all the five ingredients. It would be impossible to differentiate one ingredient from the other, and equally impossible to separate them now. The water would acquire a unique character and quality which would be very different when the ingredients were not mixed in it. Likewise, these units of creation, such as Pran, Apaana, Mana, Buddhi, Atma and Parmatma, have their independent existence only till the time a man does not practice Yoga. Once he does and acquires reasonable success in it, the mixing takes place and all differences vanish. The resultant 'self' and the personality of the person would undergo a drastic change and it would be absolutely different from what he was known to be prior to the practicing of Yoga.

Whereas previously these units worked independently, thereby creating a vexing situation for the practitioner because of the tug and push of these units in various directions, but now they work in tandem, creating a harmonious environment for him. So, while previously he was like an unorganized man who feels at sea, now he is well

organized and well choreographed. There would be a complete overhaul and transformation in his personality and behaviour.]

67. The ascetic should now practice for a quarter of the time that he used to practice earlier. [In other words, once the required result is obtained, once the spiritual aim of doing Yoga is achieved, which in the present case is attaining success in bringing about a union between the basic units in the body of the ascetic such as his two vital winds, Pran and Apaana, the two components of the brain, the mind and the intellect, and his individual soul with the cosmic Soul, what is now needed is to keep it up and not allow this great and rare achievement to gradually wither or dissipate away. Regular practice ensures that the gains of Yoga are sustained and made stable. But the earlier rigorous discipline is now no longer needed; only maintenance is required. Regular practice keeps the body attuned and under control; the gains of Yoga are not lost and forgotten.]

One should practice Pranayam for only one Prahar (i.e. roughly for a period of three hours) at a time, whether it is the day or night. [Pranayam is to be done twice daily—once in the morning and once in the evening. The one done in the morning precedes various Aasans, while the one done during the evening follows the Aasans. The maximum time limit for one session is ‘one Prahar’—i.e. approximately three hours. It should not exceed this time, nor should it be hurried through. Refer Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse no. 55.] (67).

68-69. The process of Kumbhak (holding of the inhaled air inside the body) should be practiced only once a day. While doing this, he should diligently pull or withdraw all his sense organs from their respective objects, and rein them in. This is called ‘Pratyahar’. Whatever is seen by the eyes at that time should be treated as nothing but the Atma or pure consciousness (68-69).

70. Whatever is heard by the ears and smelled through the nose should be accepted in their purest form and essence as a manifestation of the eclectic virtues of the Atma (70).

[Note—A wise and enlightened man should perceive the world and its sensory inputs from the spiritual perspective. He should marvel at the wondrous ability of the hidden ‘consciousness’ that enables lifeless entities such as the flower to have such astounding beauty and emit such sweet enchanting fragrances that keep one enthralled. Similarly, the gross body which smells the sweet fragrance and sees the beauty of the flower is also empowered to do so by the same ‘consciousness’. It’s such a wonderful spectacle as far as the enlightened aspirant is concerned. He is left awestruck at this miracle of creation.]

71. What is tasted by him by the tongue should also be treated as one of the many forms of the Atma. What is touched and felt by the skin should similarly be treated as the Atma (71).

[Note—In short, everything encountered by the enlightened man is perceived by him from a spiritual standpoint and not with the intention of deriving sensual pleasure or bodily comfort from them. Things in this world are to be viewed from the subtle angle and not from the gross perspective. For instance, when such a man eats anything, he marvels at the hidden ability of the ‘cooked’ food that has been subjected to immense battering during the process of cooking to sustain something called ‘life’ in his body which he is not able to see with his gross organ of sight called the eye, but is nevertheless experienced as being nourished and rejuvenated with this food. Even the treatment with the fire during the course of cooking couldn’t kill the

‘life sustaining’ properties of the food. That is, the vital spark of life that was present in this food in its raw form, the spark that is universally known as the ‘Atma’ of anything, could not be destroyed in this food even by subjecting it to the harsh process of cooking. It is such a miracle of life indeed that high temperatures of the fire used during the process of cooking could not eliminate the Atma from the food!

Similarly, such a wise man marvels at the ability of the Atma to enable the gross covering of the body’s skin to feel things with which it comes into touch, or the bundle of muscular fibers called the tongue to differentiate between various fine tastes even though this tongue does not feel or see the chemicals that produce these sensations.

Therefore, the wise spiritual aspirant changes his view of the material world and looks everything from a spiritual perspective. He picks up the sublime goodness and auspicious values from the material world around him while discarding the trash and the gross.

In the context of practicing Yoga, the ascetic should endeavour to remove all distinctions between any two units of the creation. Instead, he should automatically, without any prodding and cajoling, treat them as the non-dual Atma appearing in all these varied forms. In other words, the sight seen by the eye, the smell smelt by the nose, the sound heard by the ears, the taste tasted by the tongue etc. are to be treated as one of the other aspects or attributes of the pure conscious Atma. A sense of all-prevailing non-duality is established; all notions of separateness, distinction, dichotomy and difference are done away with. A universal uniformity of oneness is established. This is exactly the purpose of Yoga—to establish a union between the disjointed units of creation to create the one indivisible and immutable supreme entity that is the ultimate Truth, but which has been veiled by Maya resulting in so much delusions, consternations and perplexities.]

72. Similarly, the ascetic should transfer the activities of all the organs of action in his own inner self, and make the Atma as their object. [In other words, all his external organs of action such as the hand, leg, mouth, excretory and genital stop behaving and functioning like they are normally understood to be doing in an ordinary man. For example, he passes less urine and stool; he is not sexually aroused; he does not speak unnecessarily, so the mouth is used minimally; he remains calm and unmoving during the practice of Yoga, therefore the hands and legs also remain unmoving. Yet the Atma is very active; it is very agile and actively engaged in doing meditation; in deriving pleasure and ecstasy of self-realisation. Even when he is not doing active Yoga but involved in daily chores of the mundane life, his mind is focused in his own inner self and the Atma resident in it rather than in the external world and the functioning of the organs of action. This would also mean that he would remain oblivious of what his organs of action are doing; he wouldn’t know where the legs are taking him, what the hand is doing, what the mouth is speaking, what passes down the anus and kidneys etc. In other words, he is completely ‘lost case’ as far as this world of nice behaviour and rationality is concerned. This is the state of dissolution of the ‘Chitta’ or the mind and the sub-conscious. See also verse no. 23 which deals with this concept in detail.]

He should practice this process (of controlling his organs of action) regularly for a period of one Prahar (roughly three hours). [This is because he should be completely calm and undisturbed during the process of Pranayam. He should not allow his organs to be restless and fidgety in the least.] (72).

73-75. By regular practice of this Yoga, the ascetic’s ‘Chitta Shakti’, i.e. the transcendental powers of his mind and sub-conscious, are gradually aroused and

activated. This empowers him to gradually acquire divine and mystical powers which are magical, super human and astounding in nature. Such as for example, he can hear subtle and soft sounds from a great distance (i.e. he can hear things which are not normally heard; he becomes all-knowing); he can see things from a great distance, he can see through secrets and have a deep insight into the realm of the unknown (and therefore nothing remains hidden from him); he can arrive at a place from far away in a moment (i.e. he appears to be omnipresent); whatever he speaks become true; he can assume whatever form or shape he wishes at a short notice; he can become invisible; even iron can turn into gold by the touch of his urine and stool; he can move through the sky (like a bird or a God). Such mystical and super human powers begin to make their appearance in him; he begins to exhibit them in a gradual manner.

But he must be wary of getting deluded by this stupendous authority and super natural powers; he must not be swept off his feet by their accompanying pomp, pageantry, majesty, glamour, honours, praises, acclaim and fame. On the other hand, a wise and enlightened ascetic should remain focused on the spiritual aim and purpose of doing Yoga (rather than being carried away by the worldly fame and glory which are attendant to such attainment of mystical powers) (73-75).

76. All these Siddhis (mystical and super natural powers described in verse nos. 73-75) are impediments in one's spiritual pursuit and against the principal use for which Yoga is meant¹. Therefore, one should never disclose one's mystical abilities to others (because if he does so, it is bound to have a ricocheting effect, and it is unavoidable that boon-seekers would come in hordes to throng him from all sides. These people are selfish; they want to overcome their worldly problems by his intervention. But this would be at the cost of his own demotion and fall from his spiritual progress and high stature) (76).

[Note—¹The main purpose of Yoga is to bring about a union between the individual soul and the supreme Soul of creation; to ignite self-awareness in the practitioner; to bring about a harmony between the various subtle units of creation so that the creature's life becomes more productive and peaceful. If the gains of Yoga are diverted to worldly popularity and fame, to show off one's magical powers and gather a large crowd of boon-seekers, then the very first tenet of living in a serene and secluded place (a thatched hut with no opening except the doorway—see verse no. 32) would be violated. Adulation and being surrounded by a horde of worldly admirers and those seeking his intercession for solving their worldly problems is not the way a spiritual person would naturally like to live. These people are selfish and they come running to him for their own personal benefit, and not because they have any genuine honour and the wish for his welfare in their mind. See verse no. 78 below. This would disturb his calmness of mind and spirit, and cause avoidable nuisance. Being a human being after all, it would naturally affect him in the short or long run, thereby bringing to a naught all his spiritual gains.

In this context, refer verse nos. 56, 77-79 of the present Yogtattva Upanishad, as well as Canto 1, verse no. 160 of the Yogshikha Upanishad which is Chapter 21 of this volume.]

77. That is why, a wise and erudite ascetic should pretend to be like a fool, an ignorant person, or like a deaf. He should hide all his divine achievements and conceal every mystical power that he possesses in order to avoid publicity; he should remain unknown and all his achievements and powers should be undisclosed top secret (77).

78. The group of disciples would naturally and obviously keep him surrounded and plead with him for their selfish interests, requesting his intervention in the mundane affairs of life and for solving their own problems. But the wise ascetic is he who does not allow himself to become entangled in such mundane issues; he does not fall in the trap of getting engrossed or involved in their worldly problems and mundane concerns. On the contrary, he remains aloof and continues with his spiritual pursuit single-mindedly, unwaveringly and with an indifferent attitude towards everyone and everything else. He should not forget his main objective of doing Yoga (which is self-realisation, reaching the ultimate Truth, obtaining freedom from the fetters of ignorance that has tied him to this world of birth and death, and consequentially finding liberation and emancipation for his soul by merging it or uniting it with the supreme Soul of creation) (78).

79. That wise and sincere ascetic should concentrate what his teacher (who himself should be self-realised and a wise man of the highest order) has advised him, and shun all other types of activities and mundane affairs of the world. He should concentrate his attention and energy on doing and achieving success in Yoga (79).

80. In this way, by constant and diligent practice of Yoga, he is able to attain success in easily accomplishing the state of *Ghata*¹. This type of heightened state of Yogic accomplishment is only possible by regular and diligent practice. Mere talking and giving lectures is of no consequence; nothing can be achieved by it (80).

[Note—¹The word *Ghata* has been described in verse nos. 65-66. Basically it refers to the Kumbhak phase of Yoga (Pranayam). Such an ascetic is able to bring about a union between his own self and the Supreme Being of the creation. He not only understands the truth about himself but also about the whole creation because fundamentally all the creatures are moulded from the same mould and have the same basic truth identifying them. If this 'truth' or 'essence' in the form of the pure consciousness or Atma is removed, the whole world becomes one big huge mirage which has no substance and truth in it.

There is another connotation to this term *Ghata* in the context of the present verse. Here it is stressed that he should withdraw himself from the mundane affairs of the world, not even getting too involved with his disciples, and remain cocooned in his inner self, symbolised by the thatched hut with no opening. The pitcher with a lid to cover its mouth tight is the most appropriate metaphor in this case. The inside of the *Ghata* or pitcher is like the inside of the thatched hut or the inner self of the ascetic. When he literally shuts himself in it, when he remains submerged in contemplation and meditation, thinking of nothing but his own pure consciousness residing in his bosom, shunning any contact with the outside world and remaining aloof from it and behaving like an ignorant fool or a man hard of hearing (see verse no. 77), he is said to have obtained a 'Ghata state of existence'. It is a metaphoric way of saying that he has cocooned himself in his inner self.

It will be seen that if we put anything inside a closed pitcher and immerse the pitcher in water, its contents remain dry and unaffected. That is exactly what is meant here. Even though such an enlightened ascetic lives in this world and goes about his daily chores in a routine manner, he is not at all affected by anything related with the world.]

81-82. Therefore, an ascetic should concentrate on his main objective of life and regularly practice Yoga with due diligence and sincerity.

Now, the third step in the knowledge of Yoga is being narrated. It is called 'Parichaya' or introduction. [In other words, after having outlined the necessary

guards against the pitfalls that the aspirant may encounter in his meditation and spiritual practices, briefing him about what Yoga basically is, and how he should prepare himself for it, besides giving him a brief idea of its benefits and main objectives, now he is being introduced to the actual exercises of Yoga.]

Attempt is made to ignite the latent and hidden subtle energy hitherto trapped inside the Kundalini (the coiled subtle energy center at the bottom of the spine) by stoking it with the heated vital airs (which have been previously heated and mixed by doing Pranayam as outlined in the earlier verses) and concentrating it on this Kundalini.

The activated energy of the Kundalini should be eased into the Shushumna Naadi by unclogging its lower end and diverting or channelising the energy into it. [The Shushumna Naadi is a tubular duct that runs through the center of the spinal cord from the mouth of the Kundalini right up to the head.] (81-82).

83-84. Then the vital winds should be allowed to sneak inside the Shushumna Naadi (following its unclogging at its mouth at the Kundalini). This creates a thrilling and titillating sensation along this nerve. The mind should be focused on this process and follow it. The path of this Naadi is called the 'Maha Path', literally the grand avenue or highway. [This is because it is the grand 'royal avenue' or the highway of spiritualism that leads the ascetic to obtaining extreme bliss, ecstasy and self-realisation.]

An ascetic whose mind has virtually entered this Sushumna Naadi along with the vital winds (i.e. whose mind is concentrated on the eclectic, divine and mystical experience that is witnessed when the vital airs sneak up this nerve) is able to discern the distinctive forms of the five elements called the Panch Maha Bhuts and witness their personified forms in the shape of their patron deities or Gods called Panch Maha Devas. [The five elements are earth, water, fire, air and sky. The human body is made up of these five elements. Under normal circumstances their presence is not discernible because the body is a complex of all of them. But even as an expert chemist can immediately visualise what colour and form the ingredients of a given compound had in their individual forms before they combined to form the present chemical compound, the wise ascetic is able to visualise or perceive the subtle differences between the five elements that constitute the body. The five principal deities called the 'Panch Maha Devas' are enumerated in the following verses.] (83-84).

85. The earth element is present as a dominant force from the foot to the knees. This earth has four directions, has a subtle yellow colour, and its seed Mantra is the Sanskrit letter (Varna) 'La' (as in 'love'). [There is another connotation of this last part of the verse. The earth is said to contain large and infinite deposits of 'salts' as ores etc. The ocean is also salty. The last word of this verse, i.e. 'Lavarna', indicates this fact.] (85).

86. This is the place where the patron God of earth known as Brahma, the four armed and four headed¹ creator of creation, has his symbolic presence. [In other words, the earth is represented by the creator Brahma. This is because the entire living world as we know it is present here on earth and no other planet. The earth is the only known inhabited part of the entire creation where creatures having life and consciousness in them—right from the one-celled amoeba up to the most complex and intelligently developed ones like the humans—live.]

In order to witness his presence and have his (Brahma's) subtle vision, the ascetic should inject and cover the earth element along with its seed Mantra 'La' with the vital winds or airs so that they are blended and a harmony is established between them. This results in the revelation of Brahma with the above features and with the complexion of gold (86).

[Note—¹There is a lot of symbolism in Hinduism, and if it is not properly understood in the correct context, a lot of hilarious, absurd and ridiculous situations arise, such as this Brahma with 'four arms and four heads'. From a rational perspective, this is absolute rubbish. But if one were to understand the underlying symbolism and philosophy, things assume a rational meaning. The four heads of Brahma stand for the four Vedas he created or pronounced. These Vedas are the repositories of all knowledge that exist in this creation, and they are the Rig, Sam, Yajur and Atharva. The four arms stand for the four directions of the globe—the north, west, south and east. Since he is the creator of the visible creation, he is expected to take care of the entire earth because it is on earth that all living creatures created by him would live.

Therefore, his four arms are symbolic of his duty and ability of taking care of all the four corners of this living world, and the four Vedas indicate his all-encompassing and all-inclusive knowledge, wisdom and erudition that empower and enable him to do so.

The colour of gold indicates the colour of richness, prosperity and fertility. The egg's yolk is also yellow because it harbours life and is rich with all essential nutrients needed by the nascent creation in its miniature form as the embryo.]

87. By concentrating one's attention and doing meditation for a period of five Ghatis (two hours) in the above described manner, an ascetic is able to conquer or subdue the earth element; he becomes the Lord of this element. Such an ascetic never dies due to some kind of shortcoming, fault, weakness or imperfection of the earth element in the body, or any injury caused by it to the body (87).

88. The water element has a predominant presence in the region from the knee to the anus. It is symbolically shaped like a half-moon, and its seed Mantra is 'Vam' (as in 'vulgar + sum') (88).

89-90. This is the place of symbolic residence of the patron God of water known as Sri Narayan (Lord Vishnu), the four armed, exalted and high Lord who has a crown over his head¹ (indicative of his position as the Lord and emperor of the entire living world), who is pure as crystal (because he is untainted, without any blemish and cannot be demoted from his exalted stature in spite of the fact that he has to look after the routine chores of taking care of the mundane affairs of the multifaceted world ridden with corruption and blemishes of all imaginable types, being its sustainer, nourisher and protector), and who is wearing a yellow coloured cloth (symbolic of his ability to sustain, nourish and protect the world as its emperor).

In order to witness his presence and have his subtle vision, the ascetic should inject and cover the water element along with its seed Mantra 'Vam' with the vital winds or airs so that they are blended and a harmony is established between them. This results in the revelation of Narayan with the above features in his inner self. He should focus his attention and mind on this vision for a period of five Ghantis (two hours). This helps him in getting rid of all sins and their evil consequences (89-90).

[Note—¹Lord Vishnu is the sustainer, nourisher and protector of all creatures. His four arms are indicative of this unique ability of his. Now, let us see what are those four units of creation which he is supposed to look after.

There are four types of creatures—viz. (i) ‘Andaj’ (those born from an egg, e.g. birds; (ii) ‘Swadej’ (those born from sweat and dampness, e.g. bacteria, fungi and lice; (iii) ‘Udbhij’ (those born from seeds, e.g. plants; and (iv) ‘Jaraayuj’ (those born from an embryo inside the womb, e.g. a man).

Then we have four classes of people in the society, called the four Varanas, and each has four phases, called the four Ashrams. The Hindu society has been divided into four sections or classes by ancient sages to regulate its functioning by delegation of authority and clearly specifying the jobs each section is supposed to do to maintain order and system in the world, to prevent overlapping of functions and avoid anarchy and chaos. These four sections are— (a) Brahmins—the learned and teaching class; a wise one well-versed in the knowledge of the ultimate Truth about the supernatural Being called Brahm. They also presided over religious functions as priests, because these functions were central to life in the Vedic period; (b) Kshatriyas—they were the warrior, fighting, kingly class. They were assigned the job of giving protection to the society, dispensing justice and maintaining general law and order. (c) Vaishyas—they were the trading and farming class responsible for commerce and wealth generation. They provided for the necessities for a comfortable life. And finally (d) the Shudras—the service class of people whose main function was to free the other three classes from the humdrums of daily chores and concentrate their energies to the particular jobs assigned to those classes to which they belonged.

Finally, the four Ashrams are the following—(a) Brahmacharya—this is the 1st phase of life in which a person studies the scriptures under the tutelage of a wise teacher. This phase of life is marked by austerities, keeping of vows, observing celibacy, abstinence and continence as well as leading a regimental life style of a boarding school. (b) Grihastha—when a person has studied and prepared himself to face the world, he comes back to his house and enters the 2nd phase called Grihastha Ashram which is a householder’s life. He marries, raises a family, produces wealth and helps to carry forward the cycle of creation. This is the most important and enjoyable phase as well as the most tough one because on the one hand there are the comforts and pleasure of the world to be enjoyed, and on the other hand there are the various tribulations and miseries of a family life alongside the dealings with this deceptive world with all its accompanying horrifying problems. (c) Vanprastha—this is the 3rd phase when a man hands over the responsibilities of the world to his heirs and renounces his attachments to the house as well as the world, and heads for the forest, leaving the home for his next generation. It is now that he goes on pilgrimage and prepares for the final stage of his life, and (d) Sanyas—this is the 4th and last stage of life when there is complete cutting-off of all the ties with the world, spending time in contemplation and meditation, living a life of total renunciation, and begging for food for survival while single mindedly endeavouring for emancipation and salvation. This phase of Sanyas also has many stages depending upon the spiritual elevation and accomplishments of the aspirant, viz. Kutichak, Bahudak, Hansa, Paramhans, Turiyatit and Avadhut.

These four Ashrams, their characteristic features and virtues are described in detail in an Upanishad called ‘Ashramo-panishad’ belonging to the Atharva Veda tradition.

Thus we see that the four arms of Vishnu are indicative of his unique ability to protect the entire world of living creatures.]

91. After that, the ascetic need not fear from the water element in anyway, and neither would he die due to it (such as by drowning or by dehydration or thirst).

The fire element has its dominant presence from the anus to the heart region. [That is why all digestion of food and all the major internal organs that are responsible for the upkeep of the body and to continue the cycle of creation and

prevent its extinguishing, such as the intestines, kidneys, the reproductive organs, the pancreas etc. are located in this region. It is here that the Kundalini is also located at the base of the spine. Without the presence of the heat in the lower part of the body, the vital airs cannot be heated and empowered to lift the body of an ascetic as has been described in verse no. 53-55 above. In practical life also we observe that the fire is always present at the lower end of the oven and not on its top.] (91).

92. The fire element has three corners (i.e. it is shaped symbolically like a triangle), has a red colour and the Sanskrit letter 'Ra' (as in 'run') as its seed or root Mantra. This fire should be stoked and ignited by injecting the air or wind element into it. [This is a common day phenomenon that the fire needs air to remain burning.] (92).

93. This is the symbolic abode of Lord Rudra or Shiva. [That is, he symbolises the fire element.] One should meditate upon this Lord who has three eyes¹, who is the one renowned for granting boons (to his followers and devotees, and in the presence case to the ascetic), who is as splendid, illuminated and radiant as a sun which has just risen, and who has the ash of the fire sacrifice smeared all over his body (just like an ascetic, indicating that he is their great icon and patron deity of ascetics) (93).

[Note—¹As in the case of Brahma and Vishnu, the symbolism of Shiva having three eyes, which on the face of it appears to be an anomaly, is the following—his two eyes are the conventional eyes, and his third symbolises his deep insight and great wisdom and enlightenment. Shiva personifies the fire element which also has a symbolic significance. The fire is known to burn all impurities present in gold when it is put into it, thereby purifying the metal. Similarly, fire is used in blast furnaces to extract iron from its ore. Fire has the inherent ability to reduce to ashes all filth and garbage, which is a metaphoric way of saying that a person who has worshipped this element in the form of Shiva is supposed to have burnt all his faults, blemishes and shortcomings that taint his character and soul, thereby purifying his inner self. The ash is indicative of total renunciation and detachment from the world of materialism, because it is indicative of a renunciate way of life and symbolically stands for burning of everything into the fire pit. That is why Lord Shiva has been called the patron God of ascetics, hermits and Sanyasis who worship the fire element only.

Besides these points, Shiva is the God assigned the task of concluding the world which necessitates his being closely associated with the 'fire element' in the sense that he must be as unrelenting, merciless, powerful and ferocious as the latter in order to conclude this creation inspite of all the odds. He must reduce everything to ashes just like the fire does. And it is from this ash that the new creation would emerge in due course. Herein lie the magic of creation and its chief Lord, Brahm, the Supreme Being—the fact that a new creation rises from ashes!]

94. By meditating this way on the fire element and Lord Shiva for a period of five Ghatis (two hours), the ascetic cannot be tormented by the fire element so much so that it cannot burn or scorch him even if he is made to enter a fiercely burning fire (94).

95. The next vital primary element is the air element and it is primarily located in the body between the heart and the middle of the eyebrows in the forehead. It has a symbolic shape of a hexagon, is dark hued, and its seed or root Mantra is the Sanskrit letter 'Ya' (as in 'yearn'). The apex of this hexagon is at the point in the forehead where the two eyebrows meet, and where the third eye of wisdom is said to be located. That is why it is said to possess the quality of 'Bhaasvar', i.e. to be as bright as the sun during the day time (95).

[Note—In practical terms also, the primary wind that sustains life inside the otherwise dead and inane body is the breath that is inhaled thorough the nose and diverted to the lungs. Both these organs are located in the body in the region between the heart and the mid point of the eyebrows. If we join these organs, i.e. if a line is drawn linking the two lobes of the lungs, the triangular heart, the two shoulders and the root of the nose which has two openings, we will come with a rough shape of a hexagon. The lower-end point would be roughly the lower end of the sternum (i.e. the mid point between the heart and the lungs, the middle of the body where the ribs meet and the heart is felt to throb), and the other end is the root of the nose between the two eyebrows. Since the lower end is embedded in the abdomen, it is said to be ‘dark or Krishna’ in hue, while the upper end is said to be ‘Bhaasvar’ or like the sun because it is the location of the two eyes as well as the third eye of wisdom.]

96. The vital air or wind element is located in the body in the designated place marked by the letter ‘Ya’ of the Sanskrit language (as described in verse no. 95). The ascetic should always remember the all-knowing, omniscient and all-pervading Lord of all creation, known as Ishwar, in this region. This Lord is called ‘Vishwatomukham’, literally the face of the entire world¹ (96).

[Note—The Ishwar is called the ‘face of the world’ obviously because when we see anyone, we first see his face and the person is recognised by his face. Since the entire creation is the visible manifestation of the supreme Brahm, it is the visible face of Brahm or Ishwar. This Ishwar is also the all-pervading supreme Brahm in the form of the conscious Atma which resides in the individual creature as his true ‘self’, as well as in the form of the universal Spirit that is indistinguishable from the air or wind element which pervades throughout the world. Even as the air element is uniformly and universally present everywhere in this creation, this ‘spirit’ is therefore also present in equal measure everywhere. This spirit in the form of the air element is Ishwar or Lord of the world in the sense that no life is possible without it on this earth.]

97. If the ascetic meditates upon the supreme Lord called Vishwatomukh for a continuous period of five Ghatis (two hours), he can travel or move about in the sky just like the wind or air element. [In other words, he becomes as light as the air or wind element.] He has no fear from this element anymore and he never dies due to this element. [In other words, he never suffers from any disease related to the air or wind in the body such as from asthma, flatulence, improper movement of bowels, digestion, distribution of nutrients and blood inside the body, and all other functions that are governed by one or the other vital winds inside the body. He has not to suffer from suffocation and the fear from falling from a high place and dieing because in that case he would float in the air. Storms and other fierce forms of the wind cannot harm him also.] (97).

98. The sky element is located between the point midway of the two eyebrows and the top of the head. It is shaped like the sky (i.e. featureless, measureless and like an inverted parabolic transparent dish or bowl), is of the colour of smoke, and its seed or root Mantra is the Sanskrit letter ‘Ha’ (as in ‘hut’). It is illuminated with a diffused light like the sky is during the daytime (98).

99. The ascetic should inject the air or wind element into this sky element, and fill it with it, visualizing that Lord Shankar (Shiva) is present here, seated on the letter ‘Ha’¹. This Lord is a personification of the great Lord of all the Gods, and hence also known as Mahadeva², literally the great God. This Mahadeva is like a dot or point³ on

the one hand, and like the vast, endless, featureless and infinite sky⁴ on the other hand. In the latter form he is known as Sada Shiva⁵, i.e. the eternal and ever-present Lord Shiva (99).

[Note—¹There is a lot of brilliant symbolism here. The letter 'Ha' is the first letter of the word 'Hans', meaning the divine swan. This bird is said to be very clean and wise, and therefore is the vehicle of the goddess of learning and wisdom, goddess Saraswati. By saying that the patron Lord of the sky element sits on this letter 'Ha', it is meant that this Lord is wisdom, erudition, learning and knowledge personified, he has full command over them. Hence he is the supreme Brahm.

²By this logic, Shankar is another name of Brahm. Since Brahm is the one from whom the entire creation has emerged, he is the greatest of all the Gods and their Lord, hence he is called Mahadeva. Thus, Mahadeva and Shankar become interchangeable and synonymous.

³The origin of the creation was due to a vibration in the cosmic primordial gel much like ripples on the surface of a calm lake. This generated waves and these waves created energy to power the initial phases of the process of creation. But the vibration must have started from one single point. This is the 'dot' referred in this verse. It also refers to the fact that everything in existence has its origin from one 'point' source known as Brahm. The concept of Bindu and 'dot' have been explained in Dhyani Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 2, 37, 39-40, and Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 1, 5 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.

⁴Now, this Brahm is not limited to one single point, but it spread as far and wide as the vast sky could spread. It was diffused in the sky like smoke, and that is why the colour of the sky element is symbolically depicted to be like that of the smoke.

⁵'Shiva' means someone who is auspicious, truthful and beautiful, and 'Sada' means one who is always the same, is constant, perpetual, consistent, ever-present, uniform and universal. All these qualities are present in the supreme Brahm. That is why the latter is called Sada Shiva.

So in a nutshell, Shankar and Shiva is the same great God who is the Lord of all the Gods as well as of the rest of the creation, i.e. the supreme transcendental Brahm, the Supreme Being, personified, besides possessing all the qualities of wisdom, erudition, sagacity, knowledge, expertise, various skills etc. personified by goddess Saraswati riding on the Hans. The concept of 'Hans' has been elaborately explained in a number of Upanishads, viz. (a) Krishna Yajur Veda—Shwetashwatar Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 6; Canto 6, verse no. 15; Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 3-4; Dhyani Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 24, 61-65; Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse nos. 16, 20-28, 34, 60-64, 78-79; Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 131-132, Canto 2, verse nos. 9-11, and Canto 6, verse no. 20, 52-54. (b) Shukla Yajur Veda—Hansopanishad is exclusively dedicated to explain the concept of the pure conscious Atma by way of using the metaphor of a Hans. (c) Sam Veda—Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 82-83.]

100. This Lord Shiva is most holy, divine, pure and immaculate, and as clear and clean as pure crystal. He has a crescent moon tucked in the lock of hairs on his head. He has five mouths, is very sober, gentle and pleasant, and has ten arms and three eyes (100).

[Note—Since Lord Shiva is the patron God of Yogis or those ascetics who do Yoga, especially those who practice its exercises and rituals as propounded by Patanjali, and this Upanishad deals with Yoga, the supreme transcendental Supreme Being known as Brahm of metaphysics and Upanishad is personified here in him.

Lord Shiva has been depicted in the Purans as having a *crescent moon* on his forehead. The moon is said to have sixteen Kalaas or phases, symbolising the sixteen Kalaas or aspects out of the total of sixty four Kalaas of the supreme Brahm. These sixteen Kalaas represent the visible world which is one fourth part of the entire

creation consisting of the remaining of the Kalaas of Brahm. The visible world is called 'one Pada' or one leg or one aspect or Kalaa of Brahm. So, Shiva is the Lord who presides over the entire visible part of creation, and this world is his ornamentation in the sense that the Lord appears to be so beautiful if we consider the beauty of Nature as the astounding beauty and the expert craftsmanship of Shiva on display.

The *five heads* of Shiva stand for the 'Panch Vyom' or the five forms that the sky element is said to have. According to Vedanta, the concept of the sky or 'Akash' has many connotations. According to one interpretation, there are *five* subtle skies representing the space surrounding the five sheaths or *Koshas* present in the body of a creature. They are the sheaths that surround the Atma and are called 'Panch Akash'. These are the following—(1) the Food Sheath called Anna Maye Kosh; (2) the Vital Air Sheath called Pran Maye Kosh; (3) the Mental Sheath called Manomaye Kosh; (4) the Intellectual Sheath called Vigyan Maye Kosh; and (5) the Bliss Sheath called Anand Maye Kosh. Ref.-- Mudgal Upanishad, 4/5 of the Rig Veda.

The *ten arms* of Shiva stand for the ten forms of the subtle sky element. They are the following—(1) Ghatakash—the space inside a hollow pot; (2) Mathakash—the space inside a holy building, such as a holy shrine, a monastery, an abbey etc.; (3) Hridayakash—the subtle space inside the heart; (4) Akash—the vacant or blank space above the earth; (5) Suryakash—the space of the solar system; the space around the sun, or the solar system illuminated by the light of the sun; (6) Paraakash—the space above or beyond the solar system, it is said to burn with the celestial fire; (7) Mahakash—the great sky that is aglow with divine illumination, the heaven; that space which is radiant with a divine glow; (8) Paramakash—the supreme sky beyond the Mahakash, it is said to be very magnificent and encloses everything that exists, including all the other skies; that space which is illuminated, all pervading, all encompassing and full of bliss and felicity; (9) Tattwakash—the elementary space that is at the core of the concept of space, or the space that surrounds the basic elements of creation; by natural corollary it refers to the subtle, sublime, ethereal and supreme space where the eternal, transcendental Brahm has his abode because Brahm is the cause of all the basic elements of creation; there is complete beatitude and felicity there; that space which surrounds the essential truth known as Brahm; and (10) Anatariksha—the physical space where stars are present in deep space; the intergalactic space. Besides these, there is one more space called 'Swarga' which means heaven or the Duloka.

These skies have been ascribed different names just to facilitate understanding, and not because any one form of sky is fundamentally different from the other. For example, the space present inside the mud-pot, called the Ghata-kash, is the same as the space present outside the body of the pot. When the pot is broken, the demarcation wall of the body of the pot is removed, and both the space inside and outside of the erstwhile pot become indistinguishably and inseparably the same. Therefore, the various names are artificial and misnomers.

The *three eyes* consist of two normal conventional eyes and the third eye of wisdom and deep insight. The significance of the three eyes have been explained in note of verse no. 93 above.]

101. That Lord Shiva is armed with all types of weapons (as a symbol of protection against or to counter all sorts of worldly evils and faults that might attack a spiritual aspirant and attempt to pull him down from the exalted position that he has acquired by so hard effort). He is also decorated with numerous ornaments (as a symbol of his divine beauty and magnificence, as a token of his natural charm and a pleasant and appealing appearance). Goddess Parvati his divine consort and she literally is his other half. [That is, if Shiva is the supreme Brahm or Supreme Being, Parvati is his Prakriti and Maya. If Shiva is the Viraat Purush, Parvati is Mother Nature.] He is the

one who grants boons and is the root and primary cause of all conceivable causes and reasons that exist in this world (101).

102. If that Lord Shiva is meditated upon as a personification of the sky element and as being inherently present in this element, it is certain that the practitioner is able to acquire the mystical powers to move through the sky (like a bird or other sky-borne creatures).

By this meditation, the spiritual aspirant feels an immense sense of satisfaction and happiness no matter where he lives¹ (102).

[Note--¹This is because he feels the freedom to move about any where he likes, and is not constrained to the earth. Another interpretation is that he feels as light as the air or wind element because this is the only element that fills the entire space of the sky and can move in at its will. He feels unrestrained and free like the bird. He also feels untainted, unblemished, un-faulted and untarnished like the pure and colourless sky element. He feels infinite, vast, open, eternal and imperishable as the sky element. He feels himself as being all-pervading, omnipresent and all-covering just like the sky element. This notion and feeling would naturally be spiritually and emotionally uplifting and morale boosting for him; he would feel elated and accomplished.]

103. In this way, the body of an ascetic who has successfully achieved that state of Yoga when he can steadily and consistently meditate upon the five elements and visualise their personified forms as the five divine Gods (as described in forgoing verses) with unwavering conviction becomes sturdy, strong and robust. [This is possible because he has gained absolute control over the body and has been able to harness its natural energy, its inherent stamina and strength, its hidden potentials and powers to bring out the best in it. Since the body is made up of five basic elements such as earth, water, fire, air and sky, it follows that he is able to establish a symbolic control over these elements and rein in their individual as well as combined powers for his own benefit. Even in today's world, those who do regular physical training, do regular exercises and go to gymnasiums, have a well-built, muscular, handsome, strong and robust frame of their body as compared to those who are negligent in this aspect.]

With a well-tuned, strong and robust body, a vigorous constitution, properly channeled vitality and energy that is inherent in all the creatures but is usually wasted by negligence and over-indulgence, it is but natural that they have no fear from death (in the sense that they do not have serious diseases and lead a fruitful life till its natural end) (103).

104. Even at the time of the great flood during the dooms day, such an accomplished ascetic never has to fear from anything. He does not have any worry and mental torments even in this drastic situation. [This is obvious. He has already established lordship over the five elements, and therefore he has no fear from the 'water' that floods the 'earth'. Since the 'fire' element is latently present inside his own body in a latent form, he need not worry to keep warm either during the chill that follows the flooding of the earth at the time of the dooms-day. He has control over the 'air' and 'sky' elements, so he can not be drowned, as he would float in the air and go to any place that is safe for him by the sky route like a bird, and perch on some high ground till the water of the flood recedes. This is a remarkable scene taken directly from the great flooding of the Genesis of the Holy Bible. Not only himself, he would also save others who take refuge with him. He has acquired sufficient mystical powers to foresee the future and see the imminent flooding. So he can warn others and move to

safer place like a high ground on a hill or mountain till the water recedes. This is the physical dimension of this verse. The metaphysical and spiritual dimension is that he has become so enlightened that he sees no difference between death and life, and treats both equally as the wish of the Lord. And of course the Lord protects him as he had protected Noah during the great deluge.]

The ascetic should meditate upon the divine Gods who grant various boons and mystical powers for a period of six Ghatis (two hours and twenty four minutes) by holding breath inside the body (i.e. while doing Kumbhak) (104).

105. By meditating upon the Sagun forms of the Divinity (i.e. by meditating upon and worshipping the Supreme Being or the transcendental Brahm in the form of various Gods such as the Trinity Gods, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva and their different manifestations) the ascetic is able to acquire the different Siddhis (mystical powers) such as Anima etc.

On the other hand, if he meditates upon the Nirguna aspect of the same Divinity (i.e. as the un-manifest subtle and sublime pure consciousness known as the Atma and the subtle aspects of creation in the form of Nature with all its sublime dimensions), he would attain the exalted state of Samadhi (which is a trance-like state of spiritual attainment and bliss) (105).

[Note—In this context, refer Dhyani Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 30-36.]

106. A diligent and sincere ascetic can achieve success in obtaining the eclectic state of Samadhi in short period of twelve days only. Such an accomplished ascetic is able to achieve Mukti (liberation and deliverance) from this world even while he lives in it by steadying his vital winds (and thereby attaining peace from his natural restlessness and obtaining the eclectic state of Samadhi where he finds perpetual bliss of self-realisation) (106).

107. During the state of Samadhi, there remains no difference between the Jivatma (the individual creature in his true form as his pure conscious soul known as the Atma) and the Parmatma (the cosmic, all-pervading and all-incorporating supreme transcendental Soul of creation). In other words, a union is established between them, thereby removing any artificial distinction that might have been there till the point this stage of Yoga is reached. [After all this is the exact purpose of Yoga—i.e. to bring about a harmony and ultimate union between them; Samadhi is the successful culmination of Yoga.]

During this state, if one wishes to leave one's body then it is also possible to do it (without the fear of committing the sin of suicide) (107).

108-109. In this way, an expert and self-realised ascetic can dissolve himself or merge his own 'self' with the supreme transcendental Brahm (by establishing a union between his own consciousness and cosmic Consciousness). He does not have to take birth again.

On the contrary, if his body is dear to him and he does not wish to leave it, i.e. 'he', as his pure self, the consciousness or Atma, does not wish to discard his body and wish to retain it, then he can do so¹. He can acquire the various Siddhis (mystical powers) such as Anima etc. and go to any place he wishes where the body has no reach, so much so that he can become a God and live in the heaven if he so wishes² (108-109).

[Note—¹For all practical purposes as far as he is concerned, this would be equivalent to merging his soul with Brahm because the supreme Brahm resides in his own 'self' as his Atma or consciousness as well as his Pran or spark of life. Besides this, the very fact that he has reached this state of Samadhi itself indicates that he has crossed the earlier stages where any of the worldly corruptions can demote him and pull him away from his spiritually exalted stature. He would have realised that the body is not his 'true self' but it is the Atma, and that this Atma is the supreme transcendental Consciousness personified. How can anyone with such an enlightened view of the 'self' can ever be expected to be weighed on the same scale as his other brethren who treat their bodies as their 'self' and remain engrossed in this material world of sense objects. So, though he retains the body and appears to be of a lower category than the ascetic who has discarded his body to merge his 'self' with the supreme Brahm, basically there is no difference between the two. The former type of ascetic who retains the body is called 'Jivan Mukta', or the one who has obtained liberation and deliverance from the fetters of the world while still living in it because he has certain obligations to fulfill, and the latter is called 'Videha Mukta', or the one who has obtained the same liberation and deliverance by abandoning the body. The body in both the cases causes no hindrance for him, because even while he has retained the body as a Jivan Mukta if he prefers the option to do so, he already has acquired so much divine mystical and magical powers called the various Siddhis that he can perform super human and super natural deeds that anyone with a body cannot ever expect or hope to do. These have been enumerated in verse no. 73-74, 87, 91, 94, 97 and 102.

²But there is subtle catch here which must be closely observed. Earlier verse no. 21-22 and 76-79 have clearly stated that the use of various Mantras and obtaining Siddhis are impediments in obtaining the true fruit of Yoga; those who wish to acquire them and remain satisfied with them are of a very low type of Yogi.

Further, verse nos. 14-18 describe what constitutes 'true Gyan' or true knowledge and wisdom, and it is to obtain the only state of existence that can give eternity to the Atma, and it is called 'Kaivalya', and this is the merger of the self with the supreme Self. This is obtainable when the Atma discards the body and finds final liberation and deliverance, or ultimate emancipation and salvation. This is 'unconditional Mukti', while the one obtained while retaining the body would then naturally be a 'conditional Mukti' because while the body is still there, Mukti cannot be absolute; it is conditional and subject to certain parameters and conditions that naturally come when someone has an obligation to fulfill. The obligation in this case is towards the body because the Atma is obliged to remain inside it and it must pay its due respect and the dwelling 'rent' to it! Therefore, the Atma is under 'conditioned freedom' if the ascetic chooses to retain the body and remain inside it instead of discarding it and becoming 'absolutely free', in which case the Atma becomes 'unconditionally free'. The later state is called 'Kaivalya' Mukti. The body has to be discarded ultimately, sooner or later; the soul is therefore not 'absolutely' free if the ascetic retains the body as compared to the case where he decides to permanently abandon it once the window of golden opportunity arrives during Samadhi.

Therefore, the ascetic has two options open to him as already pointed out in verse nos. 105-107—i.e. either to obtain Kaivalya Mukti which is like the Videha Mukti, or to obtain Jivan Mukti. There is only a subtle hair-fine difference between the two. Refer verse nos. 17-18 and 23 in this context.]

110. With the acquisition of mystical powers, the expert ascetic can transform himself into a Yaksha (a kind of demi-god who is supposed to guard the treasury and garden of Gods) and vice versa in a moment's time. He is also able to assume the form of a lion, an elephant, a horse etc. at his free will (110).

111. When an ascetic has obtained the exalted and divine stature equivalent to that of Maheshwar (the great Ishwar, the great Lord, Lord Shiva, the supreme Brahm, which is possible at the successful culmination of Samadhi as clearly mentioned in verse no. 104-105 and 107), he is free to act and behave as he wishes. The difference is only on how the achievements or rewards of Yoga are practiced or utilised, and not in the basic nature of the achievement or reward itself¹ (111).

[Note--¹That does not mean he should become a reckless rogue and burden the creation with his wayward behaviour. That would kill the very spirit of Yoga. We have examples of such ascetics though who did severe Tapa (penance, austerity and observance of the strictest religious vows), which is another form of Yoga, to obtain various boons from different Gods, which are like obtaining various Siddhis, only to exploit these super natural powers to become reckless and cruel 'demons'.

So we come to a very interesting conclusion here—the difference between a mystic and a self-realised ascetic who is holy and pious and Brahm personified, and a demon, is the use to which he puts his newly acquired status and powers! The same authority and power can elevate him to Godhood and demote him to Demon-hood.]

112. [Now certain sitting postures to be adopted for the purpose doing Yoga to attain the benefits listed in this Upanishad are being described. Refer verse nos. 26-27.]

The practitioner of Yoga should sit in such a way that he presses his genital with the heels of his left leg and stretches the right leg straight in front of him. Then he should firmly clasp the big toe of this (right) leg with both his hands (112).

113. The chin is to be brought close to the chest. Sitting in this posture, he should pull in the air (i.e. breathe in air) slowly (i.e. do 'Purak') and hold it inside the body during the phase called Kumbhak as long as he can. Then this air should be gradually exhaled during the phase called Rechak (113).

114. This process should be repeated with the other side of the body. That is, after completing the cycle of inhalation-holding-exhalation of breath while the left leg is folded inwards at the knee-joint and the right leg stretched out, the process should be repeated with the right leg folded inwards at the knee-joint and its heels pressing against the genital, and the left leg stretched out and its big toes firmly clasped by both the hands. Thereafter, the breathing ritual is repeated once again.

Thus, the two steps of this exercise are alternated with each other for as long as the ascetic wishes to do Yoga (114).

115-116. This exercise and sitting posture is called 'Maha-Bandh'. The two ways mentioned above—i.e. one in which the genital is pressed with the heel of the left leg, and other when it is pressed with the heel of the right leg, are both called Maha-Bandh¹.

An ascetic who is sitting in this Maha-Bandh can withhold the air inside the body and prevent its escape from it by pulling in the muscles of the throat so as to close the opening of the upper end of the trachea, and at the same time constrict the nostrils to aid in the process² (115-116).

[Note—¹The word 'Bandh' means to close and restrict. Since the escape of Pran in the form of vital winds is closed in this and other such Bandhs, they are so named. The present Bandh is called 'Maha' because it is a 'great' closure.

²It must be noted that both his hands are tied in clasping the toe of the respective leg, and therefore they are not free to clamp the nostril to stop the air from forcing itself out as is usually done during normal breath control exercise called Pranayam.

Therefore he must constrict the muscles of the throat and the nostrils voluntarily to close the opening of the mouth and the nostrils to effectively block the escape of air.]

117-122. Those ascetics who have acquired various Siddhis or who have become experts in doing Yoga continue to practice the Maha-Vedha (Maha-Bandh) exercise regularly and continuously.

Now, the 'Khechari Mudra' is being described. During this Mudra (a posture or form in which the particular organ of the body is held during meditation), the tongue is inverted inwards and tucked inside the back of the mouth so as to close its rear opening. The eyesight is kept strictly fixed in the central point between the two eyebrows.

The 'Jalandhar-Bandh' is to constrict the opening of the throat by pulling its muscles taut, and holding the chin tightly and steadily above the chest. This sitting posture is so potent and effective that it virtually acts like a lion employed to conquer the elephant representing death. [In other words, the ascetic who practices this Jalandhar Bandh can easily overcome death.]

The Bandh which helps the Pran (i.e. the Apaana Vayu, the vital wind that is present in the lower part of the body) to lift itself and move up the Shushumna Naadi (the nerve that moves from the lower end of the spinal cord right up to the top of the head) has been called 'Uddiyan Bandh' by expert ascetics. [The word 'Uddiyan' implies something that can fly; here the epithet is apt for the reason that this process, if properly done and successfully accomplished, enables the practitioner to lift himself from the ground and float in the air—see verse no. 53-55.]

The 'Yoni Bandh' is done by constricting the genitalia by pressing it hard with the heels of the leg and pulling the muscles in the pelvic region inwards by conscious effort. At the same time, the Apaana wind (the vital wind present in the lower bowels) is pulled upwards and not allowed to move down and pass out through the anus as flatus by constricting the muscles of the lower bowels simultaneously with the pressing of the genital.

When this Yoni Bandh is practiced in conjunction with the 'Mool Bandh', which is literally the closing of the root, or closing of the lower apertures of the body such as the anus and urinary openings, then it is possible to mix the two vital winds such as Pran (the vital wind in the upper part of the body) and Apaana (the wind in the lower part of the body) and bring about a harmony between them and synchronise their vibrations so that the ascetic is able to hear the Naad (the cosmic sound emanating in ether) that appears to emanate from a point called a Bindu and radiating in all the directions from there. This Naad overwhelms the ascetic and he becomes drowned in its reverberations (which appear to massage his nerves and bless him with divine calmness and bliss). This Yoga (i.e. the process of meditation which brings about a union) is without doubt potent enough to grant definite success to the ascetic in obtaining the various Siddhis (as listed in numerous verses of this Upanishad).

Now, the special Mudra called 'Vipreet-karani Mudra'¹ is being narrated. This is said to destroy or eliminate all kinds of diseases and obstacles that the ascetic might be facing and tormented by (117-122).

[Note--¹The word 'Vipreet' means that which is against the conventional norm, or which goes against the criteria of normal behaviour. In the present case the movement of the vital winds has been reversed, i.e. the Pran has a normal tendency to come in and go out from the nostrils, and the Apaana continuously moves downwards and never upwards. With the practice of above Bandhs and Mudras as described in verse nos. 112-122, the normal movement of the vital winds is tampered with. They

are made to act against their normal behaviour. Hence, this process is compositely called 'Vipreet-karan', i.e. to make them behave against their natural pattern.

According to this Upanishad however, the Vipreet-karan is a different process as described below in verse no. 124. According to Patanjali's Yog Sutra, this is known as 'Sarwaang Aasan', literally the posture of Yoga that benefits the whole body. Obviously this terminology is also applicable to this process because if the digestive organs function properly and a man is able to digest food properly and derive nutrition from it, it is natural that his entire body would benefit.]

123. By practicing this Vipreet-karan Yoga, the practitioner's weakened hunger and the energy to digest food is re-kindled and rejuvenated, resulting in increase of appetite and the ability to digest more food (123).

124. The fire of hunger once stoked by this Mudra must be duly supplied with fuel in the form of food, for otherwise it would burn the reserve fuel of the body, resulting in emaciation.

To do this Vipreet-karan Mudra, the head is kept low and the both the legs are lifted up simultaneously. This posture is practiced for a few moments the first day. [For this purpose, the practitioner lies flat on the ground and raises the legs slowly upwards. This automatically would exert an inward and upward pull on the abdominal and intestinal muscles and strengthen them besides helping the Apan wind to move upwards through the Shushumna Naadi. Since the direction of the flow of the Apan wind is reversed, and the legs are so positioned that their level is above that of the head which is an unconventional position under normal circumstances for a body lying flat on the ground, this posture is so named as 'Vipreet-karan'.] (124).

125. From the second day onwards, the time for which this Vipreet-karan Mudra is practiced is increased gradually on a day to day basis (along with the angle of lifting of the legs, till the time they are held at right angles to the ground). This should be practiced for a minimum period of six months by the time of which the wrinkles on the body of the practitioner vanish and the graying of his hairs stop (125).

126. The ascetic who practices this (Vipreet-karan Mudra) for one Prahar (three hours) daily, he is able to subdue Kaal. That is, he is able to conquer death because his body becomes strong, sturdy and robust, he is able to digest and benefit from food eaten, and his body gets de-toxified.

This is also called the 'Vajroli Mudra'¹ because it makes him as strong, sturdy, robust and vigorous as Vajra, the invincible and strong weapon of Indra, the king of Gods. One who practices this Mudra daily is soon becomes an accomplished Yogi who is said to have mastered all the Siddhis (esoteric, eclectic and mystical divine powers) (126).

[Note—¹It is pertinent to note here that all these Aasans and Mudras are inter-linked and not detached from one another. They are inter-dependent and not mutually excluding. They form part of a comprehensive and composite process called Yoga which can bestow the mystical powers called Siddhis to the practitioner. Various Yoga texts depict variations in the way they are done, and sometimes there is a lot of confusion. For example, the Vipreet-karan Mudra as described in this Upanishad is different from how Patanjali has described them. In his description, the particular way this Mudra is done as per this Upanishad is called 'Saalamba Sarwaang Aasan'. Similarly, the Vajroli Mudra as implied here is different from the way the Vajra Aasan is done according to Patanjali. So, instead of getting confused with the intricacies and details of what this text says and what that says, the ascetic should

understand the hidden esoteric philosophy and the idea behind the exercise by understanding the meaning of the word and its broader implications and how is it to be applied in practice to benefit him. If the basic concepts are firmly grasped, the details can be adjusted according to individual needs and circumstances. See note to verse no. 117-122 in this context.

If we go strictly by Patanjali's version of Aasans, then 'Vajra Aasan' is the posture whereby the body is bent backwards to such an extent that the head rests on the upturned soles of the two legs that are bent inwards at the knee-joints so that the ankle-joint and heels are tucked underneath the buttock of the respective side and the weight of the body rests on the tucked-in legs. For this, the practitioner sits on the ground with his two legs bent inwards from the knee. He bends the body backwards like a bow so that the head rests on the sole of the feet pointing to the rear of the body. Viewed from a distance, the practitioner appears to be in a roughly ring shape.]

127. One who becomes well-versed in practicing this magnificent but esoteric art of doing Yoga as narrated here is deemed to have gained all the mystical, eclectic and divine benefits or rewards called the various Siddhis that automatically accrue to those who do such Yoga. That is, he acquires super natural and super human powers. As a result, he is able to know the events of the past as well as the future, and is certainly able to move through the sky. [Refer verse nos. 97, 102.] (127).

128. An ascetic who drinks 'Amari' (urine) daily and smells it along with doing the Vajroli Mudra is known as 'Amroli', i.e. the one who is an accomplished ascetic who follows the path of Yoga where urine (of the self or from the cow) acquires a central part of the purification process (128).

[Note—Drinking of urine should not be treated as a vulgar, repulsive and repugnant exercise. It has medicinal value and is often used as a self-created antidote to various poisons present in the body. There is a field of treatment called 'urine therapy' wherein urine is used in potency form like in Homeopathic drugs to cleanse the body of its toxins. It is like self immunization or auto-vaccine.]

129. When the ascetic is successfully able to do all the above exercises of Yoga, it is said that he has done 'Raaj Yoga'; there is no doubt about it. When he is successful in doing Raj Yoga, he need not undertake other harsher forms of physical exercises of Yoga that are described as 'Hath Yoga' (129).

[Note—The Raaj Yoga exercises are so called because they mark the high citadel of achievement in Yoga. The word 'Raaj' refers to the king, and therefore an ascetic who has successfully done all the exercises of Yoga is deemed to be like the king amongst those who aspire to reach a high level of spiritual attainment through the path of Yoga.

It is not that Raaj Yoga is less punishing and demanding than the Yoga classified as Hath Yoga, but the only perceivable difference is that now they need not go through the rigours of Yoga exercises for an extended period of time as mentioned earlier in verse no. 67 above. Whereas the word 'Hath' means forceful, stiff, obstinate and adamant, its relaxed form is called 'Raaj'. The exercises in which the body is forced to undergo ruthless stress and subjected to stiff penalty by twisting and turning it against its will is therefore called Hath Yoga. Compared to those exercises, the ones described as Raaj Yoga are mild and done to maintain practice and keep the gains of Yoga perpetual and everlasting.

When an ascetic is successful in doing Raaj Yoga, he need not worry about doing Hath Yoga any longer. This is because Raaj Yoga entails total control of the mind and intellect. Once this objective is achieved, i.e. once the restlessness of the body and its wayward sense organs are brought under control, there is apparently no

necessity for making special efforts to control them. These have been the cause of so much distress, restlessness and discomfort for the mind, and thorough it for the Atma of the creature. Once the mind is controlled, the body would automatically be controlled. The Raaj Yoga, which deals primarily with the control of the mind, ultimately leads to the state of Samadhi.]

130. A person practicing Raaj Yoga has easy access to Vairagya (a sense of detachment and renunciation for the deluding material world of sense objects, along with its sensual pleasures and material comforts) as well as Vivek (wisdom, common sense and erudition).

Lord Vishnu is the one who is Maha Yogi (the great ascetic who is accomplished and self realised). He is a personification of all the Bhuts (the primary elements of creation) and one who does great Tapa (i.e. he does great penances, observes austerities, keeps stern religious vows and generally suffers for the welfare of others). [Refer verse no. 2.] (130).

131. For a person who has stepped on the spiritual path called 'Tattva Marg¹' to reach his spiritual destination can see (visualise) that supreme and excellent Purush (i.e. the un-manifested Supreme Being in his manifested cosmic and all-inclusive form of the Viraat Purush known as Lord Vishnu) as a lighted lamp².

What a great irony it is that the man feeds himself (by drinking milk) from the same breast (of his mother) that he presses to derive immense sensual pleasure (during sexual encounters with his partner)³. [See verse no. 132 below in this context.] (131).

[Note—¹The *Tattva Marg* is the spiritual path that is business like and does not take one along a circuitous route to one's spiritual destination. It is a path that leads straight to one's spiritual goal. It's a philosophy that relies on to-the-point, well researched, clinically precise, empirically proven, effective and practical approach to spirituality and proven methods for reaching the citadel of spiritual elevation that culminates in liberation and deliverance of the soul from the continuous cycle of birth and death, and ensuring its emancipation and salvation for good. It is the eclectic spiritual way which is based on correct, proven and precise spiritual knowledge and its judicious and practical application which can fine tune one's approach to the actual and profound spiritual truths and reality as opposed to apparent or assumed truths and reality which are more often misleading and like a spiritual quagmire. It is the basic and essential path that any wise, erudite and sagacious aspirant would like to follow if he does not wish to waste his precious time and energy on debating as to which is the correct and effective way for spiritual elevation and realisation of the ultimate Truth that would provide him with final liberation and deliverance from this material world of falsehoods, delusions and entrapments. It is the noble path that would liberate the soul from the cobweb of birth and death and their accompanying horrors and pains, and lead him by the hand to the high ground of enlightenment and self-realisation from where the spiritual seeker stands to see clearly and witness first hand the presence of the supreme transcendental Brahm, the Supreme Being.

²The 'lighted lamp' is a metaphoric way of saying that against the background of a dark and foreboding world full of miseries and sorrows, of falsehoods and delusions, of myriad doctrines and philosophies that create a web of confusions and consternations that are tantamount to an all-covering veil of darkness that engulfs the spiritual aspirant from all sides, if he is wise and erudite enough to follow the correct path called the 'Tattva Marg' steadily without allowing himself to be confused in anyway, then he becomes fortunate enough to have a divine and reassuring vision of the Lord as the lamp of hope and salvation just like a ship caught in the choppy waters of a stormy sea observes the beacon of the lighthouse. The divine vision of the

light of the Lord is very reassuring; it indicates his august presence and it removes all forms of symbolic darkness that have been engulfing the spiritual traveler from all the sides, such as the darkness induced by ignorance, delusions, various worldly faults and taints etc. This light, by removing the fearsome darkness, cheers his heart and encourages him to move ahead with renewed zeal and vigour towards his chosen spiritual goal and speedily reach it. This goal is his spiritual emancipation and salvation, his liberation and deliverance from the fetters that had been shackling his self or his Atma, the pure conscious 'self', for many births and many generations. Once the light is visible at the end of the road, he races forward; previously he was moving slowly because he had to grope in the dark. This divine and sublime vision of the Lord as a lighted lamp is a sign that he has almost reached his goal, and the destination that the soul has been searching and yearning for countless generations and numerous births, is finally at hand.

³This is a remarkable observation. A man is so foolish that he forgets the reality and gets deluded by circumstances and their false charms. He forgets that the breast is provided by the Lord as a vessel or container to store the much-needed milk to feed the infant creature, and not as an instrument of deriving sexual gratification from it. The same breast is subjected to two different treatments, it assumes two opposite roles and appears to be different in two different contexts for the same man, for as a child he had fed from it and had even pressed it while suckling milk from it, while the same man does the same thing as an adult but his perception changes. There is a verse in Yagyavalkya Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, verse no. 17, dealing with the very concept of how the breast of a woman should not delude a man by its illusive charm. It says—"The breast of a woman severed from her body and lying unattended in a cremation ground, or lying randomly at any other place, is fed upon by stray dogs as if they were ordinary dog-feed or lump of meat".

Thus we observe how the same thing is seen differently by three different people when viewed by them from different angles and perspectives. The child sees the breast as the pitcher filled with the life sustaining sweet milk, the elixir of life for it. The lustful man sees it as an instrument to satisfy his sensual and carnal desires. The ascetic and a renunciate monk see it is a lump of flesh lying on the gross inane body which is eaten by stray dogs.

The basic object does not change; the basic truth about the breast that it is an instrument provided by Mother Nature to feed the infant child till it is able to take care of its self remains the same, but the apparent differences of how it is treated and viewed persist. Even those who are well aware of this anatomical fact that it is as much part of the female body as her anus still wish to enjoy the sensual gratification derived from this lifeless lump of flesh that is fed upon by stray dogs in the cremation ground. This is an ideal example of how a man gets deluded and is overcome by ignorance about the real sense and purpose of anything, of how he can be misguided if the same thing is seen under the wrong light. This is an indirect way of explaining what constitutes the Tattva Marg—i.e. the proper and correct way of looking at certain thing by concentrating one's attention on the basic and truthful essence of it, the underlying truth and reality behind it, instead of getting deluded and misled by its charming exteriors and superficial appearances, or by the myriad of ways it is being interpreted and described by numerous people creating a vortex of confusions that is most perplexing and mortifying for the aspirant.]

132. A creature continues to move in the same cycle of birth and death; it continuous to oscillate to and fro from one birth to another. A woman who is mother in one birth becomes a wife in another. Similarly, one woman who is one's wife in one birth becomes his mother in another (132).

133. A man who is someone's father in this life becomes his son in the next birth, and vice versa. In this way, this cycle of birth and death in this world is like the water-wheel used to water the farmer's field (133).

134-135. It is in this endless cycle that the creature continuous to move indefinitely, taking uncountable number of births as uncountable types of creatures that roam on the surface of earth in this world.

There are said to be three worlds¹, three Vedas², three Sandhyas³, three Swars⁴, three fires⁵, three Gunas⁶. [Refer Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 36.]

Every thing in existence, including those that are metaphorically represented by these triads of creation as mentioned here, is included in the three imperishable letters (of OM)⁷; nothing exists outside of it. Hence, the wise ascetic should meditate upon and study the mystical and esoteric effect of these three letters as well as the half-syllable called 'ArdhaAkchar'⁸ on his spiritual progress (134-135).

[Note—¹The *three worlds* are the terrestrial, the celestial and the nether.

²The *three Vedas*, which are repositories of eternal knowledge, are the Rig, the Sam and the Yajur.

³The *three Sandhyas* are the three periods of time when one phase of the day meets the other and when the three sacramental prayers are said; they are the morning Sandhya done at dawn when the night meets the day, the midday Sandhya done at noon when the sun moves from one quarter of the sky to the other, and the evening Sandhya done at dusk when the day again meets the night.

⁴The *three Swars* are the basic vowel sounds in Sanskrit, and they are the following—the basic vowel sound that is made in the throat with the mouth open, such as the first alphabet letter 'A' (अ) as the article 'a' in English grammar (e.g. *a* man), the sound produced by opening the mouth wide open such as the second alphabet 'Aa' (आ) as in the word 'rather', and the sound made when the lips are in the form of a spout of a kettle as when pronouncing the alphabet 'O' (ओ) as in *oracle*.).

⁵The *three aspects of fire* are said to be the following—the terrestrial fire that sustains life on the earth, the fire of the heavens which is used by the Gods, and the fire of the nether worlds or hell which is used to punish sinners.

⁶The *three Gunas* are the three characteristic qualities inherently present in the creature. These three basic qualities or Gunas determine its nature, habits, temperaments and inclinations which in turn decide the behaviour, personality and outlook of each individual creature in this world. These three are briefly the following—(a) *Sata Guna* is the best quality present in a creature and it is marked by a predominance of auspiciousness, righteousness, virtuousness and noble qualities. (b) *Raja Guna* is the medium quality marked by a greater percentage of worldly passions, desires and attachments and their natural offshoots in a creature. It covers such qualities as worldly yearnings, passions, a stormy nature, agitated behaviour, ambitions, desires, selfishness, expansionist tendencies, desire to sustain etc. All these pertain to this materialistic world, and they create an inherent affinity in a creature towards the material world of sense objects and their enjoyments rather than the world of spiritualism. (c) *Tama Guna* is the third quality which is the meanest and basest of the three types of qualities in a creature. It is marked by evilness, perversions and sinfulness. It is the most degrading, denigrating and contemptible of the three characteristics in a person, leading him to such negative traits as sins, vices, perversions, greed, avarice, haughtiness, pride, lust, attachments, yearnings, intoxication, wild behaviour, promiscuity, evils, utter disregard for anything which is righteous, ethical and noble etc.

⁷The *three letters* which stand for an entity that is imperishable are A, U and M, and pronounced together in this sequence they produce the sound equivalent of the

eternal word OM which is the sublime ethereal sound form of the imperishable and supreme transcendental Brahm.

⁸The fourth *half syllable* is the letter 'O' which comes between 'A' and 'U'. It is called half-letter or syllable because it is in silent mode and has no distinct sound of its own in the pronunciation of the word OM. It blends with all the other three letters and acts as a bridge between them.]

136-139. Everything in existence is strung together or held together by these three letters (of OM representing the supreme Brahm). They act like the common thread running through the beads of a rosary or the flowers of a garland holding the independent units together and giving the creation its formal meaning and shape. [This is because the creation has so astounding variation that no two units of it are similar. There must be something to hold such a vast array of diversities together and prevent the entire edifice from disintegrating and scattering around. The bonding factor and the only one common denominator in such a diverse world is the presence of Brahm. And the word OM consisting of the three letters A, U and M is like the symbolic thread that keeps the garland made of a large variety of flowers in place and prevents the flowers from scattering.]

The entity implied and referred to by these three letters is the eternal and imperishable Truth of creation that is Absolute and is known as Brahm or Pranav. It is the supreme stature that the spiritual aspirant aims for and endeavours to reach, it is a most exalted state of being that which is truthful and eternal, and it is called the 'Param Pada', i.e. the supreme spiritual attainment or achievement. [This supreme spiritual stature is realisation of the truth about the 'self' as a personification of the pure and truthful 'consciousness', as an embodiment of wisdom and enlightenment, as well as the fact that it is the same as the cosmic 'Self' or the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm.]

This eternal 'absolute truth' (known as Brahm) pervades throughout the creation in a universal and uniform manner. It submerges, drenches and soaks the entire creation; it wafts and warps through it most subtly, imperceptibly and unseen just like the presence of fragrance in a flower, butter and fat in milk, oil in the sesame seed, and gold in its ore.

It is said that a symbolic lotus flower exists in the subtle heart of the creature. The head of this flower faces downwards but its stem is erect. In the center of it is the spot where the creature's Mana¹ is located. [Refer Dhyani Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 33.]

During meditation on the supreme Truth called Brahm represented by the word OM, when the breath is exhaled, i.e. when Rechak is done, the sound produced is equivalent to the first letter 'A' of the triad of three imperishable letters representing that imperishable Truth. That is, the letter 'A' of the three-letter word OM is being said. In the context of the lotus-like heart and the Mana inherently present in it as its integral part, this letter 'A' represents the vital forces of life present inside the body of a man as well as his Mana representing his subtle heart along with its inherent emotions, sentiments and desires. They are manifested when the man makes the most primitive form of sound in the throat, the sound equivalent of the letter 'A' which is the first letter of the divine and ethereal sound OM².

The subtle lotus present in the heart is literally pierced through or ruptured by the second letter 'U' of the ethereal divine word OM³.

Finally when the exhalation is complete, the mouth is closed, and the continuous humming sound heard is equivalent to the third letter 'M' of the word OM. The cosmic Naad is heard in this stage because its sound is very much alike this

sound of OM with a closed mouth. [It is a resonating, reverberating and grave sound of high density that vibrates through the brain and heart of the practitioner. Nothing else is heard against the background of this sound which drenches the ascetic like the sound emanating from the ocean at high tide which comes roaring in and sweeps the man standing on its coast in one sweeping wave.]

The Ardha Maatraa or the half syllable (which symbolises the subsiding of these sounds and also the link between any two of them) is pure and uncorrupt like crystal⁴. It has no particular form and sound specific to it. At the stage when it is heard, the ascetic is deemed to have reached a state of bliss and ecstasy that no corruptions and worldly faults anymore can taint him. It literally destroys his sins and their evil consequences (136-139).

[Note--¹This *Mana* is the emotional and sentimental aspects that control the functioning of the subtle aspects of the heart. It determines as to which things the heart would get attracted to and be infatuated with, and which it would treat with a sense of neutrality and even disdain. The Mana is usually regarded to be the subtle aspect of the mind also that controls such functions paying attention and remembering something. But we will observe here that the heart plays an all-important role, because unless the heart is interested in anything and gets involved in it, the mind alone would not be able to fix its attention on that subject for any length of time. A coordinated effort of the subtle mind and subtle heart are collectively called the Mana.

²When a man becomes emotionally aroused, or when his heart wants something or agrees with something, the sound that expresses it is equivalent to the sound of 'A' made in the throat, indicating the emotions of 'aye' or 'yeah' or 'yes' or 'oh'.

³This can be visualised in the example of the kettle with a spout. When the water inside is heated, the steam escapes out through the spout, making a subtle hissing sound. In the present case of Yoga, the heated vital airs rise up the body from its lower half and enter the heart through the stem of this lotus enroute to the head. Since the lotus is bent at its neck and facing downwards, thereby blocking the passage of the wind, it punctures a hole through it and moves upwards. It makes a hissing sound while escaping through it, which is compared with the second letter 'U' of the word OM.

⁴It must be noted here that the atoms of quartz crystals are known to vibrate and emit very subtle electrical impulses which are harnessed in quartz watches and other electronic instruments. The same thing probably happens here. The subtle electric energy present inside the heart not only keeps it beating normally while the ascetic meditates but also enhances the vibrations produced by saying OM silently. The resonance produced by these two sounds, i.e. the beating of the heart and the silent repetition of the Mantra OM, overlap each other and their frequencies are greatly enhanced, thereby multiplying their effect. As a result what was previously a subtle sound gradually becomes a roar like a ferocious ocean or the rumbling of a train passing over a bridge at night. This the 'Naad' heard by the ascetic.

The concept of 'Ardha Maatraa, has been elaborated upon in Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse no. 9, and Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 17, 36, both of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

140-141. A wise and erudite man who does Yoga in the way described in this Upanishad is empowered to obtain Mukti, or find liberation and deliverance for himself. Even as a tortoise withdraws all its limbs and head in its shell, the ascetic who practices Yoga as described here closes all the exit points in the body, called the nine doors¹, through which the vital winds could escape when pressure is exerted on them. As a result, finding all escape routes blocked, the air is forced to move up in the body (140-141).

[Note—¹The nine exit points in the body, called the doors, through which the air could make its escape are the following—two ears, two eyes, two nostrils, one mouth, one anus, and one urethra. Refer Shwetashwatar Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, 3/18.]

142. Just like an oil lamp kept inside a hollow pitcher remains steady and lights up the whole inside of the pitcher, the self-illuminated consciousness is witnessed during the state of Kumbhak when the air is held inside the body. [In other words, when the mind is totally focused on meditation and free from all external disturbances, the ascetic is able to witness the presence of the eternal spark of divinity inside his own self in the form of his own Atma which is pure consciousness and as pure as crystal.]

In this Yoga, when all the nine doors are closed, the perfect silence is witnessed and the only entity that remains inside the body is the essence known as the Atma.

This is how this Upanishad has described Yoga. Amen! (142).

-----Shanti Paath-----

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Chapter 18

Dakshin Murti Upanishad

The Dakshina-Murti Upanishad is dedicated to Lord Shiva who is regarded as knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment personified, and therefore the most competent one to expound upon, teach and preach subjects related to the divine wisdom pertaining to the field of metaphysics and spiritualism. This Upanishad highlights the significance and importance of the ‘Shiva Tattva’ or the Shiva principle, the essence and basis for which Shiva is recognised as the greatest Lord, and worshipped as such. This realisation and knowledge of Shiva Tattva is akin to being wisened about the ultimate essence and truth of existence, the ultimate essence that is known as Brahm. This concept is reiterated in another Upanishad belonging to the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, viz. the Rudra Hridaya Upanishad.

Iconographically, this form of Shiva has other names also besides ‘Dakshina-Murti’, such as ‘Dakshina-Mukhi’.

The word ‘Murti’ means a ‘form or image’, the word ‘Mukhi’ means ‘facing’, the word ‘Dakshinaa’ means ‘giving away liberally as charity or donation’, the word ‘Dakshin’ has three connotations here—viz. ‘south’, ‘right’ and ‘knowledge and wisdom’, and the word ‘Shiva’ of course means ‘someone who is a personification of such glorious virtues as auspiciousness, beauty, truth, knowledge, enlightenment, wisdom, renunciation, dispassion and detachment from all things material and false, someone who is meditative and contemplative, someone who is self-realised and Brahm-realised etc.’

So we have a comprehensive picture of what this Upanishad aims to worship—it does not aim to worship Lord Shiva as the God of death and destruction but as the most enlightened and wise teacher of the philosophy of Brahm whom he

personifies. Since Lord Shiva faced 'south' when he taught the ancient sages and seers who had approached him in some earlier time to gain divine wisdom and metaphysical knowledge which only he could impart to them, he was known as 'the Lord facing south'. Since the knowledge imparted by him was astoundingly unique and the most 'right or correct and precise knowledge' of metaphysics which granted 'a divine wisdom as well as vision' to its followers, it was called 'Dakshin'. Since he was liberal in giving it to the sincere spiritual aspirant, he was called 'Dakshina-Murti' or the 'one who is an icon of charity and donation, one who is very generous in giving away what is asked for without holding anything away from the alms seeker'.

What did he give away? He gave away 'knowledge and divine wisdom', and only one who has something can give it to others, therefore he is deemed to be a 'Murti', or an image, a personified form of such knowledge and divine wisdom. The word 'Dakshinaa' means 'giving charity and making donation', while 'Mukha' means 'mouth'. In other words, Lord Shiva has been extremely liberal and magnanimous in giving away whatever he has, and in this particular case he has given away knowledge and wisdom pertaining to the non-dual reality of the 'self' as a personification of Brahm. Since teaching is done by the 'mouth', hence this donation and charity that he made was through the mouth, entitling him to be called 'Dakshina-Mukhi'. This is evident in verse no. 30.

In other words, the Dakshin Murti is the form of Shiva as a wise teacher and preacher of divine knowledge which is meant to make the disciple aware of the actual principles and the truth in this world that exists behind the arcade of falsehood that is so typical of it. This knowledge enables him to attain a state of eternity and blessedness marked by eternal peace, happiness, beatitude and felicity. It's the correct and auspicious path to self and Brahm realisation.

Since it was first revealed by Lord Shiva himself, it is a revealed Upanishad.

The leading sage who was given this knowledge by Shiva was Maarkandey, who later revealed some relevant part of it when he was approached by other sages and seers led by Shaunak etc. who asked him nine questions which form the basis of the present Upanishad. The nine questions briefly are—what is the esoteric and eclectic knowledge of the Shiva principle, who is the deity worshipped in this principle, what are the Mantras (mystical and spiritual formulas in the form of words or letters), what is the kind of devotion needed for its success, how can that esoteric and eclectic knowledge be obtained, what is the instrument to felicitate it, what offerings are to be made, what is the appropriate time for doing it, and what is its ultimate goal.

Each of these questions is answered succinctly with stress on the importance of their metaphysical and spiritual quotient rather than on mere ritualistic aspects.

Lord Shiva has been depicted in five forms as Dakshin Mukhi or Dakshin Murti. These forms are basically the same but with slight variations. The basic form has him seated on high seat with four arms in various Mudras (postures) and holding different things as symbols of one or other virtues that he possesses. The five forms build up on this basic outline, and each has a distinct Mantra (a group of letters, words or phrases having mystical and divine powers which are used to activate these latent powers in Nature for the worshipper's benefit) dedicated to it. These five Mantras are listed in this Upanishad.

There is another very small Upanishad of merely three verses dedicated to Lord Shiva, called 'Rudra Upanishad'. It is not ascertainable to which Veda it belongs, but the tenor of its language very much resembles this present Upanishad. Hence, it has been added as an appendix no. 2 of this volume. Refer also to Yogattva

Upanishad, verse nos. 91-94, 98-102 as well as Braham Vidya Upanishad, verse no. 64 which also expounds this aspect of Divinity.

-----Shanti Paath-----

See appendix no. 1 for the meaning of this Shanti Paath.

1. Once upon a time, the great sages called Shaunak¹ and others started a great Yagya (fire sacrifice) under a huge Vat tree (the Indian fig tree or the Banyan tree) in the country called Brahmaavarta.

During this occasion, these sages approached the immortal sage named Maarkandey² with great devotion and a sense of submission and sincerity to acquire divine wisdom and thereby satisfy their quest for eclectic knowledge about certain metaphysical questions.

They said, 'Oh great sage! How have you found immortality (i.e. a virtually never-ending long life) and how do you enjoy eternal bliss and ecstasy? [Please unravel the secret to us for our benefit.]³' (1).

[Note—¹Sage *Shaunak* was a wise and learned sage and derived his name after his father sage *Shunak*. He is regarded as an incarnation of Indra, the king of Gods. He was an expert on the Vedas, especially the Rik/Rig Veda and the majority of his works revolve around this particular Veda. They are known as 'Anukramanika' (indices). His magnum opus is the 'Brihad-devta' which deals with the deities of the Vedas. He had a large following of disciples, the chief being *Ashwalyaana*. He appears in many ancient scriptures such as *Shatpath Brahmin*, 13/5/3/5; *Brihad Aranyak Upanishad*, 2/5/20; *Chandogya Upanishad*, 1/9/3; *Mundak Upanishad*, 1/1/3; *Kaushitaki Brahmin Upanishad*, 4/7.

²Sage *Maarkandey* was the son of sage *Maarkandu*. He was a great devotee of Lord Shiva, the patron God of death, so much so that when death approached him personified as *Kaal* when the sage was yet quite young because destiny had it that he would die still when young, he clung to the Shiva Lingam (the image of Shiva) with the greatest of devotion, surrender and urgency that comes with one facing certain death. Lord Shiva appeared and prevented Death from tying him in his snare and taking him away. The Lord blessed him with a virtual eternal life, blessing him that he would live for another 14 Kalpas (1 Kalpa = 1 day of Brahma or roughly 4.32 billion human years). His magnum opus is the 'Maarkandey Puran'. He had also edited and abridged the *Manusmriti*, the code of life and conduct as laid by the first human named *Manu* to regulate society and act as a constitution and manual for ready reference for the forthcoming human race, into eight thousand verses, and passed it to sage *Bhargava*. His reference comes in the *Mahabharat* epic when he approaches the *Pandavas* and taught them the principles of *Dharma* (code of righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety and nobility). He was the one who had enlightened *Yudisthira* that *Krishna* was an incarnation of Lord *Vishnu* (*Vanapurva*, 189). In the same *Mahabharat*, he preaches the celestial sage *Narad* the laws of *Dharma* (*Anushaasan-purva*, 50-62).

³The sages were doing a religious deed dedicated to Lord Shiva. Like any intelligent, prudent and wise student, they did not just want to perform the rituals in a mechanical way but wished to know the esoteric secret behind the deity they were to worship along with its metaphysical and spiritual importance and significance. So they approached their senior *Maarkandey* who was taught this knowledge by none other than Lord Shiva himself. The Upanishad is called *Dakshin Murti* because Lord

Shiva had faced south while he had preached it, as well as to indicate the fact that in this capacity the Lord was acting as a wise and erudite teacher and preacher instead of his role as the concluder of creation.]

2-3. He (Maarkandey) replied, ‘The secret of my long life and perpetual state of bliss and ecstasy is the knowledge of the Shiva Principle (i.e. the ‘Shiva Tattva’).

The sages enquired, ‘What is the knowledge of Shiva Tattva of which you talk about? Who is its patron deity or Deva¹? What are the Mantras² used to worship and invoke its blessings? How is Japa (repetition) done with this Mantra (i.e. how is this mystical and esoteric group of letters or words having magical charm used to invoke the deity of this Shiva Tattva and attain it)? What Mudras³ are to be adopted for this purpose? What is having firm devotion and conviction in them? What are the means by which that great mystical, esoteric and eclectic divine knowledge and wisdom can be got or accessed? What is the equipment or instrument that can aid in its acquisition? What offerings are to be made to it or for it⁴? What is the appropriate time for doing it? And what is its ultimate goal (i.e. what is the final destination which a spiritual aspirant reaches if he pursues this particular line of philosophy)?’ (2-3).

[Note—¹The word *Deva* has three meanings here—(a) one is the conventional meaning ‘a God’ or the patron deity who is offered worship by its specific Mantras and other ritualistic forms such as elaborate fire sacrifice or use of charm geometrical instruments called Tantras. (b) The second is the implied meaning ‘one who shines’ or ‘one who shines in his glories and stands out among other such deities with its unique qualities and virtues which the worshipper intends to honour and invoke, the qualities which had inspired the worshipper to chose this particular deity over others’. Only one who ‘shines’ is regarded honourable and worthy of worship because he is not only pure and holy but his purity and holiness shines and lets others see their correct path in its illumination. (c) The third meaning refers to the ‘ability of such exalted deities to liberally and magnanimously shower their virtues and holiness upon their devotees so that they can benefit from them even as the sun gives its light to the whole world evenly for the benefit of all creatures.

²*Mantras* are mystical formulas having divine powers. They consist of letters, words or phrases and used to invoke the blessings of the chosen deity. Each deity has a specific Mantra just like each element in Nature has been assigned specific symbol in modern science. For example, hydrogen is recognised by the letter H, oxygen by O, nitrogen by N, carbon by C etc. The Yogtattva Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse nos. 91-94 and 98-102 expound upon the fact that Shiva is the patron deity and a personification of the fire and the sky elements respectively. It also describes the Beej Mantras, the ways of worshipping etc. of Shiva in these elements.

³The *Mudra* is a special body posture and positioning of its various external organs such as the hands, legs, head, etc. along with the various modes in which the mouth, tongue, eyes etc. are held. These form an integral part of formal forms of ritualistic worship involving Tantras (charm instruments) as well as during Japa (repetition of Mantras). These Mudras are said to harness the latent subtle and divine energy inherently present in the body of the worshipper and harmonize it with the cosmic energy of the deity being worshipped in order to bring about an integration between them and enabling the practitioner to become one with the deity.

⁴There are many ways we can interpret this particular question. In the context of ritualistic forms of worship called Yajya using the fire sacrifice, or the Tantra, i.e. the magical charm instruments used in occult forms of worship, it would mean some kind of offering that is made to the sacred fire or the chosen deity. If it’s purely done from the metaphysical point of view, then acquisition of knowledge by studying of the scriptures and listening them from a teacher is treated as another form of Yajya, and it is called Gyan Yajya, or the hardships endured, disciplined maintained and strict

codes of conduct observed to acquire divine knowledge. The offering in this case, as is obvious, would be diligence, devotion, sincerity, conviction, faith, concentration and focus of the mind, restrain of the senses and the disciplining of the body etc.]

4-5. He (Maarkandey) began his discourse—‘That esoteric, mystical and eclectic divine knowledge and wisdom which kindles spiritual awareness and enlightenment in a spiritual aspirant and seeker, culminating in the revelation to him of the supreme essence pertaining to Lord Shiva who is famously known as ‘Dakshina-Mukhi or Dakshina-Mukha’¹, is the known as ‘Shiva Tattva’.

The supreme transcendental Lord who winds up the entire creation at the time of its end (i.e. at the time of its conclusion, called the ‘dooms-day’), retracting it and establishing it in his own Atma or pure conscious cosmic Self (i. e. in his own bosom just like an octopus withdrawing its tentacles or a tortoise retracting its limbs in its shell) is the patron deity or Deva of this knowledge².

This Lord (i.e. the supreme transcendental Brahm in his most elementary and truthful form known as ‘Shiva Tattva’³—the primary essence, the basic elementary truth, known as the ‘Shiva Principle’, of creation) remains perpetually blissful by submerging himself in his own consciousness known as the Atma. He is self-illuminated (because illumination and light are metaphors for consciousness, enlightenment and knowledge that are holistic, divine, holy and auspicious) (4-5).

[Note—¹The word *Dakshina-Mukhi* has two parts. The second part ‘Mukha’ means ‘face’, while the word ‘Dakshin’ has three connotations here—viz. ‘south’, ‘right’ and ‘knowledge and wisdom’. Since Lord Shiva faced ‘south’ when he taught the ancient sages and seers who had approached him in some earlier time to gain divine wisdom and metaphysical knowledge which only he could impart to them, he was known as ‘the Lord facing south’. Since the knowledge imparted by him was astoundingly unique, most esoteric and divine, besides being the most ‘right’ or correct and precise ‘knowledge’ of metaphysics which granted ‘a divine wisdom as well as spiritual vision’ to its followers, making them experts and skilled in this knowledge, it was called ‘Dakshin’.

The word ‘Dakshin’ is derived from the word ‘Daksha’ which means to be an expert and skilled in any field of knowledge. Since Shiva is an expert God in the knowledge of Brahm and the Atma, he is therefore the most competent and expert teacher and preacher of this subject. A wise and skilled teacher is one who can make even difficult and rare knowledge easily accessible to this students, and for this purpose he must have a first hand experience of its intricate details so that he can solve all the problems, satisfy their queries, and attend to other nitty-gritties.

In other words, the *Dakshina-Murti* is the ‘image’ (‘Murti’) form of Shiva as a wise and enlightened teacher as well as an expert preacher of divine knowledge which is meant to make the disciple aware of the actual principles and the secret truth hidden in this world behind the arcade of falsehood and deceptions that are so typical of this deluding material world so as to enable him to attain a state of eternal blessedness marked by eternal spiritual peace, happiness, beatitude and felicity. It’s the correct and auspicious path to self-realisation and Brahm-realisation. And since he had done so while facing south, he came to be known as ‘Dakshin Mukhi’—or the south facing Lord who also happens to be an erudite and wise teacher and preacher.

Again, if we take the other name *Dakshina-Mukha* it would mean ‘one who is a personification of the virtues of donation and charity’. The word ‘Dakshinaa’ means giving away charitably and making selfless donation, while ‘Mukha’ means ‘mouth’. In other words, Lord Shiva has been extremely gracious, benevolent, liberal and magnanimous in giving away whatever he has, and in this particular case he has given away eternal spiritual knowledge and wisdom pertaining to the non-dual reality of the ‘self’ as a personification of Brahm. Since teaching is done by the ‘mouth’, hence this

donation and charity that he made was through the mouth, entitling him to be called 'Dakshina-Mukhi'.

²Lord Shiva is regarded as the God assigned the duty of bringing about conclusion of creation. In fact, Shiva is another manifestation of the supreme transcendental Brahm, the Supreme Being, in his role as the concluder of creation just like there is Brahma the creator and Vishnu the care-taker, both being the same Lord in his various roles. The Shiva that is referred to in this Upanishad and the one who ought to be worshipped is not his external form as the ferocious and merciless 'God of death' but the hidden element of Truth and Reality that governs this creation and which acts as the dynamic Principal that works behind the scene to bring about the conclusion of this vast creation, retract it in his own bosom like a father would embrace his offspring to protect it from the impending danger, and then when the time is conducive, to make it re-emerge once again with a new mandate and a fresh lease of life. Obviously, such an entity is known by the name of Brahm in the Upanishads. In his role as the creator, this cosmic Principal is known as Brahma, as the sustainer, nourisher and protector it is known as Vishnu, and as concluder it is called Shiva. These three Gods of the Trinity represent the basic elements of creation from which the entire creation has come into being. In this context, the reader is advised to refer to Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 85-102 which basically describe how the five elements have personified as these three Gods.

³*Shiva Tattva*—The word 'Tattva' means truth, reality, essence, fundamental aspect, the primary and basic element, the real and truthful principle, while the word 'Shiva' stand for a host of eclectic virtues and divine glories exemplified and personified by Lord Shiva, such as the divine and grand virtues of spiritual beauty, auspiciousness, truthfulness, righteousness, nobility, dispassion, detachment, wisdom, knowledge, enlightenment etc.

Since the primary essence and the basic elementary Truth of creation that is absolute, pristine pure, uncorrupted, untainted, immutable, eternal, imperishable and universal, that is auspicious, righteous and noble, is known as Brahm, and since these virtues are undiluted, untainted and eternally truthful, since they are unchallengeable and irrefutable 'truths and reality' of existence, they are collectively called the 'Shiva Principle'. Lord Shiva is the ultimate Authority and Principal of creation who personifies these virtues.

The word Shiva refers to one is not only beautiful, auspicious, holy and truthful, who is not only most enlightened, wise, self-realised and Brahm-realised, but personify or embody these virtues in his own self. That is why Shiva is the universal teacher and preacher of the great principles and tenets of metaphysics and spirituality because there is no one more competent, more knowledgeable and wiser than him. This is also the reason why he is depicted always in a state of perpetual Samadhi—the state of perpetual meditation and contemplation, because he has tasted the nectar of eternal bliss and happiness that comes with realising the ultimate Truth of existence which fills the spiritual aspirant with an extreme sense of contentedness and ecstasy.

It must be remembered that all Upanishads rely on and unequivocally expound upon one basic philosophy, and it is the tenet of 'Advaitya' or 'non-duality'. They endeavour to establish by their teachings that the 'Tattva', or the fundamental essence behind everything in this living creation, no matter what its external form and quality is and what the context and circumstance are—is basically the one and the same entity that is known as pure cosmic Consciousness. Since the underlying essence is the same and it remains constant, unchanging, immutable, indivisible and universal inspite of the mind-boggling variations in which it is manifested in this visible world, since nothing can exist without this fundamental essence, and since it would outlast all known visible faces of creation that appear to be true on their face but are fundamentally flawed because they come to an end whereas 'truth' should be eternal and imperishable, it is known as 'Tattva', the great essence and fundamental 'truth' behind everything.

So, the Shiva Tattva being talked about here is the ultimate essence or Tattva that is 'Shiva' in nature. That is, the essence that is basically truthful, beautiful, auspicious, holy and divine in nature.

The main aim of all spiritual pursuit and study of the scriptures is to become aware of the supreme and irrefutable Truth that is Absolute in this creation along with the basic principles that define this Absolute Truth and form its eclectic essence. Since the concept of the Absolute Truth is too abstract to be comprehended by the mind, it has been personified as a deity or Deva. What is it? It is the eclectic, esoteric and mystical knowledge and awareness of the cosmic, universal and eternal divine Being who personifies this Truth, and who is the subject matter of all metaphysical research and spiritual practices. This Supreme Being is none other but Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness. The knowledge of this Brahm is known as the Shiva Tattva—the auspicious, holy and divine essence and principle that defines and governs the enigmatic and mysterious entity known as Brahm.

It is like the case of the hidden nucleus around which the electrons move in an atom, or the atom itself which is invisible but forms the basic building block around which all the molecules are constructed, and which in turn form the basis of all material things that have come into existence in this world. If we remove the nucleus or the atom, nothing would exist though no one has actually seen either of them.]

6. [Verse nos. 6-8 describe the first of the five Mantras listed in this Upanishad.]

Now the various aspects of the powerful and effective Mantra dedicate to this Dakshina-Mukhi Lord (Shiva) are being enumerated. Its Rishi (the one who had first created or conceptualized it and understood its esoteric and mystical powers and prowess) is Brahma the creator¹; its Chanda (the poetical style in which it is composed) is known as Gayatri²; and its Devta (the patron deity to whom it is dedicated and who is worshipped through it) is the Lord known as Dakshina-Murti (the form of Shiva that faces south and which is in a teaching mode).

The Mantra is to be used to do 'Anga Nyas'³ (6).

[Note—¹The *Rishi* of a Mantra is the one who had first visualised or conceptualized it, who had first discovered it, who had first composed its hymns and witnessed its powerful might first hand. He tested the mystical powers of this hymn and then taught about it to his disciples for their welfare. He was like a modern day scientist who does long research and arrives at some astounding discovery and tests its truthfulness and effectiveness. Then that discovery is named after him. Verse no. 32 of this Upanishad clearly asserts that it was Brahma who had first worshipped the supreme transcendental Brahm at the beginning of creation with these hymns called Mantras in order to start the process of creation. Hence, he is the Rishi of these Mantras.

²*Gayatri* is a type of poetical composition that has twenty four letters and syllables divided into three steps or stanzas.

³The *Anga Nyas* is a process of pledging utmost faith and conviction on the divine and holy Mantra's supernatural powers and potentials by invoking it and reposing it on the various locations of the body and its vital parts. The word 'Anga' means the body and its various parts, and 'Nyas' means to invoke, deposit, place, keep, repose, trust, pledge, entrust, to keep a thing in mind, etc. This is a ritualistic process in which certain parts of the body are touched and certain Mantras are said. It also means the purification of the individual parts of the body and the installation of the individual letter of the invoked Mantra, complete with its full potentials, at those points. It is like reposting the powerful dynamic forces of creation represented by the Gods of the Mantra on the different designated parts of the body so as to empower these parts with the inherent strength and divine powers possessed by these Gods in a symbolic manner. It also makes the body holy and sanctified because it is now the seat where Divinity is being invoked and placed. Since the Gods cannot be seated on a polluted and unclean place, it obviously follows that the body of a worshipper is

made clean and holy in as much as it must be made free from all sorts of sins, perversions and other corrupting influences of this world.

Thus, the process of Anga Nyas makes the body of the worshipper sinless, holy and free from evils that cast their all-enveloping shadow on this world. Anga Nyas is a virtual shield-like body armour that gives protection to the wearer.

The locations on the body where Anga Nyas is done have great metaphysical significance. According to Ramopanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, canto 2, verse no. 43, these ten locations are the following—Brahm-randhra (which is the hair-like slit on the top of the skull), the forehead, the central point of the eyebrows (where the symbolic third eye of wisdom is said to be located), the upper palate, the two earlobes, the heart, the navel and the two thighs = 10 sites.

Primarily there are six sites according to the same Upanishad's verse no. 23 where the primary seed or root words, called the Beej Mantras, are invoked. They are the following—the Brahm-randhra (top of the skull), the central point of the eyebrows, the heart, the navel, and the two thighs.

According to its verse no. 83-85, there are five sites for doing Anga Nyas for a warrior. These are heart, forehead/central point of the eyebrows, the top of the head where the tuft of hair is located and which is the site of the Brahm-randhra, the body armour or shield, and the arms and armaments of the aspirant warrior.

The human body is a microcosm of the cosmos, because according to the genesis of creation, the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic, all-encompassing and all-inclusive manifestation of the supreme transcendental Brahm, had metamorphosed in the shape of the human body, and therefore this body is a manifestation of the entire creation including all its Gods and all their astounding potentials.

The creation has been visualised as having three divisions which form the so-called three worlds—viz. the heavens represented by the head of the human body where the Brahm-randhra, forehead and the eyebrows are located; the terrestrial world or the earth symbolised by the heart and the navel; and the nether or lower world by the legs and the two thighs. It must be noted that the two earlobes stand for the two extreme directions of the cosmic globe. So, when the aspirant does Anga Nyas with any Mantra on these specific points, he symbolically purifies these points on his body and empowers them with the mystical and ethereal powers of the powerful forces of Nature which these Mantras embody as mystical formulas encrypting astounding dynamic energy and forces of creation. This is a perception which implies that the ethereal and mystical powers and potentials of the Mantras representing the stupendous forces of Nature that control creation, right from its conception to its development, growth, expansion, sustenance and conclusion, are invoked and established throughout the breadth and length of this visible creation manifested in the form of the body of the aspirant. In other words, the aspirant hopes that he would be empowered with all the glorious virtues and auspicious powers and stupendous potentials and majestic authority vested in the Viraat Purush at the cosmic level.

But at the same time this visualization of the body being a manifestation of the Viraat Purush carries a load of noble responsibility with it. If the worshipper is enlightened and wise enough so as to be doing the Anga Nyas with full understanding of its metaphysical and spiritual import, then he must also realise that he is not an ordinary mortal creature who indulges in the pursuit of worldly pleasures and comforts, or who thinks that success in this material world is the ultimate goal and criterion of success in life. On the other hand, he should endeavour to live a life of exemplary sacrifice and service, devoting his time on researching the ultimate Truth of his own self as well as the rest of creation; he must endeavour to fine out the way to free himself from the endless cycle of birth and death, and ensure that he gets final emancipation and salvation in this very life itself. He must aim and find the source that would give him eternal peace and happiness as well as contentedness and bliss of

fulfillment. Otherwise he would be wasting his precious time and energy in imposterism and meaningless perfunctory rituals.]

7. Now the *first Mantra* is being said—In the very beginning the word ‘OM’ (a word used both as a salutation as well as a reference to the supreme Brahman who is actually meant to be worshipped through the following Mantra) is pronounced. This is followed sequentially by the following words, ‘Namaha’, then ‘Bhagwate’, then ‘Dakshina’, then ‘Murtaye’, then ‘Mahyam’ which is singular of the fourth aspect of the Sanskrit word *Asmad* meaning the Supreme Being or supreme Purush or Brahman, then the words ‘Medham Pragayam’. After that, the Sanskrit letter ‘Pra’ (as in *Pray*) is said, followed by the letter the letter ‘Ya’ (as in *yearn*), both standing for the wind element, and then the combined word ‘CChha’ (consisting half letter ‘Cha’ as in *chain* or *charm*, joined to the full letter ‘Chha’ as in *catch* it). Finally, the word for making offerings to the fire sacrifice and meant for the deity worshipped, i.e. the word ‘Swaha’, is said.

This results in the construction of a twenty four lettered Mantra dedicated to Manu (the great original and primary God from whom the rest of the humans were born, a reference to the Viraat Purush who manifested himself as the visible creation) (7).

[Note—Thus, the twenty four lettered Mantra as outlined in this verse and dedicated to Lord Shiva is the following—‘OM Namoha Bhagwate Dakshina Murtaye Mahyam Medham Pragayam Prayacchha Swaha’. This Mantra briefly means ‘OM salutations! I bow before the south facing and most revered and wise Lord called Dakshin Mukhi who is an ultimate epitome and personification of the highest quality of intelligence, erudition, divine wisdom and knowledge in this creation. I offer this offering to you; I submit myself before you by saying ‘Sawaha’.

It must be noted that the word Swaha is usually pronounced while making offerings to the fire pit of the fire sacrifice, but more broadly it means submission, humility and offering the best that one has to the chosen deity. In the present case since no external fire sacrifice is apparently being done and the worshipper is meditating upon one or the other forms of Lord Shiva while doing a symbolic form of sacrifice involving his own body where the Mantras are established and their dynamic cosmic esoteric powers are reposted, the implied meaning is to offer one’s own self with the greatest of reverence and humility to the Lord.]

8. Next, the Dhayan, or the process of meditating upon this eclectic and divine form of the Lord Dakshina-Mukhi¹, is being narrated—‘I offer my prayers to Lord Dakshina-Mukhi (i.e. Lord Shiva) who is gloriously white complexioned like the pure crystal and silver. His hands are held in the Gyan Mudra (i.e. in the posture adopted while giving divine knowledge and wisdom to his devotees) which blesses the recipient with the truthful and the best form of knowledge of the essence of everything, the eclectic and divine knowledge which is the highest form of wisdom that can be had, and which acts like an elixir of eternal bliss and felicity called Amrit. He holds an Aksha Mala (a prayer rosary) made of pearls. [The symbolism of pearls should be noted here. Pearls are metaphors for purity and the best of anything; they are symbols of holiness, divinity and piousness. Lord Shiva personifies all these qualities.]

He has three eyes. [There are two conventional eyes and the third eye symbolic of his great insight into the most secret of knowledge and the ability to see things past their physical appearances. It stands for the highest level of erudition, sagacity, wisdom, knowledge and enlightenment. Refer also Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 93, 100.]

His broad forehead gives shelter to the Moon God. [This moon is present in a crescent shape indicating the various Kalaas or divine aspects of the Lord. It is believed that there are sixteen divine qualities called Kalaas in a man that the sixteen phases of the moon symbolises, and its location on the forehead shows that these qualities adorn Lord Shiva permanently. Refer also Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 100.]²

Serpents are wrapped round his waist as girdles³. He is adorned by countless divine ornaments. [These ornaments are not physical ornaments made of jewels etc. but the many glorious virtues that adorn the Lord as has been pointed out in reference to the presence of the moon on his head. Besides these virtues, there are umpteen numbers of divine virtues that Shiva possesses as the Supreme Being personified.] (8).

[Note—¹The *Dakshina-Murti* Lord Shiva is a benign form of Shiva in his teaching mode. The word Shiva stands for such divine qualities as auspiciousness, purity, beauty, piety, truth, renunciation, dispassion towards and detachment from all material things, highest level of enlightenment, knowledge, wisdom and erudition etc. Lord Shiva personifies all of them at once. He has been depicted in the scriptures as having four hands—two at the front and two behind. These are symbolic only and not any anomalous growth on the body.

In iconography, Lord Shiva has been depicted in various forms based on this Upanishad. One of his forms, the *first version*, is being referred to here. This form has the two hands in the front are held in the following way—the right one is in Gyan Mudra or the posture of giving knowledge, and the left one is in Vara Mudra or the posture that indicates his granting boons and giving gifts. The gift in this case is the gift of knowledge and wisdom. The two hands at the back of these front hands are holding a rosary in the right hand, and the fire in the left hand.

Ichnographically, he is shown sitting on a pedestal with his left leg resting on the thighs of the right leg which rests on a reclining figure of personified ignorance and delusion, called Apasmaara Purush.

²The *Moon* present on Shiva's forehead stands for the various eclectic qualities called Kalaas that he possesses and which adorn him like the moon. Symbolically, the devotee is advised to follow the example of his chosen deity Lord Shiva and note the symbolism of the Moon on his head. These eclectic qualities should be as prominent as the moon on the head of Shiva and they should form an integral part of the character of the devotee if he wishes to place himself in the position of being called a sincere follower and worshipper of Lord Shiva. Now let us have a glimpse of these Kalaas. They are the various eclectic qualities or attributes that an exalted man should possess, and briefly they are the following—(i) Shraddha (श्रद्धा—faith, believe, conviction, reverence, respect, devotion), (ii) Pran (प्राण—life; the very essence of creation; the vibrations of life; the rhythm and essential functions pertaining to life), (iii) Akash (आकाश—the all-pervading, all-encompassing sky or space element), (iv) Vayu (वायु—wind, air element), (v) Tej (तेज—energy, splendour, radiance, glory, might, majesty and fire element), (vi) Apaha (अपः—water element which is the all-important ingredient for life), (vii) 'Prithivi' (पृथ्वी—earth element which is the base or foundation for all mortal creation), (viii) Indriya (इन्द्रिय—the organs of the body, both the organs of perception as well as of action), (ix) Mana (मन—the mind and heart complex and their stupendous potentials), (x) Anna (अन्न—food, the element without which life is simply not imaginable because it provides it with the basic nourishment and energy), (xi) Virya (वीर्य—semen, sperms, standing for courage, valour, potency, vitality and prowess), (xii) Tapa (तपः—austerity and penance, tolerance of hardship as a means of penitence, forbearance as well as carrying out strict religious vows in order to purify one's self) (xiii) Mantra (मन्त्र—the ability to give good advise, the power to contemplate and think, concentrate and focus, logically arrive at a

conclusion), (xiv) Karma (कर्म—taking actions and doing deeds), (xv) Loka (लोक—worldly interactions and behaviours), and (xvi) Naam (नाम—good name, fame, reputation, honour and glory).

Reference should be made to the Chandogya Upanishad, 6/7/1-6 of Sam Veda tradition in this context.

³The coiled *serpents* around his body indicate the fact that he constantly reminds himself of imminent death because serpents are very poisonous and symbolise immediate death. This helps him to remain focused on his spiritual aim of self-realisation instead of being attracted by the material charms of this material world of sense objects and getting deluded by them. The serpents also signify that Shiva is the Lord of death; he is death personified. Since he is able to wrap the serpents around his body and they cannot harm him, it indicates the fact that he has conquered death. That is why he is called 'Mrityunjay', the conqueror of death.

Again, the coiled serpents represent the Kundalini, the coiled subtle energy center at the base of the spine which when activated can entitle the spiritual aspirant to experience a burst of stupendous spiritual energy which provides him a glimpse of his own divine powers as well as the powers of the cosmic Consciousness present inside his bosom as his Atma. This Kundalini is activated by doing numerous Yoga exercises as described in the Upanishads on the subject of Yoga.

The coiled serpents may also represent cycles of time in the macrocosm and the basic energy of life in the microcosm in the form of sexual energy.

These reptiles are very ferocious, dangerous, poisonous, and a symbol of male potency. The symbolism is that Shiva is a very potent God who can be extremely ruthless and unforgiving towards sinful creatures. He has exercised extreme self control and has 'girdled' or readied himself in preparation for enduring the greatest of hardships and sufferance for self-realisation as well as to provide the world with liberation and deliverance. The serpents warn his enemies not to fool around with him. That is also why he has fire in one of his hands. This fire signifies his ability to reduce to ashes the entire physical world consisting of falsehood and sins as well as eliminate all impurities, imperfections, faults and shortcomings that cripple the creature's spiritual well being.

The Yogattva Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, verse nos. 92-94 say that Shiva is a personification of the fire element and is its patron deity. It is no wonder then that he is surrounded by 'fire-spitting' serpents as a symbolism of this fact.]

9. The *second Mantra* of nine letters is now being said. It should be used to do Nyas (i.e. it should be used to invoke the divine powers and stupendous glories of the chosen deity, in this case Lord Dakshina-Murti). To start with, the ethereal word OM is said with a Visarga at its end. [The Visarga is equivalent to the English colon mark “ : ”]. It is followed by the five lettered word for the deity, i.e. the word 'Dakshina Murti' is said with a Visarga at its end. This is to be followed with the word 'Ataram'.

This is the nine letter Mantra¹ of the great Manu (the supreme Lord from whom the humans and all other creatures have come into being) (9).

[Note—The nine letter Mantra is—“OM Dakshinamurtir-ataram”. Briefly it means 'OM salutations! Lord Dakshina-Mukhi (Shiva) is the one who can provide liberation and deliverance to the Atma or soul'.

The Mantra which has nine letters is called *Aasuri Jagati Chanda* or *Aasuri Ekpadaa Jagati Chanda*. It is also called *Yaajushi Brihati* + (*Swaraat Brahmi Anushtup* + *Swaraat Brahmi Ushnik*) *Chanda*.]

10. Now, the Dhyana or doing meditation on the form of this Dakshina-Mukhi Lord is being described—'One (front) hand of the Lord is held in Abhaya Mudra (the posture

of giving blessings and granting the boon of fearlessness, possibly from death and its horrors). The other hand rests on his thighs. The other two hands (at the back of the front hands) hold an axe and an antelope¹.

He is sitting comfortably under the Vat tree (i.e. the Indian fig tree or the Banyan tree). Serpents are wrapped around his waist. The moon of the second night adorns his matted lock of hairs on his head.

His complexion is white as milk. He has three eyes and is surrounded by exalted sages and seers such as Shuk (the sage who was in the body of a parrot and was the son of the legendary sage Veda Vyas, the classifier of the Vedas).

I reverentially bow before Lord Shiva and meditate upon his divine form as narrated above. Let him purify my mind and thought, and let him bless me with divine wisdom and knowledge' (10).

[Note—¹As has been said in note to verse no. 8 above, iconography has depicted Lord Shiva in different forms based on this Upanishad. The present form is Shiva's *second form* which is called Dakshina-Murti. In this form he has four hands—two in the front two behind them. The right front hand is in Abhay Mudra to grant fearlessness. The left hand rests on the thighs. The rear two hands hold an axe in the right hand and an antelope in the left hand. The axe is indicative of his readiness to slay the evil and sinful ones, and the antelope symbolises wildness in character that is about to be sacrificed by the axe.]

11-12. Now, the Nyas of the *third Mantra* is done. Brahma is the Rishi of this Mantra. The word 'OM' is said first followed by the words 'Blumm' and 'Namaha'. Then the following words are said sequentially—the seed or root letter for Maya (delusion creating powers of Brahm; Mother Nature) which is 'Hrim', then the seed or root letter for voice or the faculty of speech which is 'Aiyang' (the ninth Sanskrit vowel 'Aiy' as in My or dye with a dot on top; this 'dot' produces a nasal sound of 'ang' as in rang or rung or of 'um' as in sum). This is followed by the word for the deity being worshipped, i.e. 'Dakshin' and 'Murtaye'. Then the words 'Gyanam' and 'Dehi' are said. Finally, the word 'Swaha' is pronounced.

This creates a Manu Mantra of eighteen letters¹. The worshipper should repeat this eclectic and divine Mantra with due diligence, faith and sincerity. Amongst all the Mantras, this is said to be most secret, esoteric and mystical (11-12).

[Note—¹The complete Mantra thus becomes—"OM Blumm Namō Hrim Aiyang Dakshina Murtaye Gyanam Dehi Swaha". Briefly it means—"OM salutations! I bow most reverentially to the Lord called Dakshin Murti (Shiva) who is the Lord possessed of the astounding powers of Maya and the faculty of speech. I beg you to give me eclectic knowledge, divine wisdom and highest level of erudition and enlightenment. I offer myself in all humility to you; I submit myself to you; Swaha".

The Chanda having eighteen letters is called *Saamni Brihati Chanda*. It is usually of two types—(a) one in which the verse has a total of 18 letters arranged in three lines of 6 letters each—6 + 6 + 6 = 18 letters in all, (b) one in which there are only two lines of 9 letters each—9 + 9 = 18 letters in all. The latter version is called *Saamni Dwipada Brihati Chanda*.

It is called Manu because it is dedicated to the primary Being from whom the rest of creation has evolved.]

13. [This verse describes the process of doing Dhyān or meditation on the form of Dakshina-Murti Shiva to whom prayer was offered in verse no. 11-12.]

His body is coloured white due to the ash of the sacrificial fire smeared all over it. He bears the crescent moon on his head. One of his hands is in Gyan Mudra (the posture of giving knowledge) while the other three hold a Rudraksha Mala (a

rosary of Rudraksha beads or the seeds of the *eleocarpus ganitrus*), the Indian lute and a book¹. He is adorned by the one-piece cloth worn by ascetics (the loin cloth).

He is seated on the 'Vyas Peeth', the seat where the preacher or teacher usually sits during the course of giving a discourse. [This seat is usually higher than the rest of the place where the disciples sit around the teacher.] He is surrounded by exalted sages and seers who have come to hear his discourses. He is in a cheerful and pleasant mood. He is adorned by serpents. He wraps the skin of the tiger around himself (like the forest-dwelling ascetics and hermits usually do).

Let that Dakshina-Murti Lord always protect me, give shelter to me and provide solace and succour to me (13).

[Note—¹As has been pointed out earlier in verse nos. 8 and 10, Shiva has been depicted in different forms. The present version is his *third form*. In this version, the Dakshin Mukhi Shiva has four symbolic arms as well. The front right one is in *Gyan Mudra*—a posture in which the palm is open and held at right angle to the wrist, the thumb and the first finger form a ring and the rest of the finger are held erect and touch each other. The *rosary of Rudraksha* is very dear to Shiva as this particular tree is said to have originated from the tear drops of Shiva while he was meditating. There is an Upanishad called Rudraksha Jabalo-panishad belonging to the Sam Veda tradition dedicated to this theme and it has been included as Chapter 14 of the volume in this series dealing with the Upanishads of that Veda. The *Indian lute* is the musical instrument associated with Goddess Saraswati, the goddess of knowledge, wisdom, speech and intelligence. Holding of this instrument signifies that Shiva is the Lord of knowledge and wisdom of the best quality. The *book* of course is an obvious symbol of knowledge, especially of the scriptures.]

14-15. Now Nyas should be done with the *fourth Mantra*. The Mantra is constructed as follows—in the beginning the divine word 'OM' is pronounced. This is followed sequentially by the seed or root letter for Maya, i.e. 'Hrim', then by the seed or root letter for Sri (worldly prosperity and wealth, majesty and magnificence represented by Goddess Laxmi), which is 'Sring' (as in *string*). This is to be followed by the word 'Saamba-Shivaaye' and 'Tubhyam'. Finally, the offering word 'Swaha' is said. This is the twelve lettered Manu Mantra¹ of Shiva.

Now Dhyana, i.e. meditation on the form of Dakshina-Mukhi Lord Shiva to whom this Mantra is dedicated is being narrated—He is holding a Veena (Indian lute), a book and the 'Aksha Mala' (the prayer rosary) in his (three) hands, while one hand (i.e. the fourth one) is held in 'Abhaya Mudra' (the posture which grants fearlessness to the worshipper)².

The colour of his throat looks charming with its dark bluish hue which resembles the dark clouds of the rainy season³.

The Lord is the most exalted and the most excellent of the Gods. The king of serpents adorns his waist area (because it wraps itself around it like a girdle). He is sitting under a Vat Tree (the Indian fig or Banyan tree). He is surrounded and served by sages and seers such as Shuk etc. I offer my humble prayers to such a Lord (14-15).

[Note—¹The twelve letter Mantra is called *Aasuri Brihati Chanda*. The composite Mantra is as follows—"OM Hrim Sring Saamba-Shivaaye Tubhyam Swaha". Its meaning in brief is as follows—"OM salutations! Lord Shiva is the one who grants the boon of the powerful powers possessed by the combined forces of Maya as well as Sri to his devotees (i.e. they become entitled to possess all the worldly pomp and pageantry, all the material comforts and pleasures that money and prosperity can buy and which is befitting of an emperor). He is eternally cheerfully and benevolent. I submit myself reverentially to you oh Lord; Swaha'.

²This is the *fourth form* of Shiva. The rest of the hand positions are the same as in verse no. 13, except the *Abhaye Mudra*—this is the forgiving and fearlessness assuring posture in which palm is held at right angles to the wrist and held in an open position with the thumb and the four fingers held erect. The prayer rosary called *Aksha Maala* has an entire Upanishad dedicated to it, and it is called ‘Aksha-maliko-panishad. It belongs to the Rig Veda tradition and has been explained in the volume dealing with the Upanishads of this Veda.

³The simile is remarkable. The rain-bearing dark clouds of the monsoon season brings immense amount of cheer and merry-making in the Indian sub-continent because they are the harbingers of life-sustaining rains on which agriculture, prosperity, a vibrant plant and animal life as well as general well being and resultant happiness and joys of life depend. So the darkness is not something to be afraid of, but an occasion to welcome, rejoice and exult. The dark throat of Shiva was caused because he had drunk the Halaahal poison, the most lethal and strongest of poisons to emerge during the legendary churning of the ocean by the demons and the gods in search of the elixir of eternal life called Amrit. No one was ready to risk his life by drinking it, but the Lord was so fearless and powerful as well as magnanimous and charitable that he said the name of his own Lord, who happens to be Lord Ram, and gulped it. The poison stayed in his throat, because if it had entered the stomach then the entire creation would have been scorched to death as it is believed that the Lord harbours everything in his own sac-like abdomen.

The bluish hue created by this poison resembles the colour of the sky, and it is said in Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 98-102 which is Chapter 17 of this volume, that Shiva also is the patron deity of the sky element. The symbolism is very obvious and stark. This also explains why the ‘sky’ appears to be blue tinged—because it is a manifestation of Lord Shiva in his vast form that is visible and omnipresent but unreachable and beyond measure at the same time. The remarkable thing about this form is its all-inclusive nature because everything that exists in this creation lives within the space of the sky and not beyond it. It ought to be remembered here that the word ‘sky’ is not restricted to the blue parabolic covering that we see from the earth but includes the far reaches of the infinite, measureless and fathomless depths of the cosmos.]

16-17. Now the *fifth Mantra* is being described. The Rishi of this Mantra (i.e. the one who had first created the Mantra) is Lord Vishnu, the sustainer and protector of creation. The composition style is called Anushtup Chanda¹. Its Devta (the patron deity to whom it is dedicated) is Lord Dakshina-Mukhi (i.e. the south facing Lord Shiva).

The Nyas is done with this Mantra. [That is, various parts of the body are touched by the fingers while saying the Mantra and the mystical powers of it are established or deposited there.]

The Mantra is constructed as follows—at the beginning, the divine word ‘OM’ is said. Then the words ‘Namo Bhagwate Tubhyam’ are said, followed by the word ‘Vat-mool’. This is followed by ‘Vaasine’, then ‘Vaagishaaye’, then ‘Mahaa Gyan Daayane’, and finally ‘Maayine’. The Mantra should be wound up by saying the word ‘Namaha’² (16-17).

[Note—¹The *Anushtup Chanda* is a verse having thirty two letters.

²The composite Mantra becomes—“OM Namo Bhagwate Tubhayam Vatmoolvaasine Vaagishaaye Maahaa-gyaan-daayine Maayine Namaha”. Briefly, this Mantra means as follows—‘OM salutations! I bow reverentially to you who is the Lord residing under the Vat Tree (i.e. the Indian fig or Banyan tree), who is an expert orator and master of the faculty of speech, and who is the great giver of

eclectic knowledge, divine wisdom and highest enlightenment to me. I bow before him'.]

18-20. This Mantra composed in the style of an Anushtup Chanda is the best amongst its class of Mantras and is therefore called 'Mantra Raaj', i.e. the king of Mantras.

Now, Dhyan (meditation) of the form of Shiva to whom this Mantra is dedicated is being described. 'The Lord has one hand in the Abhaye Mudra (as described in verse no. 14-15), while his other hands hold the book, the fire, and the serpents that are as ferocious as the fire¹.

He has a cheerful and pleasant face and disposition. He is adorned by a garland of pearls. The crescent moon forms his crown. He is the one who removes the darkness caused by ignorance and delusions.

He cannot be known and understood by words and use of the faculty of speech. [In other words, no one can describe him and his divine glories to others in words so as to make them grasp the esoteric secrets of the Lord; he is beyond the reach and purview of words and the ability of the faculty of speech.]

He is the Adi Purush (the primeval, primary and most ancient supreme Lord from whom the rest of the creation has emerged). He belongs to all (i.e. he is not sectarian or bigot in his approach, for as a benevolent and benign Lord of the creation, he treats every unit of creation equally and with equanimity, without any distinction based on birth, class, creed, colour or beliefs. The entire creation is like his offspring; everyone has equal right over him because he is the Father of all).

He resides under the Vat Tree (the Indian fig or Banyan tree)².

We meditate upon and reverentially remember the Lord who is the supreme Guru, or the most exalted moral preceptor and the most enlightened and wise teacher for the whole world. We meditate upon and reverentially remember the Lord for the fulfillment of our hopes, aspirations and desires'.

Then the worshipper should become silent and contemplate upon his pure self with this thought—'I am that Lord myself'. [This eclectic vision of the 'self' is the climax of meditation on the essence of the cosmic non-dual supreme entity in Nature known as the pure Consciousness which is the essence of Shiva. It is the supreme transcendental Truth of creation known as Brahm personified in the form of Shiva as well as the pure 'self' of the worshipper as his Atma. It is the essential teaching of Upanishads which lay stress repeatedly on the non-dual nature of the supreme Truth.]

Having a firm, steady and unwavering faith in the truth of this eclectic and axiomatic maxim (that the supreme Shiva representing Brahm is none other than me in my true form as the pure conscious Atma), being fully and unequivocally convinced of its truthfulness, having no doubts about its veracity and irrefutability, and having sincere and deep devotion for this Divinity till the time of one's death (i.e. through the life), is known as true 'Nishtha' (18-20).

[Note—¹Iconographically, this form of the Lord, the Dakshina-Mukhi Lord Shiva, is the *fifth form* of Shiva. It depicts him as holding his right front hand in the Abhaye Mudra, the book is held in the left front hand, the fire in the right back hand, and the serpent in the left back hand.

²In earlier times, wise and learned, self-realised and enlightened sages, seers, ascetics and hermits used to live under such trees as a mark of their total abandonment of worldly life and its comforts. Disciples used to assemble around him and great spiritual and metaphysical discourses were held here under the tree.]

21. To regard the different Manu Mantras (as described above) as referring to one single non-dual divine entity which is supreme and transcendental, and to constantly

and persistently repeat these Mantras (to remind one of the aforesaid fact should one forget about it under the influence of this world of delusions and ignorance), i.e. doing Japa with those Mantras, is the way or medium or source known as 'Saadhan' by which Gyan (true knowledge, divine wisdom, highest erudition and holistic enlightenment) can be obtained (21).

22. To be completely focused on that truthful, supreme and transcendental Divinity with full devotion and concentration of the mind, intellect and heart, paying full and un-diverted attention on it, is called the instrument or 'Upkaran' by which it can be accessed or attained. In other words, total surrender and single-minded pursuit of one's spiritual objective in life is the only instrument or vehicle which can deliver the required results to him (22).

23. To repeatedly and diligently exercise strict restraint on the wayward tendencies of the body and its sense organs, and instead divert their efforts and energy towards things having an eclectic, divine, holy, auspicious and righteous dimension, is called 'Bali' or making of sacrifices. [To make the body and organs suffer by forcing them to give up their indulgent ways of self gratification and yearning for the pleasures and comforts of the world and its material sense objects, and sacrificing them on the altar of spiritualism and self-realisation is indeed the greatest sacrifice that a spiritual aspirant can ever hope to make.] (23).

24. To strike a perfect balance and establish a perfect harmony and equanimity of the three Gunas (i.e. the Sata, Raja and Tama Gunas inherent in the creature is varying ratios that determine his individual character and personality as well as his mental setup and demeanours) is like Kaal or the death-knell of variables and dichotomies that create innumerable distortions, confusions and perplexities that occur in the world in its three dimensions of time (such as the past, the present and the future) (24).

[Note—The varying ratio of the three basic qualities of Sata, Raja and Tama in a person determine his individuality, and since the chances of these qualities mixing with each other is phenomenally large, we have countless types of men with no two individuals having everything in common. But suppose a situation is brought about when these three Gunas neutralise each other, as the case was before the beginning of creation when they were present in Brahm but lay in a neutral state, it would result in the elimination of all disparities and differences seen in this world. That is, the state of non-duality, homogeneity and uniformity would be reached. All variations and changes would cease to matter—what is now would also be in the future, and it was the same in the past. This is the basis of the theory of non-duality, i.e. that what was then is present now and would be there in the future and beyond. Since only 'truth' does not change, the entity targeted by this Upanishad is this ultimate 'absolute truth' which it prefers to call the 'Shiva Tattva'. Refer to verse nos. 2-5 and their accompanying note, as well as to verse no. 30 in this context.]

25. The final destination of all meditative and contemplative efforts made by the ascetic to access the supreme Truth is the subtle heart said to be like a divine lotus having a twelve petals. Since it is here the sublime Atma lives in the bliss sheath, it is the abode which provides eternal peace and tranquility (25).

26. Those devoted sages and seers once again asked the exalted sage Maarkandey, 'How is that eclectic divine entity manifested? What is its form? Who worships it?' (26).

27. He (Maarkandey) replied, 'It is the seen or visualised in the light of enlightenment arising from a lamp of Gyan (knowledge, wisdom and erudition) which is full of oil representing Vairagya (the virtues of renunciation and dispassion towards this world of material sense objects and sensual pleasures), whose wick represents Bhakti (total and sincere devotion, faith, surrender and submission), and whose light is enlightenment and self-realisation. When this light is shown, the all-pervading and all-encompassing, the omnipresent supreme transcendental Consciousness known as the Truth and the auspicious Divinity is seen in the form of the self-illuminated sublime Atma present in the aforesaid lotus-like pure subtle heart (27).

28-29. When the darkness of Agyan (ignorance and delusions) is removed by the medium of the light of shown by Gyan (truthful knowledge and wisdom), Bhakti (devotion and faith) and Vairagya (dispassion and detachment from falsehood and deluding world)—it is only then that the lamp of self-realisation springs to life on its own. That is, the self-illuminated Atma begins to show its divine presence.

One should use one's Gyan (knowledge and wisdom) as the upper part of the Arani¹ which is used as a rubbing rod to vigorously arouse Vairagya (the grand virtues of dispassion and detachment) which acts as the lower end of the Arani to produce the fire of enlightenment and total dispassion or non-involvement with things that are not real and true so that this 'light' can remove the darkness of Moha and Agyan (delusions and ignorance) that act as impediments or obstacles in the awareness of the supreme Tattva, i.e. in the realisation of the ultimate reality about the pure consciousness which is the true 'self'. These two—Moha and Agyan—are equivalent to death of the creature because they create extreme fear and confusion for him.

That supreme transcendental Tattva (essence and fundamental truth) is realizable only by the means of constantly pursuing the path of Gyan and Vairagya as well as doing Yoga (meditation and contemplation). [Like in the field of modern science, research and diligence is to be continuous process and not an ad-hoc approach. Like the case when remains healthy if one eats a balanced diet for the whole of his life and not gorge upon food once and then fast for a long time to compensate for it, meditation and contemplation, learning and experimenting should be a continuous process to fine tune one's efforts and have better and finer experiences of spiritualism through life.]² (28-29).

[Note—¹The *Arani* consists of two pieces of wood used to self-produce the fire during fire sacrifices by vigorously rubbing them against one another. The lower piece is rectangular in shape with a hole or indentation in the middle; it is made of a softer form of wood, usually of the Ashvattha tree (*Ficus religiosa*). It is called the lower Arani or the 'Adharaani' and is likened to the female uterus. The upper piece of wood is in the form of a churning or rubbing rod made of hard wood, usually Shami tree (*Acacia suma*), and it is called 'Uttararaani'. It is equivalent to the male phallus. The upper piece is inserted in the hole of the lower piece and vigorously turned with the help of a long string or cord. This rubbing generates heat and results in the creation of fire at the point of friction. This fire is the offspring of this union of the cosmic male and female.

In the present example, the upper part of the Arani which is vigorously turned is the Gyan, while the lower part is represented by Vairagya. The idea is that with proper use of Gyan or truthful knowledge, an aspirant can ignite the fire of renunciation and detachment from this world and its material charms, and this light of

enlightenment would in its wake remove the darkness of delusions that they have cast upon him.

The analogy of the Arani has been cited in a number of Upanishads of the Krishna Yajur Veda, e.g. Kathwalli Upanishad, Canto 2, Valli 1, verse no. 8; Brahm Upanishad, verse no. 18; Kaivalya Upanishad, verse no. 11; Shwetashwatar Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 14-15, Canto 2, verse no. 6; Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 22.

²The same idea has been expounded in Yogatattva Upanishad, verse nos. 14-18 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

30. Not to think of and contemplate on the supreme Truth is equivalent to the fetter that shackles the creature to this world. [This is because the mind cannot stay quiet, and neither can the organs remain idle. So if their energy and restlessness is not directed or channelised properly to something spiritually better and constructive, they would automatically and naturally gravitate or swerve towards their natural habitat, which in this case is this material world of delusions and artificiality, a world full of sense objects that keep the creature trapped in their snare by their magical charms, in an instinctive manner. This happens due to ignorance about the truth and reality of existence. The creature erroneously and out of ignorance thinks that the pleasures and comforts of the world are for real as much as the fallacious conception that he has about the gross and perishable body as being his ‘true self’ instead of the Atma. Falsehood and deception are like fetters that tie the creature’s soul to this world of birth and death because he would be entangled in its vice-like grip. He would be under the impression that the deeds done by the body are being done by ‘him’—and that therefore he is entitled to reap the fruits of such deeds. He forgets in the process that what he considers as ‘him’ is not the ‘real self’ of his but only a temporary dwelling in as much as the ‘real self’ is the pure consciousness called the Atma that merely resides in this gross body and is not involved in any of the deeds done by the latter. This Atma is eternal and imperishable as opposed to the body, and therefore all the miseries to which the creature is subjected to in this world are actually limited to the body and do not affect the Atma. This Atma never dies or takes birth, and the quagmire in which it has found itself in the present is due to its ignorance about this fundamental Truth of existence. Delusions, ignorance and their attendant hallucinations, vexations, perplexities, miseries and torments are tantamount to tying the creature in fetters because a bonded man is never at peace with himself no matter what material comforts he might be enjoying.]

Those who are tied to this fetter are the ones who are tormented and scared by the notion of duality or Dvaita in this world. [They are utterly confused as to what is true and what is false. They are not certain if the world they see and believe in is true or not, and whether the Atma actually exists. They are also not sure what kind of Mukti, or liberation and deliverance of the soul or Atma is known as the ‘final Mukti’ or the Kaivalya Mukti. They toss around and hop between theories and philosophies, never finding any firm ground to rest and have everlasting peace.]

When one becomes aware of the fact that one’s ‘true self’ is the pure consciousness and a personification of the supreme Truth of existence called the ‘Shiva Tattva’, that they are one and the same, it is then that he finds freedom from all sorts of fears and consternations. That is, when a wise and self-realised person realises that his ‘self’ is the universally conscious Atma which is the microcosmic counterpart of the macrocosmic Consciousness called Brahm, he feels a sense of great spiritual achievement as he would then have found or discovered the greatest of spiritual and metaphysical Truths in existence.

This eclectic knowledge and enlightenment steadies the spiritual aspirant by helping him focus on his own 'self', in his own Atma, which is the truthful essence known as cosmic Consciousness that is synonymous with the supreme transcendental Divinity known as Brahm or the 'Shiva Tattva' (30).

[Note—Refer verse nos. 4-5, 24, 28-29 in this context.]

31. To impart eclectic knowledge and divine wisdom to the eager disciple which would entitle and enable him to know about the supreme transcendental non-dual Truth of existence known as Brahm and become self-realised himself like his enlightened teacher is the best form of donation and charity that can be made by a wise, self-realised and enlightened preacher and teacher. Hence, it is the real and true form of 'Dakshina', meaning 'donation, charity and gift given to someone as a matter of religious duty'. [In other words, Dakshina is the selfless imparting of knowledge that is eclectic, auspicious, divine and complete in every form and would help the spiritual aspirant overcome the dark shadow of ignorance and its attendant delusions in order to see the 'light' of truth and reality at the other end of the dark-tunnel like world. This would fill him with new hope and lighten up the dark days of his life full of miseries and worries regarding his long-term fate and welfare. This is the greatest gift that the wise teacher can give to the disciple or an eager student. This 'giving of Dakshina' involves sharpening the aspirant's intellect and inculcating in it the habit and ability to be able to be incisive, discriminating and wise so that this intellect can penetrate deep into and unravel the greatest of esoteric secrets pertaining to the supreme transcendental Truth of existence known as the cosmic Consciousness. This knowledge and ability can enlighten the spiritual aspirant about his own 'self' as well as the truth of the surrounding world around him. This is the best and the purest form of Dakshina that can be given. Showing of 'light' and removing of 'darkness' is the most treasured gift that can be given and received by anyone.]

To become aware of that Brahm, to know who or what that Brahm is so that one is able to witness its presence and recognise it, one has to attentively listen to eclectic teachings pertaining to that Brahm, because it is only through hearing and listening about something from someone who has a first hand knowledge of it that one comes to know and learn about anything at all. Since teaching and explanation as well as answering of relevant questions to remove all doubts and confusions can be done only by the medium of the mouth, the latter is regarded as the Mukha or the instrument that helps one to know about Brahm. It is the virtual 'face' or 'mouth' of Brahm.

Since Lord Shiva is such a self-and-Brahm realised teacher as enumerated in this Upanishad, and since he is the one who has taught about the supreme transcendental cosmic Truth that is absolute and real to sages and seers, he is known as 'Dakshina-Mukha' Shiva (30).

32. At the beginning of creation, the grandfather of creation known as Prajapati Brahma had worshipped this Supreme Being (by using the hymns called Mantras as enumerated in this Upanishad above) to empower himself to initiate the process of creation. It was due to this worship that he got sufficient energy and strength to go about the arduous task of creation and fulfill his ambition of creating this world. This made him fulfilled and happy because he was successful in his desires. That is why Prajapati Brahma is deemed to be the Supreme Being's original worshipper¹ (32).

[Note—¹Refer verse no. 6 and 12 where it is said that Brahm is the Rishi of the Mantra dedicated to the Dakshina Mukhi Lord. The Rishi is the person who first

visualises or conceptualizes the Mantra, then composes a particular hymn which is to be called the Mantra, and then preaches it to others or reveals this secret to them. Thus he becomes the Mantra's first exponent, teacher and preacher.]

33. Those who read about this most secret, mystical and esoteric knowledge pertaining to the essence and truth of Shiva, called the 'Shiva Tattva', are freed from all sins, taints, blemishes, faults, impurities, shortcomings, imperfections and other demeaning and demoting qualities that cast a dark shadow over them.

Those who study it deeply and grasp its essence are able to obtain the ultimate form of liberation and deliverance for their soul that is called 'Kaivalya', or the form of emancipation and salvation that is only one of its kind. It is the final liberation and deliverance of the soul so much so that it does not have to take a birth again. It's the final 'dissolution'.

This is what this Upanishad asserts; this is the great spiritual teaching of this Upanishad. Amen! (33).

-----Shanti Paath-----

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Chapter 19

Skanda Upanishad/Skando-panishad

Extolling the principles of Non-duality, this Upanishad stresses that there is no basic difference between Hari (Vishnu, the sustainer) and Shiva (the concluder), on the one hand, and Shiva and the Jiva (the living being) on the other. In other words, the three are one and the same; they are like the three corners of a triangle known as creation. They are manifestations of the same divine non-dual entity known as Brahm which has assumed three distinct forms to perform three distinct functions in this creation. These facts have been clearly brought out in verse nos. 8-9 and 4-6 respectively.

This Upanishad is a sort of an extension of the Dakshina-Mukhi Upanishad (Chapter 18) which says that Shiva is the only ultimate truthful Lord called Brahm, and therefore Shiva and the Atma of a creature, the Jiva-Atma, are one and the same. This Upanishad is expounded to remove any kind of doubts in the minds of devotees of both Vishnu and Shiva that their Lord is being demeaned in anyway whatsoever when they learn that either of them has been treated as being the Supreme Being in the scriptures, an unfortunate situation that would lead to un-intentioned and unnecessary tensions and doubts in the mind of spiritual aspirants. This Upanishad brings to rest any disparity and differences on this count and removes any idea of dichotomy and an illusion of duality that appears to be artificially and un-intentionally created between Shiva and Vishnu. Refer also to Rudra Hridaya Upanishad in this context; it is Chapter 26 of this volume.

Thus, this Upanishad espouses the cause of uniformity and universality of Divinity and the principle of Absolute Truth of creation, though this Truth and Divinity may be known by different names under different circumstances.

The body of the Jiva is regarded as the temple of Shiva where the Lord resides as the pure conscious Atma. [Verse no. 10.] Therefore the body should be kept clean as one keeps the temple clean, and it is inside one's own self that the ultimate Truth should be searched and worshipped. The various steps of keeping this metaphoric temple clean and sanctified have been outlined, emphasizing the need to make spiritual worship more practically oriented.

A glorious hymn called the 'Vishnu Sukta' appearing in the Shukla Yajur Veda, 5/15-21 is added as a separate appendix no. 3 of this volume to complement the assertions made in this Upanishad that there is no difference between Shiva and Vishnu. It would also complement the 'Rudra Shukta' which appears as appendix no. 2.

-----Shanti Paath-----

Please see appendix no. 1 for the meaning of this Shanti Paath.

1. [This proclamation comes from the person who has become self-realised and Brahm-realised after having understood the esoteric meaning and the fundamental essence of the word Shiva as enunciated and expounded in earlier Upanishad—the Dakshina-Mukhi. So, he makes this statement as a gesture of thanksgiving to his Lord.]

'Oh Lord Mahadev (Shiva, the great God)! Even a tiny fraction of your divine grace upon me has made me fortunate and privileged so much so that I am blessed with great virtues and eclectic qualities that has empowered me to remain steady and unfaltering in my present exalted stature and my high state of being without the fear of getting demoted or become fallen. Your divine grace has enabled me to become an excellent fount and a vibrant and exuberant point-source that exudes the nectar of eclectic knowledge and divine wisdom known as Amrit, and to become an embodiment of Shiva himself. What more can I ask for; what more can I want?' [That is, by the Lord's immense grace and benevolent blessings, the spiritual aspirant has become self-realised in as much as he has understood that his 'true self' is nothing but the eternal Shiva Principle personified as his Atma or pure consciousness. Being an embodiment of Shiva, he is deemed to have beautiful virtues of auspiciousness, righteousness, truthfulness, dispassion, detachment, enlightenment, wisdom and erudition—because these are some of the magnificent eclectic qualities of Lord Shiva. Once having attained this exalted stature, there is nothing that a wise aspirant would wish to have.] (1).

2. When the spiritual aspirant has risen to a higher state of realisation when he forgets about his gross body and gross existence (i.e. when he stops treating his gross body as his 'self' or as his true identity), and instead treats his inner subtle self, his inner sublime being as his true and self-illuminated 'self' (i.e. when he begins to treat his pure, radiant and self-illuminated consciousness called the Atma as his 'real self' instead of the external body in which this Atma dwells), he is deemed to have reached that privileged, enlightened and wise state of existence when he can see the same radiant illumination (of the pure conscious Atma) in others as he sees it inside his own self. [That is, a self-realised and enlightened aspirant is deemed to have understood the principle of non-duality in its essence, and when he applies it in practice he finds

that all the creatures with the gross body that he observes in this world around him have the same self-illuminated and radiant Atma in them that also resides in his own body. He does not see the gross body but has acquired the divine and mystical powers to peep behind the external façade and see the reality. It is like the modern x-ray machine that peeps behind the artificial man-made clothes and even the natural covering of the body in the form of the skin to see the bone structure of our bodies.]

When he observes this phenomenon of the self-illuminated Atma present everywhere, his notion of his own independent individuality ends (because he sees no distinction between himself and the rest of the living creation; he stops seeing himself as a special entity which is separate and distinguishable from the rest of the creation). Instead of distinguishing between any two individuals, i.e. instead of having the notion of ‘I’ and ‘you’, he begins to see the same Hari (Lord Vishnu; the supreme Brahman; the pure conscious Atma that is universal and uniform) everywhere. [This is the height of his spiritual elevation when he begins to apply the eclectic principles of ‘non-duality’ in practice and in every sphere of life. All his ego and self pride has ended; he does not anymore treat himself as someone more wise and great than his fellow brethrens. He becomes an epitome of humility and piety.] (2).

[Note—Exposition of the magnificent glories and divine virtues of the Atma has been a constant theme in all the Upanishads. Some of them are the following—(a) Krishna Yajur Veda’s Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse nos. 17, 81-110; Tejo Bindu Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 1-43, Canto 3, verse nos. 1-51, 60-64, Canto 4, verse nos. 2-30, 69-79, Canto 5, verse nos. 1-75, 90-96, Canto 6, verse nos. 1-72; Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 7-8. (b) Shukla Yajur Veda’s Adhyatma Upanishad; Subalopanishad, Canto 3, 5, 7 (verse no. 1), and 9 (verse no. 16); Paingalo-panishad, canto 4, verse no.18; Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 5, Brahmin 1. (c) Rig Veda’s Atma-poojo-panishad. (d) Atharva Veda’s Atmo-panishad.]

3. ‘What better can it be that now I have realised that my true identity is established in the truthful Atma (instead of the body, as I had believed till now). That is why I feel myself as having no birth, and as being immortal and eternal (because these are the divine and magnificent qualities of the Atma).

Aside of this Atma (which has a truthful existence, which is sublime and subtle, and which is immutable and imperishable), the rest of the world appears to be like an illusionary dream; it is gross and perishable (3).

4. He who is the witness and observer of the entire creation—both the gross and inane on the one hand, and the subtle and sublime on the other—is the supreme Lord who is Achutya (i.e. who is steady and unfaltering, is eternal, imperishable, unchanging, unwavering, uniform and universal) and a divine embodiment of Gyan (truthful and eclectic knowledge, erudition, wisdom and enlightenment). This Lord is indeed known as Mahadev (Lord Shiva, the great God) and Mahahari (Lord Vishnu, the great sustainer, the great nourisher and the great protector of this creation) (4).

[Note—This verse unequivocally establishes a uniformity and non-duality between Shiva and Vishnu. Refer also to verse nos. 8-9.]

5. He is the primary source of all ‘Jyotis’ (lights). [Here the word ‘Jyoti’, which literally means ‘light’, refers to the something that illuminates the entire world and removes its darkness. Therefore, it stands for life-giving consciousness and dynamic energy on the one hand, and wisdom, erudition, sagacity and knowledge that sustains and furthers the development of this creation on the other hand. Besides this, this symbolic light emanating from the lamp of knowledge and wisdom removes the

darkness created by ignorance, thereby eliminating all the phantoms symbolising delusions that exist in such darkness.]

He is the Parmeshwar, the supreme Ishwar and the great Lord. He is the supreme transcendental Brahm. I (as my pure self, the Atma which is pure consciousness) am also that Lord—there is no doubt about it (5).

[Note—This verse establishes a unity between the Atma of the individual creature and the supreme Atma of creation known as Brahm. See also the following verses.]

6. The Jiva (the living being who has a gross body in which its Atma, the pure consciousness, resides as its ‘true self’ that forms its truthful identity) is indeed Shiva (the auspicious and truthful Lord, the supreme Brahm personified, the Supreme Being), and Shiva is also indeed Jiva. Indeed, the Jiva is undiluted and wholesome Shiva personified. [That is, they are one and the same; they are non-dual entities; they are synonymous with each other; there is no difference between them; they are interchangeable.]

They (Jiva and Shiva) bear the same relationship with each other as the grain of rice which has two names. It is called ‘Vrihi’ when the husk is not removed from the grain, and ‘Chaawal’ when the husk is separated from the grain. [The same grain of rice has two names, but they do not refer to different cereals or two distinct types of food grains; both the names apply to the same food grain called ‘rice’. Similarly, the Jiva and Shiva are essentially the same. In this example, the Shiva is the rice grain, while the Jiva is the husk. The entity that has real worth is the grain of rice and not the husk; it is the rice that is eaten and not its husk. The husk is merely a covering that has to be discarded to reveal the grain of rice hidden inside it. Likewise, the body of the creature forms a covering around its true self which is the Shiva hidden inside in the form of the Jiva’s pure consciousness known as the Atma. The gross body is of no worth if there were no Atma inside it even as the husk without rice inside is worthless. The husk is also like the layer of ignorance that surrounds the essential element of worth, i.e. the grain of rice.] (6).

[Note—Refer verse nos. 7, 9 also.]

7. In this way, that pure consciousness and divine entity becomes a Jiva when it gets tied in fetters or covered in a veil (of ignorance and delusions, thereby forgetting its pristine pure existence and divine heritage which has a magnificent sublime and subtle form).

The same divine entity becomes Sadaa Shiva (the auspicious and holy Truth that is eternal, unchanging, imperishable and constant) when all the shackling affects of its past deeds are done away with. In other words, when the creature is tied in fetters, it is called a Jiva, while the same creatures freed from its fetters is called Sadaa Shiva¹ (7).

[Note--¹That is, when the creature is able to understand that this world as well his gross body that lives and interacts with this world are not the real things because both are always changing and both are ultimately perishable, he would disassociate himself from getting involved with them. Who is this ‘himself’? Is it the body or something else? Herein comes into play divine wisdom and true knowledge of the reality. The wise and self-realised creature would understand that his ‘true self’ is his Atma and not the body, that it is the gross body that does all the deeds and not the subtle and sublime Atma, and the deeds are done by the physical body in a physical world. When the world itself is regarded as illusionary and delusory, the very question of doing physical deeds becomes debatable because one cannot do physical things in an imaginable and illusionary world just like one cannot find physical water

and physically drink it in the imaginary mirage seen in a desert. So the very foundation of doing deeds itself becomes shaky and untenable.

Besides this point, the creature's true identity is the Atma which resides inside the body, but the deeds are not actually done by it; they are done by the body. This body lives in the world. As is well established in the Upanishads, the world is like a mirage created by the mind, and anything that exists in a mirage and acts in it is also a mirage. Hence, the body is also a mirage because it exists in the world and acts in it. When this knowledge is acquired by the wise and self-realised spiritual aspirant, he becomes freed from the encumbrances caused by the deeds because the body is not his 'true self', but it is the Atma that is. This Atma is pure and truthful; it is not the mirage like the body. It is eternal and imperishable unlike the body and the world. Hence, it is like the Sadaa Shiva principle.

Refer to note of verse no. 13 below and to Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 93/15 of Krishna Yajur Veda which unequivocally affirms that Mukti or final liberation and deliverance for the soul is available when the creature understands that his Atma and the supreme Brahm are one non-dual entity, and that the body is not his 'true self'. In fact, the entire verse, from no. 93/1 right up to 93/15 explains how the Atma appears to be tainted by the faults of the world.

Amongst the Upanishads that deal with the concept of the Atma being affected by the deeds done by the body when the former erroneously thinks that they are being done by it are the following—The *Adhyatma Upanishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition describes the concept of doing deeds and its effect on the spiritual liberation or bondage of the creature in fine detail in its verse nos. 49-60. The 'Karma Chakra' or the giant wheel of deeds and their consequences has been described in the *Shwetashwatar Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 6, verse no. 3. The three Paths followed by a creature according to the deeds done by him are referred to in *Shwetashwatar Upanishad*, 4/7. The *Varaaha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 2, verse no. 48 describes how one can become free from the fetters created by 'deeds'. The *Niralambo-panishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 11-12 describes the concept of Karma. The *Sarwasaar Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 6 describes the concept of how and why the creature becomes the doer of deeds

These concepts and the fact that a creature's destiny depends upon the deeds done by him have been elaborately described elsewhere also in (i) Rig Veda's Kaushitaki Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 1; (ii) Shukla Yajur Veda's Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, 3/1/3, 3/2/11-12, 3/9/28, 4/3/12, 33, 36, 5/10-5/11, 6/1/1-6, 6/2/2,14-16, etc.; *Adhyatma Upanishad*, verse nos. 57-58, 66; (iii) Sam Veda's Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 5, Section 3-10; Canto 7, Section 21; (iv) Krishna Yajur Veda's Taittiriyo-panishad, Valli 2, Anuvak 6; Katho-panishad, Canto 1, Valli 1, verse no. 20, and the whole of Canto 1, Valli 2 right up to Canto 2, Valli 3; Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 93/15; Skanda Upanishad, verse no. 7.

What happens to ignorant people after death is explained in Brihad Aranyak 4/4/1. The *Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 2, verse nos. 23-26 defines what constitutes of true 'Karma Yoga'. The *Mandal Brahmin Upanishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda, 2/4/2-3 describes the philosophy of Deeds.]

8. Lord Shiva is an image or a manifestation of Lord Vishnu, and similarly Lord Vishnu is an image or a manifestation of Lord Shiva. There is no distinction, disparity or duality between them. [In other words, there is no difference between them. Both are the supreme transcendental Divinity known as Brahm personified. The only apparent difference is because of the two functions that Brahm carries out in these forms—viz. as Vishnu he sustains and protects the creation, and as Shiva he brings it

to its end. The divine entity that does all this is neither Vishnu nor Shiva, but Brahm. The two names are only indicative of the two duties the same authority performs.]

Lord Vishnu resides in the heart of Lord Shiva, and Lord Shiva resides in the heart of Lord Vishnu¹ (8).

[Note--¹In other words, though Vishnu seems to be engrossed and pre-occupied in the job of taking care of this vast kingdom of creation and totally absorbed in its affairs, looking as if he is a worldly being who rarely finds time to do self introspection and who is engulfed in all sorts of worldly cunning and deceit, internally he is as dispassionate and detached from all this drama as Lord Shiva is. Therefore internally Vishnu is an image of Shiva, i.e. he is as truthful, pure, uncorrupt, wise, self-realised, enlightened, renunciate, dispassionate, detached, non-involved, ever contemplative and meditative as Shiva. Though externally Vishnu remains worried about the welfare of his subjects put under his care, internally he is as care free, neutral and detached from them as Shiva.

In the same vein, though Shiva is said to be the lord of death, bringing to an end what is so arduously created by Brahma the creator and so painstakingly sustained and protected by Vishnu, internally he is very merciful, kind, benevolent and graceful like Lord Vishnu himself because the latter is the eternal protector and sustainer of creation. This is borne by the fact that Shiva utters the divine Mantra called the 'Tarak Mantra' which can give eternal liberation and deliverance to the soul of a dying man in his ears. Had Shiva only been vindictive, vengeful, merciless, unrelenting, cursing and wrathful in nature, epitomizing anger and cussedness, deriving sadistic pleasure in death, destruction and mayhem, he wouldn't have ever thought of the emancipation and salvation of the soul of the creature by either uttering the Tarak Mantra in his ears at the time of his death or preaching the profoundest principles and tenets of metaphysics to enlighten one about his true self and his oneness with the supreme Brahm as evidently he has done in his form of Dakshina-Mukhi Shiva. Besides this, Shiva is always in a state of meditation and contemplation; he is an epitome of bliss and tranquility—characters quite the opposite of the Lord known to preside over anger, wrathfulness and short temper which causes havoc, death and destruction. Refer also verse no. 4 in this context.]

9. Just like Lord Vishnu is a personified form of Shiva, Lord Shiva is too a personified form of Vishnu. When I (i.e. the wise and enlightened spiritual aspirant who has become self-realised) do not perceive any difference between them, I too become a personified form of auspiciousness and divinity represented by either of them¹.

Indeed, there is no duality and difference between Shiva and Keshav (Vishnu)² (9).

[Note—¹At the time of creation, the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic, all encompassing gross body of the supreme Brahm, revealed himself in the form of the living being, forming the latter's gross body at the microcosmic level of creation. The Shiva principle is treated as the cosmic Consciousness operating inside the Viraat Purush at the macro level of creation, and as its counterpart the Atma in the individual living being at the micro level of creation. Thus, both are essentially and basically the same. Refer verse nos. 5-7 in this context. Refer also to Adhyatma Upanishad, verse no. 20 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition.

²Refer verse nos. 4,8 in this context.]

10. Those who are expert in the fundamental tenets of metaphysics assert that the body is the temple or shrine where the only enlightened and divine Supreme Being to be worshipped by the creature resides in the form of Shiva (i.e. in the form of the pure

consciousness that is enlightened, divine, truthful, eternal, auspicious, uncorrupt and untainted).

To do true worship one has to have a clear vision of the deity to be worshipped, and this untainted and undistorted view of the holy deity residing inside one's own self is possible only by abandoning the tainting and distorting effects caused by ignorance and delusions of all sorts. [These are caused by worldly faults, improprieties and imperfections that act like a darkening veil on the immaculate self, preventing the spiritual aspirant from having a divine vision of the holy entity residing in his bosom as his Atma.] (10).

[Note—The Pran Agnihotra Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda also emphasizes the importance of treating the body as the holy site where the supreme Brahm resides. In fact, it advocates the performance of the fire sacrifice internally by visualizing the body as the sacrificial pit in which the vital winds called the Prans are offered as offering to honour the supreme Brahm residing inside it.

The Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 1, verse no. 168, and Canto 5, verse nos. 2-5 also reiterates this point that the body is a holy temple where Lord Shiva resides. Refer also to Adhyatma Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, verse no. 1.]

11. True Gyan, i.e. to have real knowledge, erudition, sagacity and wisdom, is to have a uniformly view the presence of the non-dual Divinity known as Brahm in all the living beings in creation (as the pure consciousness known as the Atma which happens to be the true 'self' of all the creatures).

Similarly, real Dhyān, i.e. to be truly contemplative and meditative, is to have no attraction towards and be non-involved in all the objects of the senses in this material world.

True Snaan, i.e. to take a bath for the purpose of cleaning oneself before worship, is to abandon all the impure and inauspicious thoughts that occur in the mind and taint the heart.

Likewise, real Shauch, i.e. real cleaning, is to keep the sense organs under constant restraint (or, exercising self-restraint) (11).

[Note—These stanzas highlight the real essence of worship. Far from mechanical rituals and perfunctory formalities, it stresses the real form of worship. It would be noted that if one follows the instructions laid down here, he would not only be doing an ideal form of worship, he would also be improving himself in a practical way and in a holistic manner. His approach towards life would change, and instead of remaining restless and unhappy, he would find steady peace and happiness.

An enlightened man would not need to do costly and time consuming external forms of ritualistic worship or read extensive scriptural tomes becomes the 'real thing' has become known to him. He would not have to search the entire stack of hay when he has found the gold he had set out to find!

If one individual can improve himself, the whole society would be affected just like the case when one bad character can ruin the whole society. The beginning has to be made, and then the laws of Nature would take care of the rest.]

12. After having drunk the elixir of Brahm realisation (i.e. after having experienced the spiritual bliss and ecstasy that comes with being acquainted with the great truths as enunciated by the Upanishads about Brahm), one need only eat sufficient enough to sustain the body in a healthy manner¹.

He should abandon the idea of duality and remain submerged in meditating upon one supreme Consciousness. He should live a secluded life in a lonely place. [In other words, he should remain focused in his spiritual pursuit and not get distracted by

the disturbances created by this world, or get entangled in the snare of worldly attractions.]

Only a person who remains steady in this path and follows these instructions diligently is the one who finds final liberation and deliverance for his self—i.e. he finds ‘Mukti’ (12).

[Note--¹That is, he should eat proper food to maintain a health body because the body is like a temple in which he can worship the deity. But at the same time he should not start to worship the body by pampering it with tasty and too rich forms of food by becoming an indulgent eater because his object of worship is not the body which is merely a temple but the deity residing in it in the form of the Atma. This Atma is not hungry for worldly tastes and delicacies.]

13. I bow and pay my obeisance to the Supreme Being who resides in the supreme abode called the ‘Param Dham’¹. Let me be blessed by his grace. Let me have a long and fruitful life.

Oh Lord Narasingh² who is a personification of the Trinity Gods consisting of Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, nourisher and protector, and Shiva the concluder! By your divine grace, I am able to recognise that supreme transcendental Brahm in my own Atma; I have begin to see that Brahm as a manifestation in my own pure consciousness known as the Atma, my pure self. That Brahm is marked by such glorious virtues as ‘Achintya’ (one who is beyond comprehension and thoughts, one who is beyond the reach of the mind and intellect), ‘Avyakta’ (one who is unmanifest, unseen and without any attributes), ‘Anant’ (one who has no end and limits; one who is infinite and eternal), ‘Avinaashi’ (one who does not perish and die; one who cannot be demoted, demolished and ruined), and is ‘Vedatmak’ (an embodiment of the Vedas; a manifestation of the divine knowledge contained in the Vedas) (13).

[Note--¹Here there is a play on words. The ‘supreme abode’ is the subtle and sublime heart where the conscious Atma resides. This Atma has already been said to be Shiva personified, this Shiva is the ultimate and absolute Truth of existence or creation personified, and the ultimate Truth is the ‘Supreme Being’ known as Brahm, or cosmic Consciousness. The supreme abode is also the heaven where the three chief and primary manifestations of Brahm have their abode in the form of the Trinity Gods, i.e. Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer and protector, and Shiva the concluder. In other words, the man himself is the one who has created this myriad world, it is he who is responsible for its existence, and it is he who can conclude it. This observation has tremendous metaphysical significance. This world is false and full of miseries but the man voluntarily remains neck deep submerged in it and whole-heartedly engrossed in it inspite of this knowledge that it is he who is to blame for all his sufferings having their genesis in this world. It is his own mind that has created this world for him because he was enticed by the magnificent vision of its alluring but imaginary charms and wished to enjoy them. Once he tastes the world, his sense organs get hooked to it and then they push-propel him to remain going ahead in this direction, i.e. to remain engrossed and submerged in the ocean-like world in the hope of discovering newer methods of enjoying it. In this, he even suffers a lot but sweeps these sufferings under the carpet and bargains them for momentary happiness that is got by sensual gratifications. But to his dismay he finds that all his pleasures and enjoyments are short-lived, his sufferings are like insurmountable huge waves of the ocean which throw him off the boat so often that he has become weary and tired of trying to recover from his ordeal, that all his attempts to obtain respite from his worldly sufferings are momentary, and that he would never find eternal rest and peace unless he seeks the true remedy for all his ailments. He is like a fish splashing and floundering around nervously and in utter

dismay once it finds itself trapped in the net by being enticed by the bait and greedy enough to bite it.

Then the trapped man begins his search for ways of finding freedom and deliverance from the quagmire in which he has allowed himself to land in. He seeks his salvation and emancipation by studying the scriptures and consulting wise teachers. Once becoming aware of it, he pursues his spiritual goal, and if he is careful, prudent, steadfast and wise he would ultimately reach it. Having known what the 'truth and reality' are, he would shun falsehood and delusions like the plague because he would have realised by now that the crux of all his sufferings and problems lies in his ignorance and misconceptions. He realises that the cause of all his torments was the ignorance of the truth and the existence of the deluding world which he now endeavours to get rid of. He finds that real and meaningful peace and happiness can come only when he detaches and disassociates himself from getting emotionally and mentally involved in this artificial world. In other words, he himself begins to dismantle the world that he had so arduously and painstakingly constructed earlier, or begins the process of concluding his involvement with this world. The world would come to an end for him; it would cease to exist for him. He is freed from the fetters that shackle him to this world and everything associated with it, including his body and the cycle of birth and death, and the theory of deed and their consequences.

The Jiva or a living being, a man for example, is himself responsible for all his problems and he should not blame others for it. Refer also to note of verse no. 7 above.

That is, the man is the creator, sustainer and concluder of the world himself. Or, he is indeed that Brahm who can bring about all this to fruition. He is Brahm personified. Almost all the Upanishads endorse and espouse this basic axiomatic maxim of metaphysics and spiritualism. Some of such Upanishads are Brahm Vidya, Brahm, Tejobindu, Atma Prabodho, Atma, Atma Bodh, Ishawasya, Shuka Rahasya, Maho-panishad etc.

²It is to be noted in this verse that *Narsingh* has been regarded as an incarnation of the three Gods of the Trinity, and then the general tenor and language of the verse clearly indicates that it is the supreme transcendental Brahm that is being referred to here. In other words, Lord Narsingh is a manifestation of Brahm itself; he is the revealed form of the dynamic and forceful powers of Nature to get rid of evil and negativity in this creation.

Narsingh is the half lion and half man incarnation of Lord Vishnu to slay the demon Hiranyakashipu who had been tormenting Prahalad, his son, because the latter worshipped Vishnu. This 'half lion and half man' form of the Lord is a visible image that has a cosmic counterpart as the 'half man and half female' manifestation of the Lord that is known as 'Ardha-Narishwar'. This cosmic form of Brahm as Ardha-Narishwar has two components—the right half is depicted in iconography as being a male representing Shiva, the great God, the other half is female representing his divine Shakti known as Parvati or Uma. This Shakti represents the dynamic energy of Shiva. When this applies to Brahm, the male aspect refers to the Supreme Being himself while the female aspect applies to Maya which is the dynamic power that Brahm employed to initiate this magical creation. This depiction is basically envisioned to drive home the point that Brahm and Shakti are inseparable in the context of the creation of the world. This elementary method of reproduction is known as 'asexual reproduction' and is depicted by many asexual plants and animals even today. For instance, the one-celled amoeba reproduces itself by cleavage. On the other hand, if we were to regard Brahm in its purest form as the cosmic Consciousness, then Brahm would not need the other half of the Maya, and would only be one and universal entity which has no definite and describable form and shape, it has no attributes and qualities. This form of the sublime and most subtle Brahm is known as either the Hiranyagarbha or the Viraat Purush depending upon the

level of subtlety and grossness which is assigned to it, the former being more subtle than the latter.

The 'lion' part is a metaphor for the grand qualities of unmatched stupendous strength, physical prowess and complete sway over the entire domain of the forest and its inhabitant wild animals that the lion possesses and which are symbolic of the inherent stupendous might of the supreme Brahm as the unquestioned Lord of this forest-like world inhabited by myriad variations of creatures just like a dense forest infested by wild animals. Similarly, the 'man' part symbolises the fact that Brahm is the most highly placed Lord much like a human being who represents the highest level in the ladder of evolution.

In other words, even as the lion is the unquestioned lord of the wilds and the man of all the living beings, the supreme transcendental Brahm is the unquestioned Lord of all that exists in all its variations, whether in its primary form represented by the wild animals of the jungle or in its more evolved and developed form represented by man.

Lord Narsingh is the fourth incarnation of the Supreme Being who had taken various forms to ward off and overcome evil forces in creation when they become ascendant and overcame the good and the righteous. The Lord did this to maintain order in the creation which is like his offspring.

So when one of his great devotees known as Prahalaad was being extremely tormented by his own father, the demon Hiranyakashipu, the Lord appeared as Narsingh—or as a half lion and half man form—from the pillar to which he was tied by the demon to prove to him the omnipresence and all-pervading form of the Supreme Being. Narsingh is a personification of the grand virtues of power, energy, valour and strength, and hence is worshipped by warriors and rulers in general. The Mantra of this Lord is believed to be very powerful and effective against enemies and opponents.

Iconographically, there are many forms of Narsingh. Some of them are as follows—as seated (Aasin), as standing (Sthaanak), as boon-giver (Vardaayak), as ferocious and angry (Ugra), as striding (Yaanak), in the company of Laxmi, the Goddess of wealth and the divine consort of Vishnu (Laxmi-Narsingh), as seated in Yoga or doing meditation like Shiva (Yoga-Narsingh), as a resident of a mountain (Girija), etc.

His images depict him in either two hand form or in four hand form. In the latter case, the two back hands hold a conch and discus like the case of Vishnu. The two front hands are shown as killing the demon Hiranyakashipu by forcing the latter on his lap and tearing his abdomen and yanking his entrails out by his sharp nails.

An entire Upanishad called the *Narsingh Tapini Upanishad*, which is the 7th Upanishad of the Atharva Veda, is dedicated to him. An entire Puran called 'Narsingh Puran' is likewise dedicated to this Godhead. This Puran glorifies Narsingh as an incarnation of Vishnu, and is synonymous with Narayan, the Supreme Being called Brahm. Lord Vishnu himself is a macrocosmic, all-inclusive and invisible form of the supreme transcendental Brahm, and therefore Narsingh is a de-facto visible form of Brahm.

The *Shuka Rahasya Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 27, while describing the process of invoking one of the components 'Asi' ('is) of the Maha Vakya (the great saying of the Vedas) 'Tattwamasi' ('that essence is you) says that the Shakti (dynamic energy) of this individual component 'Asi' is Narsingh.

14. Those who are spiritually enlightened and wisened about the truth of Brahm always remain contemplative and meditate upon the divine abode of Lord Vishnu. As such, they are virtually having a constant view of this supreme abode where the Lord lives; they are constantly keeping sight of this divine vision before their eyes. They keep the sight of Lord Vishnu's divine abode constantly before their eyes¹ (14).

[Note--¹In other words, they keep their attention focused on their spiritual well being and their target of attaining liberation and deliverance from the deluding world of numerous spiritual hurdles and pitfalls inspite of going about their routine worldly affairs. They remain focused not on the world but on the primary target of life which is to obtain emancipation and salvation in this life as a human being itself because such chances are rare to come by.

The phrase 'to keep the heavenly abode of Vishnu always in sight' is a figure of speech to emphasise the fact that they remain steady and steadfast in their spiritual progress and never falter from it; they think and see only that which is auspicious and holy. The result is that their eyes reflect the image of Vishnu like the sun getting reflected from the mirror; their eyes shine with a divine radiance and the glorious light of self-realisation. This light of enlightenment and realisation removes all darkness of ignorance and delusions that surround them, and it lights up the path for them much like the lighted lamp that shows the path to travelers during the night. That is also why the eyes are said to be the symbolic abode of the Sun God because the sun is the lamp of the cosmos and the eye is that of Brahm residing inside the body as his 'temple' or holy abode. This fact is endorsed in verse no. 10.

In other words, a wise and enlightened spiritual aspirant remains steady and vigilant in his path; he does not falter or flounder in the wake of delusions and myriad forms it takes in the world where he lives.

The fact that Yoga helps in having a divine vision of Lord Vishnu has been affirmed elsewhere also, such as in Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad of the Skukla Yajur Veda, Canto 2, verse no. 100.]

15. The wise and enlightened ones who have accessed the truthful knowledge of Brahm obtain access to the supreme abode of Lord Vishnu, enter it and finally get lost in it. That is, once they have entered the state of Brahm-realisation and tasted its nectar-like blissfulness and eternal happiness, they prefer to remain in that state and never attempt to get out of it and show their faces in this world again. They adopt this heavenly state of existence as their permanent abode and prefer to remain incognito in it lest anyone recognise them and pull them back into the slippery slush and filth of this material world. They virtually voluntarily allow themselves to get lost in that divine state of existence of blessedness and holiness that is a metaphor for the heaven where Vishnu lives.

This is the complete instruction for obtaining Nirvan (emancipation and salvation) of the soul as prescribed by the holy Vedas. This is their tenet and axiomatic principle. This is what is called the Upanishad pertaining to this Nirvan. Amen! (15).

[Note—The 'Vishnu Sukta', a devotional hymn dedicated to Lord Vishnu as it appears in the Shukla Yajur Veda, 5/15-21 is added as appendix no. 3 of this volume.]

-----Shanti Paath-----

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Chapter 20

Shaarirak Upanishad/Shaarirko-panishad

This Upanishad basically deals with the profound secrets of creation, the Genesis of Creation vis-à-vis the individual creature. It describes the fundamental basic elements or units of this creation and the way they mutated and underwent changes, expanding and developing into such a complex structure as the individual creature that it defies definition. In its twenty verses it encapsulates the entire process in a clear and step-by-step format. Treating the individual creature's body as a microcosm of the vast cosmos, and then dividing this body into its basic ingredient units, it goes on to systematically analyse how the different parts of the body were manifested from these basic elements at the micro level and how it expanded to incorporate the entire world at the macro level from the different offshoots of these basic elements. It describes the two aspects of creation, the gross and the subtle, with the example of this body.

The body is classified into two, the subtle and gross, each having its own set of organs. The external gross body has the gross sense organs, while the inner subtle body has subtle organs. How they are formed and what their functions are have been outlined in a precise manner. Then there are certain Gunas, or inherent virtues and qualities of a creature that determine its character and unique individuality; they have been described. The four symbolic states in which life exists are outlined along with their metaphysical import and relevance for the individual creature as well as the world at large.

So what started out with essentially one, non-dual, indivisible, immutable and neutral unit of creation at the very beginning, called the ultimate and Absolute Truth or Brahm, gradually transformed and metamorphosed into five elements which later on expanded, by way of mutations and branching out into offshoots, into seventeen and then to twenty five elements. These elements are called Tattvas, and by the uncountable number of ways that they mixed together in various ratios and in different permutations and combinations, this vast creation came into being. The possibilities of these elements of mixing were so great that the resultant creation had no two units alike; each was a unique individual with his exclusive characteristic qualities and features.

Hence, this Upanishad succinctly outlines how the entire complex creation came into being from one single immutable non-dual unit known in metaphysics as Brahm.

Besides the above points, another remarkable feature of this Upanishad is that it presents precise definition for a number of metaphysical terms in a succinct manner so much so that it sort of acts as a ready reference manual for such terms. Some of the things it outlines are the different elements of creation and how they combined to form this complex creation, what are the Anthakarans or the components of the inner self, what is the body of the creature made up of, what are its characteristic features from the perspective of metaphysics, what are the different Gunas and the types of Gyan (knowledge) in relation to these Gunas and how they define an individual's personality and character traits, what are the different stages of existence of consciousness, who is the Jiva Atma vis-à-vis the Parmatma, what is the Linga Deha of the creature, what are the Tattvas or the elementary units of creation, and other such finer points. In this, it supplements and compliments the Niralamba Upanishad

of the Shukla Yajur Veda because what one has not defined has been done by the other.

Ideas similar to this Upanishad have also been elucidated in Paingalopanishad, Canto 2 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition.

-----Shanti Paath-----

Please see appendix no. 1 for the meaning of this Shanti Paath.

1. [This verse describes the very primary elements or units from which the creation is made, and how they transformed themselves into the different components of the creature's gross body. Refer verse no. 5-6 of this Upanishad below. Besides this Upanishad, there is another Upanishad belonging to the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, viz. the Paingal Upanishad which narrates almost identical concepts in its Canto 2. This Upanishad appears as Chapter 12 of volume no. 3 that deals with the Upanishads of this particular Veda in this series.]

OM salutations! This gross body of the creature is a combination of the five basic elements in creation called the 'Pancha Mahabhuts', such as earth etc. (the others being water, fire, air and sky)¹.

The solid, thicker, denser and heavier part of the body is made up of the earth element. [For example, the bones, skin, nails, hairs etc.]

The fluid part is made up of the water element. [For example, blood, lymph, semen, mucous, urine, semi-solid stool etc.] The heat and warmth in the living body is the fire element. [A dead body is ice-cold, and since the fire element is missing in such a body, it cannot live and is deemed to be lifeless.]

The constant movement and restlessness that is so typical of any living organism is a manifestation of the air or wind element. [This movement may not be externally visible, but is always there in some form or the other. For example, the heart continues to beat and the blood flows uninterruptedly even while a man sleeps; all the internal organs such as the kidneys, lungs, intestines, brain etc. continue to function during this state though externally there is no activity. A man breathes continuously though 'breath' cannot be visibly seen. Breath is nothing but the air element in its life-giving role. The Trishkhi Brahmin Upanishad of the Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 8 says that the movement of the consciousness inside the body is through the different Naadis or ducts such as nerves, veins and the like. This consciousness is metaphorically represented by the different 'Gods' that are said to moving in these Naadis and controlling their respective functioning. These Gods who personifies various forces of Nature are also metaphors for the Pran's different forms because they regulate life in a living body. In other words, the 'consciousness' and 'Pran' or the wind element are synonymous with each other and together are equally responsible to keep the body alive. The body of any living being cannot survive without either of them. Even immobile forms of living creation such a plants continue their activities day and night without resting for a moment. The importance of air for the life can be proved by keeping someone in a vacuum—sure enough he would die immediately. In fact, life and movement are synonymous with each other; only a dead body shows no movement in the real sense. Similarly, life and air are also synonymous with each other.]

The hollow space present in the body in a very subtle and invisible form (such as the space between the organs and the inter-cellular space, and even the space inside the cell between its constituent parts, the pores on the skin, the hollow of the nostrils, the auditory canal, the hollow of the mouth and anus, the air passage of the lungs and the food passage of the digestive canal et al.) is made up of the sky or space element (1).

Note—¹The five primary elements called the ‘Tattvas’ came into being at the very beginning of creation. The Tattvas are the primary or fundamental elements or units or dimensions or aspects of creation which act as the building blocks of creation, not only as its brickwork but also to decide the shape its exterior façade would take as well as the interior character and quality of the construction.

We have *primary elements* that were formed at the time of creation, and the *secondary elements* that developed later on as offshoots to the process of creation. Primarily there were five basic elements—such as the sky, air or wind, fire or energy, water and earth in increasing order of density or grossness. From them came the secondary elements. These latter vary according to the level and dynamics of creation one is dealing with in terms of metaphysics. These elements can be compared to the elements of material science of the modern world, such as the elements calcium, magnesium, potassium, selenium etc. which are heavier and grosser in nature as compared to other elements such as the gases oxygen, nitrogen, hydrogen, helium etc. which are lighter and subtler. Then there is carbon which is the base of an entire field of chemistry called organic chemistry, much like we have Atma in metaphysics, that in association with different other elements form a vast array of organic chemicals and material products of daily use. If carbon is compared to the basic unit called the Atma in metaphysics, then the other elements that combine with it are the various Gunas, Vikaars, Vasanas and Vrittis that surround this Atma to give rise to an uncountable number of creatures of different virtues, nature, temperaments, characters and personalities.

In this scenario, Brahm would be like the primary Atom which left to itself is neutral and inactive. It is only when certain changes take place in its core, such as the shift in the position of its electron or change in the number of its protons and electrons etc. that the chain of reaction starts that would ultimately result in not only producing newer elements that combine in mind-boggling permutations and combinations to create an endless array of material things, but also releasing energy in the process or absorbing matter from the surrounding atmosphere. At the cosmic level this is seen in exploding stars or formation of huge black-holes.

The Atma would be more like the atom of carbon which is at the heart of all organic compounds that exist in this world, while Brahm would be the primary form of the atom, i.e. the atom of the first element of the Periodic Table with atomic number 1, or even the nucleus of other heavier atoms of the higher elements of this Table from atomic number 2 onwards.]

2. [This verse describes the different organs of perception of the gross body and their functions. Refer verse no. 6. It ought to be noted that the Supreme Creator had delegated different duties to different organs so as to ensure optimum usage and that they do not overlap producing duplicity of effort which would be a colossal waste of energy and time from the macrocosmic perspective, but also to see that they do not clash with each other over jurisdiction and authority. This delineation of duties and functions were primary tool used by the Supreme Being to manage the huge structure of the living world. This is the first example we have of the theory of ‘delegation of authority’ in Nature. It ensured that the wheel of creation moves smoothly and continuously for ever. It is like the case of a chariot (representing the body) having five horses (representing the five organs of perceptions and actions). If the horses are

kept in control by the charioteer (represented by the mind-intellect complex), the chariot moves ahead and reaches its destination in one piece, and the passenger (represented by the Atma or the pure conscious 'self') himself is secure, happy and fine. Otherwise not only would the chariot topple over but the passenger would be mortally wounded! This analogy of the chariot has been beautifully cited and elucidated upon in Katho Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 1, Valli 3.]

The five sense organs of perception are called 'Gyan Indris', such as ears etc. (the others being eyes, nose, tongue and skin).

The ears represent the sky element; the ears are the manifestations of the sky element. [The ears have the function of hearing, but it can hear only if the sound reaches it. Sound would need open space and an ethereal medium to travel and reach the ear because it does so in the form of waves. That is why the ears turn towards the direction in the sky from where the sound comes. The ears are like the modern day radar that is made to turn and rotate in order to optimize the reception of sound. That is why we cannot hear anything if there is a solid obstruction between the origin of sound and the ears because it would obstruct the path of the movement of sound waves traveling in the ether present in the space of the sky between the origin point of the sound and the ear.]

The skin represents the air element; the skin is the manifestation of the air or wind element. [The skin has the function of feeling the sense of touch. When a soft breeze blows over our skin, it can immediately feel being subtly and softly massaged by the former. The excellent ability of the skin to exhibit the subtle sense of touching and feeling anything in its subtlest form is manifested when it can feel the air or wind blowing over it, because this air or wind is not physically seen but its presence nevertheless 'felt and known'. Similarly, when a fire is burning fiercely, one gets scorched by its heat though one does not actually touch it. This happens because the hot air coming in from the fire touches the skin and makes it feel scorched and hot. This feeling and sensation is the exclusive domain of the skin, for the ears, eyes, nose and the tongue can't do so. Their sphere of activity and functions are different from one another.]

The eyes represent the fire element; the eyes are the manifestations of the fire element. [The eye can see anything only if the latter is illuminated, or there is light in the general surrounding area; it cannot see anything in dark. The fire element has light as one of its integral characteristic feature—where there is a fire burning, there would be light. That is why a fire is lit in the forest to ward off wild animals because they are scared by its light and leaping flames. The fire element has heat and energy inherent in it too, and the eyes can perceive the existence of anything if the fire element manifests itself even in its non-visible form as heat and energy as is evident from modern day night-vision instruments such as night-vision goggles etc. which precisely exploit this phenomenon of the ability of the eye to perceive the existence of anything if there are subtle components of fire element present in the thing viewed. The infra-red rays that are emitted by anything not frigid cold are translated into vision by these specialised instruments. In the absence of the light in the visible spectrum, the eye utilizes the subtler components of fire, such as heat and energy and the infra-red rays emanated by anything that is warm or hot, to perceive things. Similarly, modern day weapons which have so-called smart electronic eyes can home on to their targets relying upon heat emanating from them.]

The tongue represents the water element; the tongue is the manifestation of the water element. [The tongue can taste anything only when the enzymes of taste present

in the saliva dissolve the chemicals present in the food tasted. Suppose a piece of iron is put on the tongue. Would it enjoy its taste as much as it longs for a delicious sweet dish? This is because the water element is not present in the solid piece of iron that can enable the enzymes of the saliva to taste iron like it would taste, say for example, a piece of dry fruit or a grain of rice which are also relatively hard as compared to cooked soft food. Even uncooked and raw food does not appeal to the tongue as much as properly cooked food for this precise reason—the chemicals of uncooked food do not sufficiently dissolve in water present in the saliva to interact with the enzymes of taste. Until the water has softened the food, the latter cannot be gulped; it would get stuck either in the mouth or in the throat. That is why of all the external organs of the body, it is the tongue that is the moistest and supple.]

The nose represents the earth element; the nose is the manifestation of the earth element. [The nose has the main function of smelling, and smell has its origin in anything that is gross and that has an affinity to the earth by preferring to be near it. This is evident from the fact that there is no smell in outer space; we smell things only when we land on the earth. Even on earth, places that are symbolic of life and fertility, such as green and moist areas rich in fauna and flora give out a fragrance, whether likable or not, but dry and parched areas of the same earth, such as arid deserts and snow covered mountains do not harbour smell. A garden is full of fragrances of flowers and the sweet aroma of fruits which spread over large areas in the surrounding place, even carried to far distances by the wind, but if we were to rise above the surface of the earth, say in a hot air balloon, the smells would not be smelt by us high up in the sky. In other words, smell has a direct affinity to earth and things that this earth harbours. That is why we have such terms as ‘earthy smell’, such as the one that comes out from earthen pots and mud houses. Wherever there is earth element, there would be a subtle and sublime ‘smell’ typical of life in all its forms.]

The respective senses or perceptions of these sense organs are word (sound—pertaining to the organ known as the ear), touch (feeling—pertaining to the organ known as the skin), form and shape (sight—pertaining to the organ known as the eye), the various genres of taste (pertaining to the organ known as the tongue), and smell (both the sweet and the foul—pertaining to the organ known as the nose).

All these perceptions and their organs have their origin in the five basic elements of creation, called the ‘Panch Maha Bhuts’. [Refer Prashno-panishad of Atharva Veda, question (Canto) 4, verse nos. 8-9.] (2).

3. [This verse describes the different organs of action of the gross body and their functions.]

The organs of action are the following—the organ of speech (i.e. the mouth), the hands, the legs, the anus and the genitals.

Their functions are respectively to speak (mouth), to take and give (hand), to move and go to some place (leg), to excrete waste products from the body (anus), and to reproduce (genital).

All of them have their origin in the Maha Bhuts such as the earth element etc. (the others being water, fire, air and sky elements). [This is because since everything in existence has its origin in these five elements which act as the fundamental building blocks of creation, the bricks of the edifice known as creation, nothing exists that does not have one or the other of these five basic elements playing a role in its existence.] (3).

4. [This verse describes the ‘Antahakaran’ which refers to the components of the subtle body of the creature just like the sense organs of perception and action make up the gross body. The word would therefore briefly mean the inner self, the sub-conscious and the conscience.]

The Antahakaran¹ (the inner self consisting of the subtle body; the conscience; the sub-conscious) consists of the following four units—viz. the Mana² (mind), the Buddhi³ (intellect), the Chitta⁴ (the faculty of reasoning, thought, understanding, attention, the sub-conscious etc.), and Ahankar⁵ (ego, pride, haughtiness and the accompanying arrogance and hypocrisy; lack of humility, simplicity and piety).

Their characteristic features are respectively the following—(a) The Mana typically is inclined to have various ‘Sankalps and Vikalps’, i.e. the mind has a natural tendency to make different vows, resolutions, have ambitions, volitions etc, and seeking alternatives and having doubts and confusions pertaining to their success and correctness.

(b) The Buddhi is characterised by the virtue of ‘Nishchaya’, i.e. it has a natural characteristic or habit or inclination of making certain deductions and arriving at certain conclusions, and then taking decisions based on them followed by a determined action to implement those decisions. The intellect does not believe in dilly-dallying and procrastination; it does not believe in having doubts, confusions and perplexities. It on the other hand believes in analyses, rational logic and discrimination between what is correct and what is not, in taking a decisive action and on resolute functioning unlike the nature of the Mana (mind) which swings from object to object in an undecided manner. That is why we have such phrases as ‘wild swings of the mood’ indicating the fickle and floundering nature of the mind as compared to the robust and self-confident attitude of the intellect.

(c) The Chitta is characterised by the virtue of ‘Avadharana’, literally meaning to have a firm and clear conception of anything and helping one to determine and decide on any given subject. It helps the intellect and mind in their functioning by aiding the mind to become fixed on the subject and abandon its naturally fidgety nature, and the intellect to arrive at a fixed conclusion.

(d) The Ahankar² has ‘Abhiman’ (meaning ego, pride, vanity, arrogance, hypocrisy and exaggerated sense of self-importance) as an integral part of it; indeed both the terms are synonymous with each other. This is because if one has a predominant trait of having ego and pride, he would be inclined to develop arrogance and haughtiness in life as opposed to the eclectic virtues of humility, piety, grace and simplicity shown by a man who has no trace of Ahankar in him. Such a person would become a hypocrite and is jealous of others. These negative traits in his character would affect his overall character, temperament, nature and personality. This element of Ahankar would cast its evil or dark shadow even on the Mana (mind), Buddhi (intellect) and the Chitta (sub-conscious). Consequentially, even though these components of his inner self would warn him that a certain thing or deed is harmful for his long term good and is best avoided, the Ahankar would veto their advice and compel the man to heed its own advice instead. As a result a man more often than not does things out of a sense of misplaced self-importance and to satisfy his inflated ego and uphold his false pride. He compromises on rationality and the value of the action on the altar of Ahankar and Abhiman. Therefore, Ahankar and Abhiman are the greatest of pollutants for the inner self.

[Now, the symbolic places where these five subtle units have their dominant presence, and from where they play their respective roles in moulding the individual’s character, are being enumerated.]

The Mana has its dominant presence in the upper region of the throat; it is here that the Mana reveals itself; it is its playground. [This is because a man expresses his doubts and confusions by making uncertain sounds in the throat, such as humming, murmuring or making muffled comments. He speaks in hushed tones because he is not certain of what he is to say or what the correct thing is. If he is mentally upset, he weeps and sobs; if he is very happy, he exults and expresses his emotions not in articulate words but sound gestures indicating his happiness or sorrows as the case might be. Besides this, the word Mana also has an element of involvement of the heart along side the mind. The heart has predominant qualities of emotions and sentiments, and the latter are never articulate in their expression as compared to the expression of the intellect which uses forceful logic, rational thinking and powerful words. The sounds and words of the Mana are soft, subtle and supple. An emotional man dominated by the Mana would strum some music or stutter when speaking as compared to the case when the intellect is driving him.]

The Buddhi reveals itself in the mouth; it is here that it is symbolically located and has its area of influence; it is the mouth that is the playground of the Buddhi. [As discussed above, the mouth is the organ by which one speaks out about various things. The man's intellect prowess and level of erudition and wisdom is known only by what he has to say on any given subject. The intellect helps him to participate in debates, discussions and negotiations. The intellect helps one to express wise words and advise others judiciously; it helps to overcome any doubts that the mind might be having by way of speaking cohesively, coherently and articulately. Since the mouth is like the loudspeaker of the brain, it also serves as the spokesman for the intellect. That is why it is said that a stupid man makes himself known by opening his 'mouth'—and not his throat or any other organ for that matter!]

The Chitta has its primary location and dominion in the area around the region of the navel. [The navel is the area from where all the vital Naadis (the sensory nerves) radiate out from their base in the Nabhi Kanda, the knot of nerves in the region of the navel, to all other parts of the body. These Naadis are central to the proper functioning of the entire body and keeping each unit lively with the flow of current of consciousness in them. It is only when the whole body is peaceful, if there is no pain and sufferance in any part of the body that the mind and intellect would be able to think of anything worthwhile. Otherwise, their entire concentration would be focused on the pain and suffering part of the body. This phenomenon is symbolically said here by saying that the navel is the playing ground of the Chitta—i.e. the concentration and attention of the mind can be fixed and the intellect can work properly in its prime form only when the nervous system of the body functions properly. These nerves have the Nabhi Kanda as their central controlling center. Hence the Chitta would depend on the good condition of this navel area; it has its working center around the navel area.]

Similarly, the Ahankar has its fertile play ground in the heart. [For example, when a man does anything difficult and achieves success in it, he says my 'heart' is overjoyed, my 'heart' feels proud of my achievement, etc. He would not say that his mind is proud of the achievement, or that his intellect is joyful at the success. When someone dear to him makes some great achievement, he says that his 'heart' is glad and overwhelmed to hear this good news, his 'heart' feels exhilarated and proud of the person so dear to him for obtaining this great success, but he never says that the mind or the intellect felt glad or happy over it or proud at the achievement. Therefore, the entity that would develop any trace of pride and arrogance from such achievements and successes would naturally be the 'heart' as opposed to the mind and

intellect because it was the one to feel happy, and exulted about it. Hence, the element of pride and ego and their attendant arrogance and haughtiness have their seat in the 'heart'.] (4).

[Note—¹The word *Antahakaran* literally means the 'inner instrument' of the creature by which his mind works and receives the world. The word has two components—viz. 'Antaha' meaning 'inner', and 'Karan' meaning 'instrument that causes the mind to work'. The external organs of the body such as the eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin which are the organs of perception physically receive the inputs from the external world, but their actual functioning is due to this Antahakaran or the inner instrument of the subtle body consisting of the mind and intellect complex because if the latter malfunctions the former are useless.

Out the three states of existence of the creature, viz. the waking, the dreaming and the deep sleep states, the mind is active in the first two states only, and therefore the Antahakaran is related to only the first two states of existence. But even here its main field of activity is internal and not external as is implied in the word 'Antaha' itself which means 'inner'. Therefore, the external organs of the body such as the organs of perception and action are only subsidiary and play an ancillary role only vis-à-vis the activity of the 'inner self' consisting of the mind, intellect and sub-conscious as well as the subtle heart which is the seat of various sentiments and emotions. This is simply because the inner self receives inputs from the outside world through the instrument of the external organs, and all the activity of the inner self in relation to the world in which the creature lives depend upon these external organs directly or indirectly.

The Antahakaran functions in four different ways and gets four different names according to these four functions. (1) It is called Chitta or sub-conscious mind and its ability to receive information and remember while performing the function of reception and retention. (2) It is called Mana or logical mind when it performs the function of questioning, doubting and willing. (3) It is called Buddhi or intellect when deducing, deciding and determining. And (4) it is called Ahankar or ego, self pride, arrogance of knowledge when it identifies itself with each of these functions—when it thinks that it has the ability to remember, to question and debate, to decide and will.

The word would therefore briefly mean the inner self of the creature consisting of the subtle body rather than the outer self consisting of the gross body. It is said to be one of the 19 Tattwas or essential elements that came into being at the very commencement of creation.

Depending upon how one interprets the word 'Antahakaran', it is said to have one, two, four or five components.

The Antahakaran *one dimension or aspect* is called the Mana, but this Mana itself has two subtler aspects—viz. the mind and the heart because the notion of Mana as it affects the inner self of the creature revolves around the various tugs, pulls, pushes and prodding that the different hues of character traits such as emotions, sentiments, impulsiveness, spontaneity etc. exert on the creature. The word 'Mana' cannot be restricted to the dictionary version of the term as meaning only the mind, because the heart plays an equal important role in the entire setup. This fact has been elaborately described in Tejobindu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 5, verse nos. 191-192.

The Antahakaran with *four dimensions* is described in the present Shaarirako-panishad, verse no. 4 above. They are briefly Mana (mind), Buddhi (intellect), Chitta (sub-conscious) and Ahankar or Abhiman (pride, ego, arrogance, haughtiness, hypocrisy, vanity, false self-importance etc.). Again it would be noted that the subtle component of the heart play a secret role in this setup because the ingredient of pride, ego, haughtiness and arrogance along with their sentimental and emotional quotient are very closely related with the heart.

The Antahakaran with *five dimensions or aspects* is described in Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 6, and in Paingalo-panishad, Canto 1, verse no. 9, and in Canto 2, verse no. 3—both of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition. The five components of Antahakaran are—(a) Mana (mind), (b) Buddhi (intellect), (c) Chitta (the faculty of concentration and memory; knowledge and consciousness), and (c) Ahankar (ego, pride, arrogance). Their attendant Vrittis (inherent character, traits, habits, inclinations and temperaments of a creature) decide the basic nature of a person and the way he would react to a given circumstance, the way he would deal, behave and interact with the world, the way he would interpret things, the way he thinks, the things that would appeal to him and the things he would abhor etc.—all depends upon the mental setup tinged with the fundamental character traits that are firmly ingrained in him.

Since the mind, intellect and the sub-conscious are involved in the definition of Antahakaran, it would follow that the following too would be included as the five components of Antahakaran—(a) Pramaan—knowledge that helps to establish the truth; (b) Vipratipatti—ignorance, delusions, illusions such as imagining a snake in a piece of rope; this is erroneous knowledge; (c) Vikalp—alternatives; that knowledge which is acquired by hearing of it but may not present the correct picture, such as for example a wooden puppet—there seems an apparent difference between plain wood and the puppet, but they are basically the same and defined with the same word ‘wood’; this knowledge is neither is true nor false for to say that the puppet is different from an ordinary piece of wood because of its distinctive shape and value would be as much true as saying that it is plain wood; (d) Nidra—meaning sleep; when a man remains oblivious of any truth just like anything gets hidden in darkness though it is very much there, that man is likened to a man sleeping soundly in spite of the goings on around him and therefore remaining unaware of them; and (e) Smriti—literally meaning memory; it refers to that knowledge which is based on experience and witnessing so that it is etched in memory; such knowledge becomes robust and gets soundly established in mind with the passage of time.

²*Mana*—The word Mana has a broad meaning, covering the combined apparatus of the subtle subjective mind and the emotional heart that has emotions and sentiments. This is because they both work in conjunction to determine how and what a man thinks, believes, imagines and is attracted to. Mana refers to the various emotions and thoughts; the dispositions and inclinations; the intentions, ideas and purpose of the mind; the wishes, attractions and desires of the heart; the attractions that tempt the the mind, causing it to fix its attention in these attractions, thereby also dragging the heart along which begins to love it and get attached to these attractions. All these factors have a composite effect on the sub-conscious. [Refer—Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 4, verse no.38-39; the concept has been elaborately described in Chandogya Upanishad, canto 7, section 3.]

Heart is the center where all types of emotions and sentiments have their origin. On the other hand, the subjective mind and the objective intellect are the two components which are like the two limbs of the brain and they work in close cooperation with each other, being the controlling center where all sorts of thoughts and decisions are centered. The Mana plays a pivotal role in the creature falling into the trap of worldly delusions or being liberated and delivered from it. Further, all Mantras have had their origin in the mind and heart of ancient sages and seers when they contemplated upon any aspect of Divinity and arrived at some profound spiritual Truth in this creation. The great Maha Vakyas were then ‘revealed’ to them in their meditative trance. Hence the importance and primary source of everything in this creation as the Mana cannot be neglected or even over-emphasised.

The Mana is to be distinguished from Buddhi, for the former refers to the mind and the latter to the intellect. The most important component of a creature’s body is his brain. It is the level of development of the brain that determines in which rung of evolutionary hierarchy the creature stands. The brain has two components—the

grosser mind and the subtler intellect. The mind is always in a state of flux, remaining undecided and running hither and thither like a mischievous child let loose, while the intellect is marked by stability and is like an adult who knows what to do and what to choose. When the child, the mind, is put under the care of his parent, the adult intellect, it would have a proper upbringing and would not commit some grave error, while an uncared child would be a nuisance for the society. Likewise, the mind when it is under the supervision and guidance of the intellect is under leash and such a mind can be very productive for the man just like a properly raised child can give a lot to the world when he grows up.

The Yog Kundalini Upanishad, Canto 3, verse nos. 5-6 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition describes how the Mana or the mind can be a source of both entanglements with the world as well as the source of liberation and deliverance from it. The Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 98-105 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition establishes that the Mana is the root cause of all miseries that torment the creature and rob him of his peace. The Subalo-panishad, Canto 9, verse no. 11 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition describes the Mana and its effect upon the emotional bearing and structure of the creature. The Dhyan Bindu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 25 asserts that it is the Mana that is the cause of the entire creation. The importance and significance of Mana has been extensively expounded upon in Brihad Arankya Upanishad of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 1, Brahmin 5, verse nos. 4-7, 9, 12; Canto 3, Brahmin 7, verse nos. 20 ; Canto 3, Brahmin 9, verse nos. 10-17; and Canto 4, Brahmin 1, verse no. 6. The Taittiriya Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its Valli 3, Anuvak 4 describes the importance and significance of Mana as a manifestation of Brahm.

³*Buddhi*—The intellect, reasoning, analysing and discrimination faculty of the mind of a creature; the rational thoughts, intelligence, wit, comprehension, sagacity and erudition. It is the intelligent and analytical mind that helps to intelligently analyse anything and determine its truth and eliminate falsehoods which distinguishes a creature having 'Buddhi' from one who lacks it. Buddhi is also the thinking mind which remembers and ponders and determines upon something or its different aspects relying upon the data collected and previously stored in the sub-conscious part of the brain. [See Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 4, verse no.38-39.]

The Varaaha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 2, verse nos. 59-60 describes how Buddhi helps the man to see the reality. The Subalo-panishad, Canto 9, verse no. 12 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition describes Buddhi, its influence on the creature and how it can be controlled and channelised for constructive purposes. Subalo-panishad, Canto 14, verse no. 1 describes how the Buddhi (intellect) is superior to Mana (mind).

⁴*Chitta*—the word Chitta refers to the faculty of reasoning and thought of the mind-intellect complex; the ability to pay attention and fix concentration upon a chosen subject which leads to understanding and a sharp memory; the conscious intellect as well as the sub-conscious mind; the powers of discrimination, understanding, paying attention, memorizing, and the ability to recollect and store information that are characteristics of the conscious powers exhibited by the mind and intellect apparatus; the sub-conscious and memory, along with its power to remember anything as depicted when the man involuntarily reacts to any given situation depending upon his memory-bank; the ability to concentrate and focus the mind on anything. (The concept has been elaborately described in Chandogya Upanishad, canto 7, section 5; Sanayso-panishad, canto 2, verse no.42-46).

The power of the Chitta is called 'Chitta Shakti'. The word Shakti means power and authority, potentials and energy that any entity possesses. Therefore, the combined stupendous powers exhibited by 'Chitta' are called Chitta Shakti.

The Subalo-panishad, Canto 9, verse no. 14 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition describes Chitta in detail. The concept has been elaborately described in Chandogya Upanishad, canto 7, section 5; Sanayso-panishad, canto 2, verse no.42-46.

A related concept is the 'Chitta Vrittis'. The Vrittis are the inherent tendencies, the natural inclinations and inborn habits of the Chitta, and the Tejobindu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 3, verse no. 67, Canto 4, verse no. 53-54 describes how to overcome the various habitual faults of the mind, called the Chitta Vrittis.

⁵*Ahankar*—his is the notion of having false ego, self-pride, self-assertion, vanity, boastfulness, self-righteousness, arrogance, haughtiness; a sense of false prestige and false pride; to think that one is the doer and achiever; to erroneously believe that success is obtained by one's efforts alone and that one is superior to others in many respects etc.

The concept that 'I' is the body and not the 'pure conscious soul' leads to ignorance-based ego and a sense of false pride and prestige, called *Ahankar* (अहंकार). The constant identification of 'I' (me) with the body and this material world of sense objects lead to the sense of possessiveness in the creature. 'Pure consciousness' mired by ego becomes 'a conditioned consciousness' and fails to remain pure. This is why *Ahankar* has been likened to a minister of the king—it directs and regulates the actions of the consciousness which, under its influence, loses its independence. This 'conditioned consciousness', working through the mind-intellect-ego combine, is called, inter-alia, 'Chitta' (चित्त). The word also means sub-conscious and its memory bank. Hence this memory of the sub-conscious acts as a referral library for the intellect. The latter falls back on it and rely on it whenever it is in doubt. The quality of books in the library guides the student; similarly, the quality of inherent tendencies stored in the library of Chitta directly affects the inputs of the intellect, and through it, the mind and successively down the hierarchy to the body and its organs of perception and action.

Although the soul has nothing to do with this command chain involving Chitta (sub-conscious and memory)—Vrittis (inherent tendencies and inclinations, nature and temperament) and Vasanas (passions and desires)—Buddhi (intellect)—Mana (emotions and notions, the emotive thoughts)—Sharir (body)—Karma (action and deeds)—the result of deeds and actions—more experience—stored in memory—and the chain continues, but for all practical purposes the Atma/soul is deemed responsible for it because of its sovereign nature.

So, the sincere seeker/aspirant should delineate this conscious from the rest of the chain and break the nexus between them so as to allow the glory of the pure consciousness of the soul to shine through like the splendorous sun breaking through from behind a curtain of clouds.

It is like removing the various veils or covers from around the candle so that its light shines through the darkness of the room and illuminates all the corners of it.

Example of a sleeping man—*Ahankar* is generally associated with the body when the creature thinks that he has so many achievements to his credit and that he has achieved them with his body. He erroneously begins to have a notion of possessiveness and belonging to this world; he starts to conjure up imaginary relations that have their relevance only as long as there is the body, for once a man dies these relations snap even without notice, and even in the case the ignorant Atma wished to retain them it cannot because the same son and wife whom he loved so much are eager to get rid of the dead body which is causing pollution in the household! So, when a man snuffs out *Ahankar* from his mental radar, he becomes as indifferent and dispassionate as a sleeping man who is unconcerned with the external world.

For example, if the house is on fire, a sleeping man wouldn't be bothered at all as long as he is asleep because he is totally disassociated with the house. He does not bother because he is not attached with his 'possession'; a sleeping man just cannot think that the house that he had built on his own strength and effort is getting destroyed. But once he gains consciousness, he is struck with grief and dismay. Similarly, when a wise man realises that the world is not related to him, and his true

identity is his Atma and not the body, then he isn't bothered either with the body or the world with which the body is related and the various relations that exist only because of the existence of the body. The Atma has no relationships whatsoever. Absence of Ahankar eliminates all these at one go.

For all practical purposes, a wise man is as good as asleep as far as the external world is concerned. Even as a sleeping person forgets all about the outside world because his sense of belonging to and identification with the world, of calling the world mine and your, of having love or hatred, of having attachment or detachment, of having animosity/enmity or endearment and friendship, of having happiness or grief—all such emotions are literally 'asleep' with him. Similarly, a person who does not have Ahankar is freed from such emotions that are directly related with his sense of involvement with the world through the medium of the body, though he appears to be awake and active in this world.

The Atma or soul is pure and these things have got nothing to do with it. But because there is the false belief that the creature is the gross body and not the pure consciousness and pure self which is called the soul or Atma, all the external actions done by the body appears to have been done by the creature which, in fact, is an erroneous conclusion.

Ahankar has been described in the context of the Antahakaran (the inner self of the creature) as being one of its main components elsewhere in other Upanishads, such as Paingalo Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 2, verse no. 3; and Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 6.

Paingalo-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 1, verse 6 describes the concept of Ahankar in the context of the genesis of creation, and how it was able to influence even the supreme Brahm, in his grosser cosmic manifestation of Lord Vishnu, to get involved in the creation of this delusory world.

How Ahankar affects the creature's nature and temperament has been succinctly described in Niralamb Upanishad, verse nos. 11-12, 20. How it affects path of spiritual liberation and deliverance of the creature has been explained in Yoshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse nos. 34-37.

Other references—Subalo-panishad, Canto 9, verse no. 13 of Shukla Yajur Veda.]

5. [This verse now elaborates upon verse no. 1 to describe how the five basic elements such as earth, water, fire, air and sky transformed into various units of the body.

The ideas expressed and expounded upon in verse nos. 5-6 are reflected in Prashno-panishad of the Atharva Veda tradition in its fourth question, verse nos. 8-9.]

The bones, skin, veins and other tubular ducts of the body such as arteries, nerves etc., the hairs and flesh—these are manifestations of the earth element. They have been made or crafted from the earth element. They represent the grossest part of the body.

The urine, mucous, blood, sperms and semen, sweat—these are manifestations of the water element. They have been made or crafted from the water element. [That is, all things that have a fluid dimension must have water element inherent in them.]

Hunger, thirst, laziness and indolence¹, attractions and passions², and sexual activity³—these are manifestations of the fire element. They have been moulded out of the fire element. [¹This is evident during very hot seasons when one becomes lethargic and dozes off to sleep. ²That is why we say that certain passionate things are done 'in the heat of the moment'. Attraction of the opposite sexes is also due to the presence of the fire element because it generates intense passions. Heat in any form creates restlessness and makes the man uneasy, just like passions of any form—such as

having a ‘passion’ for reading, traveling, cooking, sports etc. or any other activity that is dear to one’s heart—must have the concealed fire element in it to keep the drive and energy alive and kicking. Similarly, when we receive someone enthusiastically and affectionately, we say that he is welcomed ‘warmly’, thereby implying the role of the fire element because ‘warmth’ comes from fire and not from ice.³ Sexual activity is obviously a manifest form of the fire element. It involves intense degree of romance and passions in general and such physical actions as hugging, kissing, caressing, intercourse etc. all of which generate heat, increased heart beat and a general increase in the flow of impulses of lust, wanting and passion in the nerves which must be addressed for otherwise they are so overwhelming that they make the man besides himself. This ‘heat’ makes him more often than not even lose control over his senses and wisdom.]

To expand, to run and move, to walk, to fly, the movement of the eyelids etc.—these are manifestations of the air or wind element. They have been crafted out of the air or wind element. [This is because the air or wind element is always mobile; it cannot remain static. A man breathes air continuously without rest; even a balloon filled with air is never at rest. If the Apan wind, the one responsible for movement of food in the intestines, stops functioning, the results would be catastrophic for the living creature. Indeed, even as air in the form of breath is synonymous with life, movement in any form so characteristic of the air or wind element is a definite sign of life, because only a dead body would not move.]

Kaam (lust, yearnings and worldly desires), Krodh (anger, wrathfulness), Lobh (greed, rapacity), Bhaya (fear and consternation) etc.—these are manifestations of the sky element. They have been made from the sky element. [The symbolism here is obvious. All these qualities have no limits; they are as endless as the sky. They cannot be precisely defined and delineated like the vast sky.] (5).

6. [This verse now elaborates upon verse no. 2 to describe how the five basic elements such as earth, water, fire, air and sky transformed themselves into various perceptions of the gross body.]

Word (hearing, sound), touch (feeling), shape and form (sight), taste and smell—these are the five activities which are described as the characteristic virtues displayed by the earth element.

Word (hearing, sound), touch (feeling), shape and form (sight) and taste—these are the four activities which are described as the characteristic virtues displayed by the water element.

Word (hearing, sound), touch (feeling), and shape and form (sight)—these are the three activities which are described as the characteristic virtues displayed by the fire element.

Word (hearing, sound) and touch (feeling)—these are the two activities which are described as the characteristic virtues displayed by the air or wind element.

And word (hearing and sound) is the only one activity which is described as the characteristic virtue displayed by the sky element (6).

[Note—Refer explanation given in verse no. 2. The verse clearly outlines the pyramidal structure of the primary elements in creation. The ‘earth’ being the grossest and heaviest is at the base, while the ‘sky’ being the subtlest and lightest is at the top, with the rest of the three elements, viz. the ‘water’, the ‘fire’ and the ‘air’ being arranged in an ascending manner clearly show their declining grossness and increasing subtlety.

To understand how one element can transform itself into so many forms, we can take the example of *isomerism* in chemistry. The word ‘iso’ means the ‘same’, and

‘meros’ means ‘parts’. Hence, isomerism refers to the phenomenon whereby two or more compounds that are composed of the same chemical formulae, i.e. they have the same molecular composition but different three dimensional structures; they differ in physical or chemical properties. Such things are called ‘isomers’ of the principal element.

Extended further, this phenomenon of isomerism would apply to the concept of the same Atma residing in all the living beings having a mind boggling variety of physical structures, besides the fact that all the creatures have the same Atma as well as the same basic elements as their essential identity.

Then there are two types of isomerism—i.e. *structural isomerism* and *stereo isomerism*. The concept of structural isomerism refer to those isomers which have the same molecular formulae but different structural arrangement of atoms or groups of atoms around the central atom or ion called Structural Isomers and this phenomenon is called structural isomerism. This would be like different species of living organisms which have the same Atma at the core, the same set of fundamental five elements set up around this basic core, and then comes the arrangements of secondary elements around this basic core to give rise to varying structural variations in the species as they evolved. Stereo isomerism is when the same molecular formulae represent two or more compounds which differ in the spatial arrangement of atoms or groups of atoms. Such compounds are called Stereo Isomers. In this case, we deal with one given species such as the human species which have all the gross features the same but the internal geometric patterns in which the secondary and tertiary elements exist determine the individuality of a particular man and set him aside from all others of his ilk.

A related concept is *isomorphism* wherein there is apparent similarity of form between individuals belonging to different races or species. In the field of chemistry it refers to the existence of two or more chemical compounds with the same crystal structure; they differ in chemical composition but have the same crystalline structure. This would be like speaking of the entire human race, or of all the mammals for instance who would exhibit similar external features but have different internal chemistry in the sense that all have their own set of characteristic qualities, virtues and values, their own independent personality, intelligence, emotional quotient etc. Their mental and intellectual setup, their emotional and sentimental quotient, their inherent natural temperaments and inclinations etc. would differ from one individual to another depending upon the combination in which the three Gunas (Sata, Raja and Tama) exist in them.

In this context, the three Gunas that determine the individual character of the creature, that determine his ‘individuality’ as compared to the general character of the group to which that individual belongs, are like the *isotopes* in chemistry. The isotope refers to the phenomenon wherein one of two or more atoms of the same chemical element that contain the same number of protons but different numbers of neutrons in their nuclei and therefore have the same atomic number and chemical properties but different mass numbers and physical properties. For example, two brothers have the same genes and the same inheritance, but the presence of the three Gunas in different ratios between them changes their personality and thought processes. One may be a highly righteous man while the other might be just the opposite. Their parents are the same, their upbringing is the same, they have attended the same school and ate the same food, but there is a deep chasm when it comes to their character as individuals.

The metaphysical concept of Bhuts, Tattvas and Dhaatus as being the primary or secondary or tertiary building blocks of creation and their contribution in the process of creation seems to be too abstract to be a reality, but if we relate them to our modern knowledge of chemistry they become very easy to understand, very rational and very evidently possible.

All the elements in existence have been classified into a Periodic Table in chemistry, called the ‘Mendeleev Periodic Table of Elements’. The elements are

arranged in it based on their atomic weight (the average mass of a chemical element's atom) or atomic number (the number of protons in the atom of a chemical element's nucleus). The one with atomic number 1 is at the top of the list, and currently there are said to be 116 elements in the list. The increase of atomic number would be like increase in the weight of that element which we can liken to increasing degree of grossness and decreasing degree of subtlety in metaphysics.

The orderliness in Nature can be well gauged from the fact that all the elements behave in a fixed, pre-destined and pre-determinable manner depending upon their place in the table. Those in the same group or column show similar chemical behaviour.

The primary elements are those that have atomic numbers 1 (hydrogen) to 83 (bismuth). The secondary elements would be those having atomic number 84 onwards till 92 (uranium). The tertiary elements would be the ones having atomic numbers above 93 and till 110, and by later additions to 116. These tertiary elements are the trans-uranium elements (i.e. those with atomic numbers higher than 92) and all of them have been produced in the laboratory. This phenomenon is similar to the concept of evolution of newer Tattvas and Dhaatus, newer forms of Kalaas and Gunas that kept on developing by mutations of the primary and secondary elements.

These naturally occurring elements exist in varying forms. For instance, eleven are in the form of gases (hydrogen, nitrogen, oxygen, fluorine, chlorine, and the six noble gases—helium, neon, argon, krypton, xenon and radon). Two are in liquid form (bromine and mercury). The rest are solids of varying textures and forms. Again this is not enough—for we have some as hard solids (copper, iron), some as soft and not so hard solids (lead), some as viscous fluids (mercury), some as waxy non-metallic elements (phosphorus), some as solid non-metallic elements (sulphur), some that are stable (elements having atomic number 1-83) and others that undergo constant decay and destruction over a period of time, called their 'half lives', e.g. those with atomic number 83 to 92, and then still others that are synthetic such as those having atomic number 93-116 in the present list of the Periodic Table.

Some elements are permanent such as the ones having atomic number 1(hydrogen) - 83 (bismuth), while those above it have a transient life, called radioactive elements. Some elements are abundantly available such as carbon, while some are precious because of their rarity such as silver and gold, while still other are still rarer and present only in trace, called the trace elements such as selenium, magnesium, potassium etc.

Then there are the 'isotopes' of the same element, i.e. elements having different number of neutrons but the same number of protons in their nucleus and hence the same number of electrons in their shells, thereby showing the same basic chemical behaviour—e.g. tin (which has an astounding 10 isotopes) and carbon (with numerous isotopes).

This single entity 'carbon' proves how the supreme creator was versatile and astoundingly creative when he set about for the mammoth task of creation. The atomic number of carbon is 6; it has many isotopes of which carbon-12 and carbon-13 are said to be stable, while carbon-14 is said to be the most stable amongst its radioactive isotopes because it has a half-life of 5730 years approx. Carbon exists in many natural forms and has four known allotropes—e.g. diamond, graphite, carbon black (coal, coke and charcoal) and fullerenes (hollow cage molecules). Carbon is the most versatile of all elements in creation and it forms more chemical compounds than all the other elements taken together, giving rise to an entire branch of chemistry devoted to it called the organic chemistry. There are millions of known carbon products.

This ubiquitous carbon can be regarded as the most important, most handy, most adaptable, very flexible and highly useful tool in the hands of the cosmic creator which helped him not only in creation but for the planning for its future upkeep, because all the essential ingredients needed to sustain life in this living world are

carbon-based. Carbon is the core of proteins, carbohydrates, lipids, nucleic acids—all essential chemical ingredients needed to sustain life and make it viable, besides in the form of hydrocarbons found in coal, petroleum and natural gases which would be needed for the upcoming creation for its daily needs. It exists in the earth's crust as carbonate rocks as well as dissolved in the ocean.

Some molecules of compounds are as simple as water molecule having two atoms of hydrogen and one of oxygen (both gases), then a slightly higher level of combination results in the formation of different salts. These salts are formed when the hydrogen of an acid is replaced by a metal or its equivalent—the most common form of salt is the table salt (sodium chloride), and other common names which are more complex such as sodium bicarbonate, silver nitrate, calcium carbonate etc.

The carbon chemistry opens a mammoth vista of chemical compounds such as ketones and aldehydes, formaldehydes and resins, simple and complex polymers etc.

The general idea of the above narration is that if such a variety is possible in this world which has a physical limitation of its resources and their application, one can well imagine what astounding possibilities can exist when we consider the unimaginable vastness of this creation in which the known world in which we live is but like a speck of dust or sand on a beach by the ocean. So the authenticity and truthfulness of the manner the Upanishads speak about this creation and its Bhuts, Dhaatus, Tattvas and Kalaas should never be doubted. That we do not understand anything is no proof of its non-existence or veracity; it is the limit of human knowledge and mind that things which are beyond his comprehension or imagination seem absurd to him. The same man thousands of years ago would not have known chemistry as it is understood today, and suppose the present concepts were explained to him then by some wise man who would have been fortunate enough to have the deep insight and a sharp analytical mind to know or interpret certain event or observations in the context of science and then had tried to explain his observations to those primitive societies, he would have been ridiculed, irrational and thought to be outright mad. But with the benefit of hindsight and introspection we would now realise that what he had taught then was indeed the truth, albeit spoken in a language in vogue at that remote point of time which is now incomprehensible for us, and therefore creating skepticism in modern times.]

7. There are said to be three inherent qualities or Gunas that determine the basic character and fundamental nature of all living beings. These three are Sata, Raja and Tama (7).

[Note—The *Sata* is the best Guna as described in verse no. 8-9, the *Raja* is the medium one as described in verse no. 10, and the *Tama* is the basest and meanest of the three Gunas as described in verse no. 11 below.

The character of all the living beings in the entire creation is dependent upon three primary qualities called the Gunas. They are Sata, Raja and Tama.

(a) The *Sata Guna* is the best of the three qualities present in any creature. It is a positive quality and is marked by a propensity for following the path of nobility, auspiciousness, probity, propriety, virtuousness, holiness and righteousness. Creatures that have a predominance of Sata Guna are inclined to do selfless service, be benevolent, merciful, kind and gracious, have coolness of head and a rationale and balanced mind, be contented, have humility and piety etc. Such creatures are devoted to good values in life and have a desire to acquire knowledge that would help them reach higher spiritual goals in life.

This Sata Guna is marked by high standards of ethical and moral existence that makes the bearer of such qualities highly respected in society. Such people have a spiritual dimension to their personality. This quality is spiritually uplifting and gives a divine halo to those who possess it and practice it.

The Vasanas that have the Sata Guna or quality dominant in them are like a veil covering the lamp or like a smoke covering the fire. A slight breeze will remove this smoke. Similarly a little bit of prayer and meditation will remove the Satwic desires; its removal requires the least effort.

(b) The second quality is the *Raja Guna* and it makes a man more attracted to this material world and its charms, and less spiritually inclined. The Raja Guna is the medium quality marked by a greater percentage of worldly passions, desires and attachments and their natural offshoots in a creature. It makes a creature inclined towards the material things of the gross world and their enjoyments, towards creation of wealth, its enhancement and protection, and generally having a desire for growth, development and expansion etc. It covers such qualities as worldly yearnings, passions, a stormy nature, agitated behaviour, ambitions, selfishness, expansionist tendencies, a desire to acquire, retain and develop such acquisitions even to the detriment of one's long term spiritual welfare and even if such actions cause pain to others. All these pertain to this materialistic world. Such qualities give worldly fame and prosperity. If these qualities are judiciously mixed with the Satwic qualities, then they provide the person the better of the two worlds, both in terms of worldly fame as well as spiritual well being.

The Vasanas that have the Rajsic Guna or quality dominant in them can be compared to dust on a mirror. In this case some dusting and rubbing is needed to clean the mirror; a greater effort is needed as compared to the case with Satwic quality.

(c) The third quality is called the *Tama Guna* and is the meanest and the basest of the three Gunas. It is a demeaning quality in a creature that leads to his downfall and perpetual entanglement with things that are considered improper and unethical. It creates an inclination for committing all sorts of sins, misdeeds and demeanours. It leads the creature towards negativity and inspires him to acquire negative qualities such as various vices, evils, sins, perversions etc. It makes him inclined to be greedy, rapacious, haughty, arrogant, lustful, intoxicated, vile and wild to the extreme. Such a creature with a predominance of Tama Guna has utter disregard for propriety, noble virtues and ethics, for righteousness and morality.

In brief, it is the most degrading, denigrating and contemptible of the three characteristics in a person, and leads to such behaviour which is utterly immoral, denigrating and depraved, marked by grossness, crassness and recklessness. It therefore leads to his downfall, ignominy and ruin as well as ignorance, delusions, gloom, inertia, anger, frustration etc.

The Tamsic Guna or quality is like the embryonic membrane that covers the foetus in the womb. They cannot be removed easily and require great diligence, effort, persistence, dedication and careful handling requiring time and patience. It is the basest and the lowliest of the three characteristics, and the worst type to possess.

The Vasanas that have the Tama Guna in dominance are regarded as the 'bad Vasanas' or better still the 'worst type of Vasana' that any individual can have.

The varying quantity and intensity of these three in any given individual would decide his specific character and how he is inclined to deal with the world and a given circumstance. The various permutations and combinations of these three qualities create a particular nature of an individual, giving him his individuality and his special personality which are unique to him; they determine his temperament, behaviour, thought process, et al. Two individuals having the same external form of the gross body might look very much alike but they vary immensely in their nature, habit, temperaments, inclinations, behaviour, thinking, outlook, the way they act and do their deeds, the way they tackle the problems of life, the level of their wisdom and intelligence, their personality and their general way of living.

This is also the reason why it is believed that a creature has to roam in 84 Lakh wombs or forms of life; it is only a metaphor—it does not mean an actual and countable specific number of births that the creatures have to take, but only symbolise

the huge possibilities of individual characteristics that are determined by the differing ratios of these three Gunas, and the immense number of individuals that exhibit these characteristics in this creation.

The three Gunas that determine the individual character of the creature, that determine his 'individuality' as compared to the general character of the group to which that individual belongs, are like the *isotopes* in chemistry. The isotope refers to the phenomenon wherein one of two or more atoms of the same chemical element that contain the same number of protons but different numbers of neutrons in their nuclei and therefore have the same atomic number and chemical properties but different mass numbers and physical properties. For example, two brothers have the same genes and the same inheritance, but the presence of the three Gunas in different ratios between them changes their personality and thought processes. One may be a highly righteous man while the other might be just the opposite. Their parents are the same, their upbringing is the same, they have attended the same school and ate the same food, but there is a deep chasm when it comes to their character as individuals.

Since each individual is like an independent piece of mosaic that completes the entire picture in conjunction with other such pieces, this individual creature's nature and character helps to determine the overall shape of the creation. These Gunas keep the creation in a state of constant change, because numerous creatures die every moment and new ones are born. The Supreme Being has to be constantly on the alert because of this flux.

The various permutations and combinations of these three qualities create a particular 'nature' of an individual giving him his individuality and his special characters which are unique to him; they determine his temperament, behaviour, thought process et al. Two individuals having the same external form of the gross body—e.g. two men—might look very much alike but they vary immensely in their nature, habit, behaviour, thinking, outlook, action and deeds, wisdom and way of living. This is what is meant when it said that a creature has to roam in 84 Lakh wombs or forms of life; it is only a metaphor—it does not mean an actual, countable specific number that there are actually and physically 84 Lakh types of bodies of living beings; it only symbolically refers to the huge possibilities that are possible with these three 'Gunas' and their different combinations that can imaginably produce a myriad variety of creation that can be created with these three basic qualities and their various sub classes of qualities.

The proportion of the three Gunas decides the nature, natural temperament, tendencies, habits and inclination of the creatures. For example, a person with a greater proportion of 'Satvic' (noble) characteristic will be considered nobler than a man with a greater proportion of 'Rajasic' or 'Tamsic' qualities. So we can say that sages, seers, prophets, scholars and generally enlightened persons have a high degree of 'Satvic' qualities in them; kings and householders who live a noble life are example of those with higher amount of 'Rajasic' quality in them; while sinners, killers, drunks, rowdy elements, cheats etc. are those people with higher 'Tamsic' quality in them. These Gunas have direct bearing on the personality of a man.

The first quality of Sattva is concerned with creation and enhancement of knowledge and wisdom. For this, one has to remain alert and vigilant like Brahma. The 'Jagrat state' also corresponds to that state when the creature is awake and interacts physically with the external world, imbibes whatever knowledge and information that comes to it, gains experience, and physically reacts to that knowledge and information. Further, such people are regarded as seniors in society, and they are best depicted in the form of the old patriarch Brahma the creator. They remain so engrossed in the world that they forget who they actually are, what their true identity is, and the very basic fact that what they are thinking to be real is actually not.

Next comes the 'Swapna state' in which a man dreams, and it is a metaphor for imagination and visualization of things based on the experience and knowledge

gained during the Jagrat state. In this state a man lives and does things in a virtual manner in a virtual world of dreams. He sustains and nourishes his imaginations, fantasies and conceptions in a world of dreams which is far away from the harsh realities of life in the physical world. He suffers and enjoys in his dreams, then when he wakes up, he sometimes forgets what that imaginary world was like, but at other times there have been incidents wherein he has got new insight and new inspiration while he was dreaming. This is how Vishnu sustains and nourishes the creation created by Brahma. For all practical purposes, a dreaming man appears to be in a state resembling the state of Samadhi, or a state when an aspirant is in deep meditation and engrossed in contemplation, because he remains aloof and oblivious to the external world, and remains absolutely motionless. But this state is temporary, because he would revert back or wake up to the Jagrat state. That is why Lord Vishnu, who represents this quality of Raja, is depicted as perpetually reclining contemplatively on the bed of the coiled legendary serpent floating on the celestial ocean of milk called Kshirsagar. Since without a vision and imagination one cannot grow, develop and rise, Vishnu is regarded as a maverick player of fantastic tricks in order to sustain and enhance his interests of looking after the creation. Out of these Trinity Gods, it is Vishnu who assumes so many forms and adopts so many tricks to do the needful.

The third quality of Tama is represented by Shiva, and that is why he shows certain traits which are so typical of this quality—viz. being short tempered, and destroying at the shortest notice; his external behaviour and attire also represents the excess of this lowest quality in him. The Sushupta state that he represents stands for being totally oblivious of the external world, and remaining in total bliss. This is exactly how Shiva has been depicted—he remains in a perpetual state of meditation, completely indifferent to the external world, unconcerned and detached from the attractions of the enchanting outside when he can find complete bliss inside his own bosom. The Tama quality marks the presence of ignorance in a greater ratio, and this is depicted by Shiva when he remains ignorant of the niceties of worldly behaviour, notwithstanding his exalted stature of being the greatest amongst the Gods.

To understand how the three Gunas affect the Atma, let's take two examples—that of a hot piece of iron glowing red with heat, and the potter moulding various pots from the same clod of earth.

The supreme pure conscious cosmic Atma subjects the Bhoot Atma of the individual creature to the 'radiation' of these 'Gunas'. These 'Gunas' are the three basic qualities present in all the creatures in different permutations and combinations. These 'Gunas' effect the 'Bhoot Atma' differently based on a number of factors—such as for example, the present status of the 'Bhoot Atma' vis-à-vis its past deeds, their cumulative affects, the caliber of its mind and intellect, the position it occupies in the ladder of spiritual evolution, its willingness to change or subject itself to the effects of such radiation etc.

The concept can be understood differently also. A piece of iron, when heated, shows the heat as a 'red hot glow' which fully pervades the iron piece and becomes an integral part of it. The whole piece appears to be one whole mass of something which is red, hot and glowing. When beaten by a hammer, the iron piece bends and can be shaped into any shape. Each new shape, when heated, will show the same glow of red hot fire inside it. Similarly, the Atma provides consciousness to the creature, making it active and lively, subject to receptions of stimuli in the form of various perceptions originating in the external world and received through the organs of perception present in the gross body. The 'heated' body (i.e. the Bhoot Atma made active by the Atma) now becomes susceptible to change (from the impact of the three Gunas) much like the heated piece of iron being hammered by the hammer. The 'hammering' by the three 'Gunas' (the inherent qualities present in every creature) help to cast the individual creature into various moulds or shapes having different characteristics. Even as cold iron is not easily malleable, the creature without the infusion of life injected into it by the Atma is as good as dead and is the least

malleable. Here, the allegory is simple —the creature is the iron, the glowing consciousness is the fire, the impinging ‘Gunas’ is the blow of the hammer, and the Atma is the iron smith.

The wheel of the potter moulds the clay into various shapes, but the driving force of the wheel is the potter. Similarly, the three ‘Gunas’ mould the characteristic of the creature, but the Atma is the authority, the potter in this allegory, who drives the three ‘Gunas’. Just as the potter is not the wheel, the Atma is not affected by the three ‘Gunas’, it is just an instrument, an implement to shape the character of the creature. Again, even as a wheel is needed by a potter to give shape to a shapeless clod of clay, the Atma needs the three Gunas to mould the characters of the creatures that constitute this creation.

An important point to note here is that ‘Ahankar’ (ego, false pride, arrogance, haughtiness, hypocrisy and the sense of ‘I’) is the root cause of demoting even the most exalted of souls to an existence equivalent to that of an animal. This is stressed in Jabalu-panishad of Sam Veda tradition which stresses that ‘Isha’ or the supreme Lord of creation had to become a ‘Pashupati’, Lord of animals, just because Ahankar cast its dark shadow on him. An exalted soul too becomes demoted as an animal if he has Ahankar in him.

The concept that ‘I’ is the body and not the ‘pure conscious soul’ leads to ignorance-based ego (Ahanakar). The constant concept of I vis-à-vis the body and this world leads to the sense of possessiveness in the creature. ‘Pure consciousness’ mired by ego becomes ‘a conditioned consciousness’ and fails to remain pure. This is why ego (Ahankar) has been likened to a minister of the king. It directs and regulates the actions of the consciousness which, under its influence, loses its independence. This ‘conditioned consciousness’—working through the mind-intellect-ego combine is called, inter-alia, ‘Chitta’. The word also means memory. Hence this memory acts as a referral library for the intellect. The latter falls back on it and rely on it whenever it is in doubt. The quality of books in the library guides the student; similarly, the quality of inherent tendencies stored in the library of Chitta directly affects the inputs of the intellect, and through it, the mind and successively down the hierarchy to the body and its organs of perception and action.

Although the soul has nothing to do with this command chain, but for all practical purposes the Atma/soul is deemed responsible for it because of its sovereign nature. So, the sincere seeker/aspirant should delineate this conscious from the rest of the chain and break the nexus between them so as to allow the glory of the pure consciousness of the soul to shine through like the splendorous sun breaking through from behind a curtain of clouds. It is like removing the various veils or covers from around the candle so that its light shines through the darkness of the room and illuminates all the corners of it.

The Shwetashwatar Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 4, verse no. 10 describes the relationship between Prakriti, Maya and Gunas in a very succinct manner.

The Upanishads symbolically refer to the three primary colours when they describe these three basic qualities in the creature. They are white for the Sata Guna, red for the Raja Guna, and black for the Tama Guna. Refer—Shwetashatar Upanishad, 4/5; and Paingalo-panishad 1/3.

The Chandogya Upanishad, 3/5/4-3/9 and 6/3-4 uses these three colours to describe the different types of characters called Sata, Raja and Tama defining the three basic types of creatures and their individual personality traits and temperaments that exist in this creation.

The Paingal Upanishad, 1/3-9 of the Shukla Yajur Veda clearly states that these three colours were the ones with which Nature representing creation was born and how the supreme creator had subtly entered the entire creation to be uniformly present in its very minutest of corner.

How the three Gunas were used by Brahm to create this world has been beautifully described in Paingalo-panishad, 1/7 and 2/3. Canto 2, verse no. 3 describes how Sata and Raja were used, while Canto 1, verse no. 7 narrates the use of Tama.

The concept of Gunas affecting the Atma has been elaborately dealt with in various Upanishads, for example the Maitrayanyu Upanishad, 1/11, 2/5, 3/5, etc. of the Sam Veda tradition.]

8-9. The following are described as the characteristic traits of those people who have the first Guna, the Sata, in predominance—Ahinsa (non-violence, non-killing or non-harming in any way, physical and mental), Satya (truthfulness in all its broad connotations, including such noble traits as trustworthiness and honesty), Asteya (non-theft, non-stealing, non-deceit, non-subterfuge, non-sleight and non-slyness), Brahmacharya (celibacy, continence, abstinence, self-restraint, self-control of the organs and the self), Aparagriha (renunciation and detachment, non-hoarding, giving away of superfluous and excessive wealth to those who are needy, making of liberal charities and donations, giving of alms), abandonment of Krodh (forsaking anger and wrathfulness), serving one's Guru (i. e. a person who is one's moral preceptor, teacher and guide), Shuchitaa (cleanliness and purity in all their broad connotations involving the mind, intellect and body), Santosh (contentedness, satisfaction and feeling fulfilled with whatever that is available, without yearning for more endlessly, and feeling restless, agitated, insatiate and greedy as a consequence), Amaanita (lack of pride, ego, haughtiness and arrogance; having humility, piety and simplicity), not to have Dambha (i.e. not to have the negative trait of excessive show of self pride and arrogance; not to be a hypocrite; not to be a bragger, a coxcomb, a boastful and loud-mouthed man, not to be deceitful, sly and an imposter), to have Aastiktaa (i.e. to have firm faith, unwavering conviction and steady belief in the Truth enshrined in ancient wisdom and the tenets of the scriptures; to have unfaltering faith in one's self and one's auspicious goals in life), and to abhor violence of all kind etc. (8-9).

10. The following are described as the characteristic traits of those people who have the second Guna, the Raja, in predominance—to have the notion of being a doer of things, to feel that being the doer of deeds one has the right to enjoy their consequent rewards as fruits of one's labour, to feel that one is the speaker and orator (i.e. one is a wise and scholarly man who is well versed with letters and everyone is eager to hear his wise council on a variety of subjects). In short, to be proud of one's achievements and successes in this world comes under the purview of Raja Guna (10).

11. The following are described as the characteristic traits of those people who have the third Guna, the Tama, in predominance—Nidra (excessive sleep and be drowsiness, leading to inattentiveness and lack of concentration), Aalasya (laziness, lethargy, indolence), Moha (worldly attractions, delusions and their attendant hallucinations), Aasakti (to be greatly infatuated with and mentally and emotionally so intensely attached to the things of this material world that one's whole being is overshadowed by its thoughts), Maithun (to have a conjugal relationship; to constantly delve in sexual subjects and thoughts; to establish a union which does not necessarily mean a sexual union, but involves any kind of infatuation with the material things and sense objects of the world and yearning for sensual gratification; to allow the mind and intellect to continuously think of nothing else but these objects is tantamount to being in constant physical contact with them or having sex with them), and Chaurya (to do things stealthily, to be sly, deceitful, have underhand

dealings, the trait of sleight and subterfuge, to commit theft and steal something not rightly belonging to one's self, etc.) (11).

12. The Sata Guna is regarded as the best quality, the Raja Guna of a medium quality, and Tama Guna as being of the lowest and meanest quality (12).

[Note—In the beginning the elements were neutral. Anything that is 'neutral' does not do anything; it remains dormant and latent no matter how powerful it is. So, when the first spark was injected in the neutral elements by way of creative energy, there was some subtle electric activity in its neutral structure and their atoms began to get polarized just like we have the an-ions and cat-ions when electrolysis of a neutral liquid is done with the help of electrodes. The negative charges of the 'cosmic electrode' are metaphors for the grosser parts of creation and represented by the Tama Guna. At the other extreme are the positive charges forming the subtlest parts of creation and represented by the Sata Guna. In between lie the area of mixed charges symbolising the spread of characters and qualities defined as 'Guna' in varying proportion and hue of colours and characteristic features in a diffused manner—with one end of the spectrum being the positive charges and the other end dominated by the negative charges. Hence, the Raja Guna may be dominated by the Sata or Tama Gunas depending on which of them is the dominant factor in the mixture. So a creature may be doing worldly deeds because of the Raja Guna, but the way he does them and the way he enjoys their rewards would vary widely depending upon which of the two Gunas, the Sata or Tama, is dominant. These Gunas do not exist in watertight compartments or one in exclusion of the other, but they form a complex structure, a complex matrix of Gunas where each has some role to play. How the creature carries himself and uses the knowledge and wisdom available to him depends upon this matrix.

This situation can also be likened to loadstone or natural magnet. It knows only to attract as is proved by the earth which is one big natural magnet. The earth pulls everything that comes within its gravitational and magnetic jurisdiction, and never the opposite—i.e. it would never throw things out into space on its own. But when the same loadstone is given an elongated shape of a bar magnet, it begins to have a north and south poles which attract the opposite pole and repel the similar one.]

13. The knowledge of the eclectic, non-dual, immutable, eternal and absolute Truth of existence (i.e. the knowledge of the cosmic Consciousness that pervades uniformly everywhere and without no notion or concept of 'life' has any meaning) is regarded as Satwic Gyan (or the best and the excellent form of spiritual knowledge and enlightenment which paves the way for a man's self-realisation and his ultimate liberation and deliverance from this world of birth and death marked by ignorance, delusions, horrors and torments that are never ending). This aspect of knowledge and erudition is called 'Satya Gyan' or knowledge of the Truth.

The knowledge pertaining to Dharma (i.e. that knowledge which enlightens the man about his moral obligations, duties and responsibilities as well as making him aware of what are considered as noble, righteous and auspicious virtues, deeds or things in this world) come under the category of Rajsic Gyan (because such knowledge would automatically and naturally inspire him to get involved in doing good deeds and avoiding the bad ones). This aspect of knowledge and erudition is called 'Dharma Gyan' or knowledge of Dharma.

But that knowledge that is covered by a veil of darkness signifying ignorance, stupidity and delusions, leading to all sorts of misconceptions and illusions about the truth and reality, the darkness in which phantoms and ghosts are seen, comes under

the category of 'Tama Gyan', or the knowledge dominated or tainted by darkness (13).

[Note—The word 'Gyan' broadly means knowledge, wisdom, erudition, enlightenment and being aware and informed about anything. The knowledge which tells one the truth and reality of anything or situation would be the 'Sata Gyan' because it does not hide anything and makes an honest and truthful declaration. The Sata Gyan would involve looking at the positive aspect and constructive side of anything or situation. A wise man with the Sata Guna in a dominant ratio would pick up the good part of the body of knowledge or information available to him; he would look at the brighter side of things and research how life can be made better by this knowledge, not only for himself but for the rest of the society as a whole. On the other extreme hand is the Tama Gyan which would be that knowledge that is acquired with an eye to all the negative aspects of anything or situation, how to exploit them for one's vested self interest, even at the cost of others. A man with a predominance of Tama Guna in him would have a natural tendency at picking up the negative and destructive part of the available body of knowledge or information. In between is the Raja Guna which inspires a man to live in this world and take care of it as mandated by the Supreme Creator. If he does it in a righteous and auspicious manner, then it would be 'Dharma Gyan'; otherwise it would be no better than Tama Gyan.]

14. The four states of existence of the consciousness are the following—Jagrat (the waking state), Swapna (the dreaming state), Sushupta (the deep sleep state) and Turiya (the post deep sleep state marked by perpetual bliss as opposed to ordinary deep sleep state which is transient and the creature reverts to his earlier states).

During the Jagrat state of conscious existence of the creature, there are fourteen components of his existence that remain active—viz. the five organs of perception (ear, eye, nose, tongue and skin—see verse no. 2) + the five organs of action (hand, leg, mouth, anus and genital—see verse no. 3) + the four Antahakarans (Mana, Buddhi, Chitta and Ahankar—see verse no. 4) = total of fourteen units.

During the Swapna state of existence of the creature, there is only the Antahakaran having four dimensions (verse no. 4) that remains active, while the other components have been rendered redundant. [This is because when a man sleeps, the external body becomes inactive, and consequentially the five organs of perception and five organs of action too become redundant.]

During the Sushupta state of existence of the creature, only the Chitta remains active. [This is obvious because when a man is sound asleep, even his mind ceases to function as he not even dreams. But he is not dead; all his internal organs are very much alive, active and functioning. This is brought about by the Chitta remaining active. It has already been said in verse no. 4 that this Chitta has its center of activity in the region of the navel from where the different Naadis radiate out to all corners of the body, taking and bringing vital impulses of life to and from distant corners of the body. So the sub-conscious aspect of life remains awake even while the conscious aspect of existence sleeps.]

Finally, during the Turiya state of existence of the creature, even the Chitta becomes redundant, and what remains is the pure conscious Atma of the creature, the pure enlightened 'self' of the creature called the Jiva-Atma (14).

[Note—The four states of existence of the consciousness have been elaborately described in a number of Upanishads, for instance (a) Shukla Yajur Veda—Subalopanishad, Canto 4 full as well as Canto 9, verse no. 1-7; Paingalo-panishad, 2/11-15; Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 2/4-2/5; (b) Krishna Yajur Veda tradition—Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 61-64; Canto 2, verse no. 61-64; Brahmo-panisha,

verse no. 1, 20-21; Kaivalya Upanishad, verse no. 12-14; Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 93/12-93/15; Sarwasaar Upanishad, verse no. 4.]

15. The state of existence that prevails between the two extreme visions of life—one in which the eyes are fully opened in a symbolic manner like in the case of the waking state and the creature sees the world of astounding charm and remains lost in it, and the other in which the eyes are totally closed and one sees nothing at all as in the deep sleep state of existence—is said to be the habitat of the Jiva-Atma, or the consciousness of the creature.

The first state when the eyes are open is when the consciousness interacts with the gross world using its gross organs of perception (such as the eyes to see, ears to hear, tongue to taste, nose to smell and skin to feel and touch) and gross organs of action (such as hands to receive, legs to go and move around, mouth to speak and eat, excretory to eliminate waste, and genitals to reproduce and enjoy). It is when the consciousness is deemed to be alive and living in this world, and therefore it is called 'Jiva'—literally meaning the living being, someone who has life and shows activity.

During the dreaming state, the consciousness might not be actively involved in the physical world with the medium of the gross body, but its subtle body, i.e. the mind-intellect complex, is very much active and involved in creating a world in dreams which might be even more fascinating than the one physically present. The consciousness playing around in this world has no physical involvement of the gross body as it is asleep, so instead of being called an ordinary Jiva, it is now called 'Jiva-Atma' to indicate a transitory stage between the Jiva and its primary form as the Parmatma. The consciousness in the dreaming state has the same emotions and activities as during the actual waking state, it is equally restless and agitated, but the only factor that is missing is the direct involvement of the gross body.

The dreaming state is like the half awake and half asleep state of consciousness or the Atma; it is like the state with eyes half closed and half open. In the dreaming state, the man neither sees this world and remains active in it, nor is he totally devoid of its awareness and remains inactive. This is because even while his gross body is inactive during the dreaming state of sleep, he is very much active on the mental plane or in his subtle level of existence. In other words, though his physical gross body is inactive, his subtle body is very much active in the world of his dreams. But what he sees in his dreams is not remembered by him when he wakes up from his sleep. This fact is expressed in the expression 'half open eyes', while the fact that he remains oblivious of what is happening in the physical world in which he actually lives and which forms the background and basis for his dreams by influencing the sub-conscious is metaphorically represented by the term 'half closed eyes'.

The deep sleep state is when the consciousness does not even dream and the mind-intellect-sub-conscious complex has become defunct along with the gross body. In this state, the consciousness is called 'Parmatma' because the Atma or the pure consciousness exists in its true and real form of having no awareness of the world and being in an extreme state of blissfulness and contentedness, remaining engrossed with its own eternally blissful and contented 'self' which is nothing but the ethereal and divine Consciousness.

Now, in the first case when the eyes are wide open (i.e. the waking state), the Atma (the pure consciousness which is the true identity of the creature) assumes the role of an ordinary Jiva—i.e. a living being who lives and interacts with the gross material world of sense objects as has been stressed above.

In the second case when the eyes are totally closed as in the deep sleep state of existence, the same Atma assumes the role of the supreme Brahm who is not at all concerned with the material world and its delusions and illusive charms but remains in a state of perpetual bliss and contentedness. The Atma assumes a transcendental role here and therefore it is called Parmatma.

Then there is mid-level of existence which is between the two extremes—the so-called state with ‘half open and half closed eyes’. It is symbolic of the state in which the Jiva-Atma lives. To understand this state, we have to understand how and why the Atma is called by three names—viz. the Jiva, the Parmatma, and the Jiva-Atma.

On the one hand is this Atma which acts like an ordinary Jiva (living creature) by enjoying the world and remaining engrossed in it through the medium of the body consisting of the gross and subtle components. This Atma is identified with the body, and hence it is synonymous with the Jiva who remains totally ignorant of its basic exalted nature as the supreme consciousness. This state is symbolised by the ‘open eyes and its equivalence in the waking state of existence’.

On the other extreme end is the consciousness that remains in its pristine pure form as a neutral entity unconcerned with what the body does and is regarded as an image of cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm. This is the pure form of the Atma and it is symbolised by the closed eyes and the deep sleep state of existence which makes the Atma shut-off all delusions created by the world. This Atma is called Parmatma because it exists in a transcendental state of existence.

In between them is the ‘Jiva-Atma’, i.e. the Atma which oscillates between acting like a Jiva on the one end and like the Brahm or Parmatma on the other hand. It shows the character of both the worldly creature by remaining engrossed in the world and enjoying the pleasures derived by the body during the waking state, and also as the wise Atma that is unconcerned with and unencumbered by the world as the situation that prevails while the creature is sound asleep in the deep sleep state of existence when there are no dreams. This middle state of the pure and true ‘self’ is called Jiva-Atma (15).

16. [The following verses narrate how the earlier five basic elements of creation mutated and branched out to create more elements. Thus, from these five elements there arose seventeen at the micro level, and then expanded to twenty five ultimately.]

The body of the creature is called the *Linga Deha*. It consists of the following seventeen dimensions or units or elements—the five organs of perception (ear, eye, nose, tongue and skin) + the five organs of action (hand, leg, mouth, anus and genital) + the five Prans (the five subtle forms of the vital winds present inside the body—such as Pran, Apaana, Samaana, Vyan and Udaana) + one Mana (mind) + one Buddhi (intellect) = seventeen units or elements of creation at the micro level or the level of the individual (16).

[Note—These seventeen units or elements of creation are like the secondary elements that came into being as the process of creation moved forward. They formed the gross body of the creature representing the microcosm. Out of these, five gross organs of perception and five gross organs of action form the ten elements or units of creation which are considered comparatively gross in nature. The other seven, i.e. the five winds, one mind and one intellect are the subtle elements or units of creation at the microcosmic level. Therefore, the former is called the ‘gross body’, and the latter is called the ‘subtle body’.

The phrase *Linga Deha* literally refers to the ethereal form of the corporal body of a creature. But in the context of the Atma which is itself ethereal in form and most

sublime and subtle in nature, it would mean the physical body that it assumes, a body that has gross components as well as subtle components existing side by side.

The Paingalo-panishad, canto 2, verse no. 4 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition describes how this Linga Deha came into being. It states that the supreme Lord created five Koshas or sheaths. They are the following—‘Annamaye Kosh’ or the food sheath, ‘Pranmaye Kosh’ or the vital wind sheath, ‘Manomaye Kosh’ or the mental sheath, ‘Vigyanmaye Kosh’ or the intellect sheath, and ‘Anandmaye Kosh’ or the bliss sheath. [These sheaths cover the Atma or pure conscious self like various coverings or shrouds wrapping any object.]

The Annamaye Kosh is that which was created by the intake of food, was nourished and developed by food, and at the end it finally disintegrates into the basic ingredients that constitute food and merges with the earth element from where the food has derived its original ingredients. This forms the gross body of the creature.

The Pranmaye Kosh consists of the five vital winds (Pran, Apaana, Vyan, Udaan, and Samaan) along with the five organs of actions (hands, legs, mouth, excretory and reproductive).

The Manomaye Kosh consists of the mind and the five organs of perceptions (ears, eyes, nose, tongue and skin), while the Vigyanmaye Kosh consists of the combined apparatus made of the intellect and these five organs of perceptions.

A combination of these three sheaths, i.e. Pranmaye Kosh (vital wind sheath), Manomaye Kosh (the mental sheath) and Vigyanmaye Kosh (the intellect sheath) is what is known as the ‘Linga Deha’ of a creature, or the ethereal form of the corporeal body. This is the subtle body of the creature.]

17. Now the elements or units of creation at the macrocosmic level are being enumerated. Since the creation at this macro level is known as Nature or Prakriti, these are therefore the units of the latter. They are the following—one Mana (mind) + one Buddhi (intellect) + one Ahankar (pride and arrogance) + one Akash element + one air element + one fire element + one water element + one earth element = total of eight elements that cast their shadow on the purity of Nature (just like the shadow of the earth casts its shadow on the bright moon to result in the lunar eclipse).

These elements are called the eight ‘Vikaars’ (literally meaning faults, errors, shortcomings or imperfections) that are present in Nature¹.

Besides these eight Vikaars, there are said to be sixteen more Vikaars of Prakriti or Nature² (17).

[Note--¹This is because primarily and in its basic form, Nature is immaculate and uncorrupted and neutral. When this creation began to take its shape in the cosmic bowls of Nature, the former began influencing the latter and certain subtle changes started to make their appearances in it just like a lady begins to show physical anatomical changes when she becomes pregnant. The immaculate and pristine pure form of Nature becomes affected by the unique attributes of its offspring which was developing in its womb just like a pregnant lady undergoes changes in her body. Now, as the embryo of creation developed, it changed shape continuously, and from the first single cell of the egg and the sperm it develops into a complex structure of the body of the creature. What was a single-cell organism in the beginning of creation (such as the amoeba, paramecium, algae, fungi, bacteria etc.) gradually underwent mutations and transformations, under the influence of various physical and biological evolutionary forces, to grow and develop into the highly complex organisms we have today (such as the human species).

This is a metaphoric way of saying that the primary five elements (verse no. 1) gradually mutated and underwent profound changes, giving out new branches and offshoots, to develop into more and more elements as the cosmic embryo developed. Finally there came into being twenty five elements (verse no. 18-20).

Let us very briefly analyse why the different organs formed out of the basic elements and their relevant functions are classified as ‘Vikaars’ or faults and imperfections vis-à-vis the Atma at the micro level and the Prakriti or Nature at the macro level. For this, one example of the eye is taken. The eye sees things by two methods—either directly or through a viewing glass. Suppose the viewing glass is tinged green, then it is obvious that the entire scene seen by the eye through this glass would be influenced by this colour, and it would be vastly different than what it sees without it. The entire process of seeing is not such a simple mechanism however, for a number of other factors impinge upon it to bend one’s perception of what is seen. Such as for example the factor of mental alertness and whether the mind is focused on the thing seen or it is diverted elsewhere, for in the latter case the brain would not register anything seen at all. Besides this, the general temperament and attitudes of the seer, his general health and especially of the eye, his education, knowledge and level of wisdom, the way he interprets the sight and the importance he assigns to its different aspects, the inherent quality and exterior features of the thing seen and other physical factors such as light and distance etc.—all play their part in the eye seeing anything.

Each slight variation in any one factor would consequentially produce a distorted picture of the real form and nature of the thing seen by the same eye. The result is obvious to imagine—the observer or seer of the sight, i.e. the Atma which is the pure self of the man and the actual entity that does the seeing through the medium of the gross organ of the eye and the subtle organ of the brain, gets various versions of the same scene seen at different times and under different circumstances. This creates confusions for the seer. This idea has been beautifully enunciated in Dhyān Bindu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, verse nos. 93/1-93/15, which describe how and why the immaculate Atma appears to be tainted itself, and why it sees the world as tainted. It uses the analogy of the Atma living in a lotus of coloured petals like someone living in a cell or glass house with coloured walls, and then seeing the world through these tinted walls as much as he himself is being watched by others through the same walls. Obviously, the real colour of the world viewed by the Atma through this enclosure would be tainted by the colour of the petal or wall of the Lotus in which it lives as much as its own pristine and immaculate from getting corrupted when seen by others for the same reason.

Then again, what one makes of a particular sight would invariably vary from what another person makes out of it. For example, a lady is seen as a mother by one man, while another sees her as his wife and still someone else as his sister. So the perception changes, and with it the entire way a creature deals with this world. Refer also to Yogtattva Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, verse no. 131.

This logic applies to all other elements mentioned in these verses.

²The Yogtattva Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 12-13 presents a list of sixteen other faults or imperfections that afflict the creature and thereby taint its otherwise immaculate Atma.

Some of the numerous faults, weaknesses, imperfections, blemishes or shortcomings that affect the character of a Jiva (living being, the creature) and prevent his pure and uncorrupt self, the Atma, from retaining its primarily untainted, pristine pure and immaculate nature and form which is one and non-dual, called the ‘Kaivalya’ state of its existence, are the following—Kaam (worldly desires, passions and lust), Krodh (anger, spite and wrath), Bhaya (fear and consternation), Moha (attractions, attachments, delusions, infatuations, longing), Mada (arrogance, haughtiness and intoxication), Raja (the second of the three qualities creating worldly tendencies and desires related to this world), Janma-Mritu (the cycle of birth and death and its attendant horrors and agonies), Kaarpanya (being stringy and miserly, specially in the field of religious duties such as giving alms and making charities, or supporting such activities; the word would cover miserliness of thoughts in the sense that one does not give the correct knowledge to others out of jealousy), Shok

(sorrows, grief and agonies), Tandra (being sleepy, indolent, lethargic, lazy, careless and showing lack of energy and alertness), Kshudha (hunger, both physical such as for food and the insatiable desire for sensual gratification, as well as emotional such as the insatiable longing for worldly things), Trisha (desires, wishes and yearnings pertaining to the world) [12], Trishna (thirst, ambition, avarice and greed; the word is usually used in the negative sense; it pertains to a man's insatiable desire and greed for worldly things), Lajjaa (shame, dishonour, ignominy), the constant fear of Dukha and its attendant Vishaad (i.e. being constantly tormented by the fear of sufferance from sorrows and grief of all kinds and the attendant agonies and miseries, distresses and a sense of despair and hopelessness and haplessness), Harsha (to feel elated and happy, to be glad and joyous, to feel cheerful and exhilarated by certain situations which seem to be in favour, such as on receiving some good news), etc.

It is only when the creature is freed from the tainting effects of all these faults, blemishes, imperfections and shortcomings that the Atma can realise its one and non-dual pure conscious form, the state of existence called 'Kaivalya'.

These shortcomings, imperfections, taints, blemishes or defects cast a shadow on the character of the Jiva and makes it appear that his Atma, which is his true identity, has these respective shortcomings or defects or imperfections in it. This is because the Atma of the Jiva allows itself to be affected by any or all of these faults and imperfections, forgetting that this is not its true nature but an illusionary scenario created by ignorance of the truth of its primary nature, which is leading it to delusions and its attendant problems. Each fault or imperfection or defect or shortcoming enumerated in these two verses, in association with others and acting in coordination with them in various permutations and combinations create an infinite array and variety of traits of character, temperaments, habits, personalities, attributes, virtues and qualities in all the creatures. The resultant effect is that there is no similarity between any two of them. Thus, the Atma, which is one and the same in all the creatures, appears to be of as many varieties as there are number of creatures. It assumes a dual and varied form; it becomes multifarious and diverse; it loses its non-dual, indivisible and immutable nature. In other words, it has become tainted and full of faults associated with the worldly creature; it has lost its pristine purity and singleness.

The 'perfect' Atma has thus become 'imperfect'; the 'untainted' Atma has been 'tainted'.]

18-20. [These verses describe the twenty five elements or units or dimensions or aspects of creation.]

The five gross organs of perception present in the body such as the ear, skin, eye, tongue and nose make up the five gross units or elements of creation at the micro level of the body of the creature. [Total 5 organs of perception.]

Then there are the five organs of action such as the anus, genital, hand, leg and speech (mouth). These are the five gross organs which add their count to the number of elements or units or dimensions that exist in this creation at the micro level. [Total 5 organs of action.]

Besides these, there are the five subtle sense perceptions such as the perceptions of hearing (relevant to the ear), feeling or touching (relevant to the skin), seeing various forms and shapes (relevant to the eye and the faculty of sight), taste (relevant to the tongue) and smell (relevant to the nose). [Total 5 senses of perception.]

Thus the tally comes to twenty three elements of creation as follows—8 Vikaars (of verse no. 17) + 5 organs of perceptions + 5 organs of action + 5 senses of perceptions (as enumerated in verse nos. 18-19) = total 23 (18-19).

The twenty fourth element or unit or dimension of creation is said to be the invisible and un-manifest cosmic Nature. [This brings the tally to $23 + 1 = 24$.]

And finally, there is the ultimate chief Authority of creation, called the supreme Purush, the Supreme Being, who forms the last unit of creation. This entity is immutable and indivisible, it is non-dual and eternal, it is infinite and imperishable, and it is all-pervading, all-incorporating and all-encompassing. Therefore there is nothing beyond it to count; it is the final frontier; there is nothing that exists beyond it that can be counted as an independent entity superseding the Chief Purush.

Thus we come to the total tally of twenty five elements. [The tally is arrived as follows—23 elements + 1 invisible and un-manifest cosmic Nature (as described in verse no. 18-19) + 1 Supreme Being (as described in verse no. 20) = total 25 elements*.]

In this way, the entire universe or cosmos is made up of twenty five elements.

This is the teaching of this Upanishad; this is what this Upanishad proclaims and unequivocally asserts (20). [18-20].

[Note—The gross body can be studied at various levels depending upon the classification used to study its constitution and structure. The structural elements are variously called the Bhuts, the Dhaatus and the Tattvas.

(a) The *Primary level* of the elements—This consists of the five primary elements called the 'Pancha Mahabhuts'. They were formed at the beginning of creation, and consist of earth, water or fluid, fire or energy, air or wind and sky or space elements in increasing degree of subtlety.

They can be studied at two levels—one at the very core level, and the other at the more general level.

(a) (i) The study of the body at the core level of the five Bhuts consisting of the five primary elements consisting of the sky or space, air or wind, fire or energy, water or fluids, and earth. Refer verse nos. 1-2, and 5-6 of this Upanishad above.

(a) (ii) The next level would be the various Koshas or Sheaths that are made of a combination of these five elements. They are the following—Anna Maye Kosh (the food sheath), Pran Maye Kosh (the vital wind sheath), Manomaye Kosh (the mind sheath), Vigyan Maye Kosh (the intellect sheath), and Anand Maye Kosh (the bliss sheath). These Koshas are also like the elements or units that decide the complexities of the creature's body and its position in the hierarchy of evolution.

All the living organisms can be classified into the following five types depending upon the number of Koshas they have—(i) Udbhij—these are those life forms that are born from seeds, such as members of the plant kingdom. These have only one Kosha, the Anna Maye Kalaa. In other words, they depend on food and become food for others higher up in the evolutionary ladder. (ii) Swedaj—they are those which are born from dampness and sweat, such as fungi, algae, bacteria, germs, mosquito, lice, flies etc. They have two Koshas, viz. Anna Maye and Pran Maye. That is, they are formed from food, they live for food and they die as food. Besides this, they also exhibit signs of life, e.g. the mosquito and lice have life like any other member of the animal kingdom. (iii) Andaj—they are placed higher up in the evolutionary ladder, and are born from eggs, whether inside the mother's womb or outside. Such birds as pigeon, sparrow, parrot, peacock etc. come under this category. They have three Koshas which are Anna Maye, Pran Maye and Mano-maye. The last Kosh refers to the fact that such creatures have a mind and heart which enables them to think, albeit in a primitive level. (iv) Jaruyuj—these are the creatures that are born as embryo that develops inside the mother's womb. Under this class come the animals such as horses, cows, dogs, elephants etc. They have four Koshas, such as Anna Maye, Pran Maye, Mano-maye and Vigyan Maye. The last Kosh refers to their ability to have a higher level of thinking ability called intelligence. The human being comes under this last category with the added benefit of having five Koshas. Besides the four Koshas

mentioned above in other creatures of this category, the man has the fifth one and it called the Anand Maye Kosh. It is only possessed by a man and not by other creatures in the sense that the man can realise the true meaning of the terms ‘bliss and happiness that is eternal and substantial’ by the virtue of his attaining higher level of intelligence and his ability to delve into the secrets of the concept of truth itself and then realising that kind of happiness and bliss that is not superficial and which is not limited to enjoyment of the sensual pleasures of the body and the material comforts of the world, but which has a holistic and all-inclusive dimension that incorporates the spirit or the soul.

(b) The *secondary level* of study of the body and its structure would be at the level of the Tattvas. It consists of the Linga Deha made up of the seventeen Tattvas which are seventeen dimensions or units or elements that constitute it—the five organs of perception (ear, eye, nose, tongue and skin) + the five organs of action (hand, leg, mouth, anus and genital) + the five Prans (the five subtle forms of the vital winds present inside the body—such as Pran, Apaana, Samaana, Vyaana and Udaana) + one Mana (mind) + one Buddhi (intellect) = seventeen units or elements of creation at the micro level. [Reference Shaarirako-panishad, verse no. 16.]

The gross body can be further classified as consisting of twenty three elements. They are the following—

(1) The five gross organs of perception present in the body such as the ear, skin, eye, tongue and nose make up the five gross units or elements of creation at the micro level of the body of the creature. [Total 5 organs of perception.]

(2) Then there are the five organs of action such as the anus, genital, hand, leg and speech (mouth). These are the five gross organs which add their count to the number of elements or units or dimensions that exist in this creation at the micro level. [Total 5 organs of action.]

(3) Besides these, there are the five subtle sense perceptions such as the perceptions of hearing (relevant to the ear), feeling or touching (relevant to the skin), seeing various forms and shapes (relevant to the eye and the faculty of sight), taste (relevant to the tongue) and smell (relevant to the nose). [Total 5 senses of perception.]

(4) The eight Vikaars such as one Mana (mind) + one Buddhi (intellect) + one Ahankar (pride and arrogance) + one Akash element + one air element + one fire element + one water element + one earth element = total of eight elements that cast their shadow on the purity of Nature (just like the shadow of the earth casts its shadow on the bright moon to result in the lunar eclipse). These elements are called the eight ‘Vikaars’ (literally meaning faults, errors, shortcomings or imperfections) that are present in Nature and affect the basic nature of all living beings.

Thus the tally comes to twenty three elements of creation as follows—5 organs of perceptions + 5 organs of action + 5 senses of perceptions + 8 Vikaars = total 23. [Reference Shaarirako-panishad, verse no. 17-19.]

(c) The next level of study of the body is the *tertiary level*. The tertiary elements that constitute the body all living beings would be the following nine—the three Gunas such as the Sata which the best quality in creation, the Raja which is the medium quality, and the Tama which is the lowest quality (refer Shaarirako-panishad, verse nos. 7-13), and the six aspects of Anatahakarans which is the inner self of the creature consisting of the sub-conscious or conscience that governs his innate character. The five aspects of Anthahakaran are the following (1) Mana or mind, (2) Buddhi or intellect, (3) Chitta or the faculty of concentration and memory; knowledge and consciousness, (4) Ahankar or ego, pride, arrogance, (5) Vrittis or inherent character, traits, habits, inclinations and temperaments of a creature based on these basic components of the subtle body—refer Paingalo-panishad, Canto 2, verse no. 3), and (6) the various Vasanas (worldly passions, lusts and yearnings—Muktiko-panishad, Canto 2). The total comes to 3 + 6 = 9. These nine decide the inherent character and basic nature and temperament of the creature.

(d) The 7 Dhaatus—The structural features of the gross physical body consists of the so-called seven Dhaatus. These stand for the structural constituent of the body which supports and sustains its existence. According to ancient Indian system of medicine, they are the following—(1) Rasa (lymph and mucous; sap), (2) Rakta (blood), (3) Maansa (flesh), (4) Meda (fat and muscles), (5) Ashthi (bones and cartilage), (6) Meja (marrow), and (7) Shukra (semen).

According to other interpretations, these seven Dhaatus which form the structural features of the gross body and give it its shape and support it are the following—(1) all forms of fluid ingredients such as blood, urine, mucous, lymph etc, (2) bone and cartilage, (3) marrow, (4) flesh, fat and muscles, (5) abdominal organs such as stomach etc, (6) skin, and (7) Naadis (arteries, veins, capillaries and nerves).

(e) The structure of the body as explained in the Upanishads can be easily understood when we analyse it in the context of modern science of chemistry. This gross body of a creature can be compared to the molecular structure of any chemical substance or any thing in this world for that matter that is made up of certain basic elements. The molecules are also not visible to the naked eye just like the ingredients of the body mentioned above except some of them such as the skin and mucous much like the external features of the finished chemical product.

At the next level comes the atomic structure, or the subtle level of constitution of the body. It is like the atoms of any chemical molecule that make up the basic building blocks or units of that molecule. For example, Benzene has a hexagonal structure which would be like the gross structure of the creature's body called the Dhaatu, while the Carbon and Hydrogen atoms (C_6H_6) that go in to form the basic and fundamental ingredients of Benzene are like its subtle structure called the Bhut.

To understand how one element can transform itself into so many forms, we can take the example of *isomerism* in chemistry. It has been explained at length in note of verse no. 6 of this Upanishad above.

*The Maho-panishad of Sam Veda, in its Canto 1, verse no. 5 gives a list of the twenty-four Tattvas in the specific sequence as follows—the five sense organs of perception (eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin) [these are the 1st five Tattvas]+ the five sense organs of action (hand, leg, mouth, excretory and reproductive) [these are the 2nd five Tattvas]+ one Mana (mind) [this is the 11th Tattva] + one Ahankar (pride and ego) [this is the 12th Tattva] + one Pran (vital airs or life-giving winds) [this is the 13th Tattva] + one Atma (consciousness) [this is the 14th Tattva] + one Buddhi (intellect) [this is the 15th Tattva] + the five Tanmatras (the five subtle senses of perception such as sight, hearing, taste, smell and feeling or touching) [these are the 16th to 20th Tattvas] + the five primary elements called the Panch Bhuts (earth, water, fire, air and sky) [these form the 21st to 25th Tattvas] = total twenty five Tattvas. {5 + 5 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 5 + 5 = 25.}

Refer Taittiriya Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Valli 1, Anuvak 7 in this context.]

-----Shanti Paath-----

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Chapter 21

Yogshikha Upanishad/Yogshikho-panishad

The Yogshikha Upanishad has six elaborate Cantos dealing with the concept of Yoga. The word 'Shikha' literally means 'a peak, a crest, an apex, a flame, the highest point'. Hence the composite word obviously refers to the knowledge which helps the wise person who possesses it to reach the climax of spiritual achievements that is possible by employing Yoga as a tool for this purpose. This eclectic knowledge ignites the hidden potentials in him like a flame of light that removes the darkness of ignorance and its attendant delusions.

Yoga and Gyan are the two famous paths of Brahm realisation or becoming knowledgeable about the ultimate, immutable and absolute Truth of creation. This Brahm realisation is equivalent to 'self' realisation because the Atma or the pure consciousness of all living beings and the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm are one and the same. This Upanishad presents a magnificent judicious mix of metaphysical philosophy of Yoga based on the principles of Vedanta along with the Tantra philosophy of Yoga and its practical aspect of exercises and meditation techniques.

This Upanishad is one of the 'revealed Upanishads' because it was revealed by Lord Shiva to Brahma the creator. Shiva is an expert ascetic and the patron God of all ascetics as well as the Lord who controls the function of bringing the creation to a conclusion; he is regarded as the greatest spiritual teacher, highly self-realised, most enlightened and the wisest amongst the Gods.

This Upanishad is very similar to other Upanishads on Yoga, such as Jabal Darshan, Yogchudamani, Paingal and Yogkundali. The Yogtattva Upanishad, which is Chapter 17 of this volume, is of special interest because both these two Upanishads are revealed ones—the present one, the Yogshikha, is revealed by Lord Shiva who is not only the greatest ascetic himself but also the patron God of all ascetics and is considered as the universal moral preceptor or Guru of all living beings in this creation, while the other one, the Yogtattva was preached by Lord Vishnu who is the protector and sustainer of this creation besides being the Viraat Purush himself personified. In both the cases however the one who is preached is Lord Brahma who is the creator of this visible world as well as all knowledge required to guide the creatures and encoded in the form of the Vedas. Therefore, with such enlightened and all-knowing teachers and a disciple who himself is no less wise, these two Upanishads act as the two prime treatises on Yoga.

Another interesting spin-off of this fact is that all the concepts of Yoga as narrated in this Upanishad are pregnant with both the Vedanta philosophy as well as the Tantra philosophy—in fact it presents a comprehensive amalgam of both of them, and herein lie its beauty. It brings under one umbrella various Yoga concepts which have been mentioned in a brief and succinct language because the listener is Brahma who himself was wise and learned and needed no great explanation at length. So elaborate notes have been appended to the verses as and when required for the purpose of our study so that these concepts are easily understood by the reader as he goes along with the main text.

The probable reason why Brahma approached Shiva to preach him on Yoga though Brahma was himself no less wise as he had created the Vedas which are considered as the repositories of all knowledge is the fact that Shiva was an expert

Yogi and therefore considered as the wisest teacher on the subject who had put into practice the teaching of the Vedas created by Brahma who had only a theoretical knowledge of the subject. Shiva was deemed to be more competent and expert on the subject of Yoga with all its different connotations. Besides this, this format of question and answer was a standard method of collating and bringing together in a cohesive, comprehensive and easy to understand format a vast array of information and knowledge pertaining to any given metaphysical subject which was otherwise spread across the large volumes of the numerous scriptures and therefore hitherto inaccessible for an ordinary person. Hence, this Yogshikha Upanishad is like a pocket ready-reckoner on the subject of Yoga taught by Shiva, the wisest and most enlightened teacher of the subject being the patron God of all ascetics, to Brahma the creator who himself was an equally wise and enlightened disciple God as he is the one who has created all the four Vedas which are repositories of all available knowledge in creation, but who has assumed a role of a disciple for the sake of knowledge.

The very fact that Brahma had thought it fit and proper to approach Shiva to hear and learn the secrets and profound tenets of metaphysics and spiritualism inspite of being the creator of the world and all its knowledge himself proves that Shiva is superior to him and therefore fits the bill of being Maheshwar or the 'Great God' perfectly. It also shows that knowledge is not an exclusive domain of any single person matter how enlightened and wise he might be, and a truly wise man is one who continues to seek knowledge from whatever source it is available and in any form throughout his life; there should be no element of shame in it or the feeling of being inferior to others in terms of the level of knowledge.

Amongst the numerous interesting facts narrated in this Upanishad are the genesis of the spoken word and the different notes of music as described in verse nos. 2-9 of Canto 3 along with the concept of Bindu and Naad which have been elaborately dealt with in Canto 1, verse nos. 105, 167, 178, Canto 2, verse nos. 6, and Canto 3, verse nos. 1-10. An astounding array of metaphors and analogies has been cited in Canto 4 to describe what Brahm is. The human body is treated as a holy city and the abode of both Lords Vishnu and Shiva. This city has ten doors, ten avenues, ten life forces moving on these avenues, six city circles called Chakras, six forests or green belts, four Peeths or pedestals, four lamp posts and two signs. These have been described in Canto 1, verse nos. 72, 165-167, and Canto 5, verse nos. 2-5.

The importance of Gyan (truthful knowledge) vis-à-vis Agyan (ignorance or lack of knowledge), and their relationship with Yoga (meditation and bringing about a fusion between the various aspects of Truth) have been elaborately explained in Canto 1, verse nos. 1-80. The detailed process of Yoga with all its various limbs and branches have been discussed in the rest of the verses of Canto 1. Canto 2 describes why and how a Mantra is regarded as a symbol or Linga of Divinity here represented by Lord Shiva. Canto 3 elucidates upon the finer aspects of Naad (the cosmic vibrations from which the dynamic energy of creation emerged) as a symbolic manifestation of Brahm; Canto 4 deals with the metaphysical question of relationship between Brahm, the Supreme Being, and the individual creature called the Jiva; it explains the concept of non-duality or Advaitya by citing various instances. Canto 5 is a sort of reiteration of what has been said in the four preceding Cantos.

Canto 6 deals with the concept of Naadis and the movement of Pran in them, the activation of the various Chakras, the location of different divine Shaktis (energies) in the body itself, how one does an involuntary Japa (repetition) using the Mantra 'Hans' and the significance of it, importance of Mana (mind) and Chitta (sub-conscious), the role of Ahankar (ego and pride), and how the practitioner of Yoga can

achieve true Mukti (liberation and deliverance, emancipation and salvation) and ‘dissolution of the self’ by following its tenets.

It would be also observed that Canto 5 has an uncanny resemblance to Canto 1, verse nos. 162-178, Canto 2, verse nos. 12-22, and Canto 3, verse nos. 1-12. The fact that the same concepts are repeated once again shows one of two probabilities—either Shiva had preached Brahma on two separate occasions, or he had repeated the concepts to drive home their great importance and significance.

-----Shanti Paath-----

Please refer appendix no. 1 for the meaning of this Shanti Paath.

Canto 1

1. Once, Brahma (the creator) went to Lord Shiva (the expert ascetic and the patron God of all ascetics as well as the lord of conclusion of creation; the greatest spiritual teacher, one who is self-realised, and is regarded as the wisest amongst the Gods) and politely asked him, ‘Oh Lord! All the creatures are tied in strong fetters created by Maya (ignorance-caused delusions and their attendant problems in this world). These fetters trap them in a web or net of Sukha and Dukha (i.e. in a continuous cycle of happiness, pleasures, comforts and joys on the one hand, and sorrows, miseries, agonies and grieving on the other hand). They are not able to break free from this net, are constantly buffeted by them and suffer as a consequence.

Please describe the way that they can find liberation and deliverance from it (1).

[Note—Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 4-5 of Chapter 17 of this volume.

The concept of Maya has been explained at length elsewhere in other Upanishads of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition in this volume—viz. as a note of verse no. 13 of Kaivalya Upanishad which is Chapter 4, Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse no. 87 and its note which is Chapter 16, and Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 33 and its note which is Chapter 14.]

2. Tell me that path which is a panacea of all ills, the path that bestows all successes and Siddhis (mystical powers that one automatically acquires upon spiritual elevation), that is powerful enough to break the fetters created by Maya (delusions) and liberate the trapped creature, that can eliminate such horrors as birth, death, old age and various diseases that torment him, and which can provide happiness and spiritual comforts to the creature’ (2).

3. When Hiranyagarbha (Brahma) asked this question, Lord Maheshwar (literally the great Lord, the great Ishwar, Lord Shiva) replied—‘The best form of liberation and deliverance which is rare and only one of its kind is called ‘Kaivalya’—the only one. This supreme stature of existence for the creature’s soul is called ‘Param Pada’, the most exalted and eclectic state of existence. There are not myriad of ways to reach it; there is only one way. If attempt is made to take numerous paths to reach this eclectic stature, it becomes all the more difficult to attain it; it goes beyond reach. [This is like

the case of jumping from boat to boat in order to reach the other side of the river, or the case of too many cooks spoiling the broth.] (3).

[Note—Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 5-6 of Chapter 17 of this volume..]

4. Oh the one created out of the divine lotus¹ (i.e. Brahma)! This Kaivalya Pada is obtainable only by following the path called ‘Siddhi Marg’ or the path that is spiritually liberating and paves the way for acquisition of certain divine and mystical authority, power and prowess that are natural to such spiritual attainment. There are no other alternatives.

A person who thinks himself to be intelligent and learned gets entangled in the web created by the numerous scriptures and the various versions of the same path shown by them. He tries to be logical and derive rational ways to achieve his goal by delving in the voluminous tomes of the scriptures and spending his lifetime trying to unravel their secrets, without reaching any conclusion. This creates confusion and perplexities for him; he gets bogged down with uncertainties, gets flummoxed with contradictory interpretations of the scriptures and their doctrines, and consequentially instead of crossing the ocean he gets drowned in it (4).

[Note—¹According to Purans, the mythological ancient histories of the Hindus, Brahma the creator of the visible world was born atop a divine lotus that emerged from the navel of Lord Vishnu, the macrocosmic manifestation of the Supreme Being, while he lay reclining on the bed of the huge serpent floating on the surface of the legendary ocean of celestial milk called the ‘Kshir Sagar’.]

5. The supreme entity (known as Brahm) that is the target of all spiritual research and practices is self-illuminated (like the celestial sun). Say, can it ever be illuminated by the scriptures? Can anyone ever hope to see that eternal source of light by the help of a candle light?

That supreme transcendental entity is ‘Nishkal’, i.e. it is without any blemishes, taints, faults and corruptions that are the dominant characteristics of this world. It is ‘Nirmal’, i.e. it is immaculate, pure, clean and taintless. It is ‘Shaanta’, i.e. it is peaceful, tranquil, serene, calm, unruffled and rested. It is ‘Sarwateet’, i.e. it is transcendental and beyond everything in existence. It is ‘Niramaye’, i.e. it is free from all the symbolic ailments that afflict and torment the rest of the manifested world and its creatures; it is free from all spiritual diseases and warts that ail and deform the rest of the creation (5).

[Note—Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 7-8 of Chapter 17 of this volume.]

6. When the same immaculate and neutral, supreme and transcendental entity which has no gross forms and worldly attributes assumes the role of a Jiva (a living being with a gross body), it gets surrounded by the veil cast by deeds and their consequences¹.

The supreme transcendental cosmic consciousness called the Parmatma, the supreme Soul, is eternal and non-dual. Say how can it become a Jiva?

[That is, even the Supreme Being who created this myriad and colourful world himself, if he allows himself to be charmed by its deceptive nature and lured by its enticing attractions, and get confused by doubts as to what is the reality and what is not, he would become like an ordinary Jiva or an ordinary living being who lives in this mirage-like world and remains perpetually trapped in its web of illusions and delusions. It is like the case of the presence of water in the mirage seen in a hot desert—the water is obviously not there, but a man who sees that mirage would swear by his life that he is actually seeing real water.] (6).

[Note—¹The Skanda Upanishad succinctly describes this concept of Jiva and Brahm. Refer Chapter 19. Briefly, when the supreme consciousness, which is essentially ethereal and formless, begins to think that it has a gross identity marked by the presence of the gross body and the world around it, it gets mired and entangled by the web of deeds done by the body and the various relationships that it develops with this artificial and deluding world. As every action will necessarily have a relevant reaction, there is created a chain of deeds and their consequences. This acts like an iron-shackle for the otherwise pure, ethereal and inherently liberated consciousness, bogging it down like an ordinary creature of the world called a Jiva.

Refer also to Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 9 and 11 of Chapter 17 of this volume.]

7. That great Lord called Mahadev (referring to the Supreme Being) is beyond the reach of the world created by various elements called *Tattvas*¹; he transcends the definitions of the world bounded and limited by various *Tattvas*.

He is beyond the purview and reach of all material things as well as all places in existence. [This is because he surrounds everywhere from the outside like a boundary wall, and there is no creation outside the limits created by this Mahadev.]

He is beyond all notions and concepts, as well as of honours and epithets. He is an embodiment of Gyan (truthful knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment). He is without any blemishes and faults (7).

[Note—¹The various *Tattvas* have been described in Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 12-13 which is Chapter 17, and in Sharrirako-panishad, verse nos. 16, 18-20 which is Chapter 20 of this volume.]

8. [This verse describes the initial phases of creation. Refer also to Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 9.]

In that neutral cosmic ethereal entity which primarily had no sign of activity, there appeared some form of subtle and almost imperceptible wave-like movement as it is usually seen in the movement of air. [When the static air begins to move, it is so subtle and soft that it almost passes notice until the time it gathers sufficient energy and speed to be felt by the skin as breeze. No one can actually 'see' the waves in the air, but it is an undeniable fact of science that sound travels from one point to the other point in the form of waves in air. When these waves gather speed, we can actually hear their movements in the form of a howl of wind blowing across our ears, and we can actually feel its movement against our faces.]

The next thing to happen was the creation of 'Ahankar', i.e. the subtle element that marks such traits as having a sense of pride, ego and haughtiness that are hidden in the bosom of the creature and influence his character. [It should be noted here that Ahankar is also one of the four components that make up the inner self or the Antahakaran of all living beings or Jiva. Refer Shaarirako-panishad, verse no. 4 of Krishna Yajur Veda.]

Then came into being a Pinda or an egg-like entity (the cosmic embryo) consisting of five primary subtler elements (such as the earth, water, fire, air and sky), and enclosed by the shell of grosser elements (such as blood, flesh, bones, marrow, veins and nerves etc.)¹.

Since there was a definitive shape and structure of this cosmic egg, however invisible and subtle it was, it was bound to have certain Gunas, or virtues and qualities, which were characteristic to it, and which would determine the unique nature, personality and character of the would-be offspring that would emerge from this cosmic egg in due course². (8).

[Note—Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 10, 12-13 of Chapter 17 of this volume.

²These Gunas are three in number, such as Sata, Raja and Tama. They have been briefly outlined in Sharrirako-panishad, verse no. 7-13 of Chapter 20 of this volume.]

9. When this happened, the supreme primary entity that primarily had been neutral and without any attributes tainting its inherently immaculate nature and pristine pure character now got tainted and was influenced by so many factors that it got deluded into thinking that it is assumed a form with certain Gunas or attributes and qualities (as described in verse no. 8 above). It began to think that something has come into being with a definite character and attribute.

What was that which came into being? It was an egg inside which there was an embryo with a certain shape and form and texture (as described in verse no. 8), and it was surrounded by a shell. This embryo later hatched into a living being or creature with a body. So the supreme Brahm or Parmatma began to identify himself as a Jiva with a gross body. [The shell of the cosmic egg transformed into the grosser protective layer of the skin, flesh and bones of the newly born Jiva or the living creature, and the embryo itself formed this Jiva. Naturally therefore, all the ingredients that helped give the embryo its shape and identity transferred themselves into the new Jiva. How the elements shaped the body of the Jiva have been clearly described in Sharrirako-panishad, verse nos. 1-13.]

Hence, the very thought of the Parmatma, the Supreme Being or Brahm, that he has got such and such qualities or possesses certain attributes made him believe that he was a Jiva, the living being. Otherwise, the Parmatma is supreme and transcendental, remaining free from any limitations and definitions that are artificially created when some or the other attribute or quality is assigned to any given entity. The Parmatma is beyond the purview of any kind of definition and attribute which act like taints upon his immaculate nature. [Something that is perfect and absolute, that is infinite, indescribable and beyond comprehension would be scarred by being delineated, encased and limited if one were to assign certain specific attributes to it because each quality or attribute has its inherent limitations and gives a fixed idea of what it means, and would therefore imply that the entity under study is limited by this particular attribute, that the attribute in question defines it and draws a line around it, that this particular attribute is its defining quality which dominates its character and is more important than the other qualities. This sort of limits something that is limitless; it sort of limits something within certain definitions and criterions. For instance, if we say that there is light in the room, then the question arises what type of light is it, what is its intensity and colour, what is the source, was there darkness before it, is it sufficient etc. Suppose one says that the Supreme Being is all-knowing, then the question arises why is this particular quality being highlighted? Does it mean that the Supreme Being's main quality is being all-knowing and the other qualities are of lesser significance? If we say the ocean is salty then someone would say 'how salty'? In short, something that cannot be defined is best left alone as being indefinable, and no specific attributes ought to be assigned to it because this would be tantamount to imposing limitations on it and drawing a defining parameter wall around it] (9).

[Note—The very fact that the Parmatma lost his neutrality and began to think in terms of possessing the three Gunas (Sata, Raja and Tama), or having a gross body that lives in this world and interacts with it, a body that can enjoy or suffer and that does deeds and expects results from such deeds, or that the world actually exists at all inspite of being omniscient and all-knowing about the truth of creation, and so on and so forth, it is natural that he fell from his exalted stature of being 'supreme'. It is then that this Parmatma becomes a Jiva or an ordinary living being. Conversely, if the Jiva

realises the truth and disassociates himself from the delusions created by this world and the body, if he is able to overcome the various taints and imperfections typical of this life and as enumerated in the Upanishads, then it is natural that such a Jiva rises to the exalted stature of being a Parmatma. In brief, when the Atma is engrossed in the world and its accompanying delusions, it is called a Jiva, and if it is able to realise its true nature by 'self-realisation' it elevates itself to the exalted stature of a Parmatma.]

10-11. [These two verses list the numerous faults and shortcomings in the character and mental setup of the creature which prevents the latter from becoming one like the supreme Lord of creation because they act as drags on his spiritual upliftment, pulling the individual's soul towards this mundane world rather than allowing it to go higher to reach for the sky of spiritual achievement.]

Some of the inherent faults, shortcomings, imperfections and drawbacks that mire the creature's spiritual progress and pull him down from reaching the high of spiritual achievement that would make him equivalent to the supreme Soul of creation are the following—Kaam (worldly desires, lust, passions etc. and the attending greed, yearnings and aspirations that they create in their wake), Krodh (anger, indignation, wrathfulness and a sense of vengeance when desired results are not obtained and aspirations are not fulfilled), Bhaye (fear, consternation and perplexities arising out of uncertainties, confusions and other factors such as fear from death and enemy, fear of failure and its attending shame, fear of sufferings of the body due to old age and diseases etc.), Moha (delusions that create a sense of attachment, infatuation and belonging to this material world and attractions for the illusive charms that its sense objects offer, along with their sensual pleasures and comforts), Lobha (greed, rapacity and yearnings), Mada (arrogance, false pride, hypocrisy and haughtiness), Raja (the quality of remaining engrossed in this world of material objects, to think that one is the doer of deeds and therefore is entitled to the rewards of these deeds etc.), the problems associated with the cycle of Janma and Mrityu (birth and death), Kaarpanya or Kripantaa (to be miserly and pinch-fisted, shallow-hearted and small-minded, frugal, illiberal, niggardly, avaricious, stingy), Shok (grief, sorrows, miseries and agonies of all kinds), Standra (sleepiness, lethargy, indolence, drowsiness, sluggishness and lack of alertness especially when doing some important or dangerous work requiring concentration of mind, vigilance and alertness of the faculties), Kshudha (hunger) and Pipasa (thirst) [10],-----

-----Tirshnaa (thirst for acquiring and enjoying worldly things and desire for self gratification; greed, avarice and rapacity for the material world and its sense objects and their enjoyments), Lajja (shame at doing something dishonourable and ignominious) and its attendant fear of losing face, self respect, dignity and position in society, all sorts of Dukha and Vishaad (sorrows, miseries, agonies, grieving, lamentations, feeling of gloom and guilt, melancholy, sadness, depression, dejection, low-spirited etc.), and Harsh (the opposite of Dukha and Vishaad; the feeling of elation, happiness, joy, ecstasy and exhilaration; to feel glad, cheerful and joyous).

These are the shortcomings or imperfections that cast their shadow on the otherwise immaculate and perfect Atma of the creature, thereby miring it in a number of unwarranted problems and separating it from its pure nature. Until the creature is freed from their clutches or tainting effects, he cannot ever hope to become as pure as the Shiva, i.e. the creature cannot attain his true primary nature which is pristine pure, uncorrupt, truthful, auspicious, neutral and beautiful like the form of Shiva [11]. (10-11).

[Note—These two verses list 19 faults that mire the creature's Atma. Refer also Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 11-14 of Chapter 17.]

12. Therefore it is essential to get rid of these faults and destroy them. Now I shall tell you the ways to do so. Some say that only Gyan (knowledge) is the proper instrument to effect this riddance. But simply Gyan is not sufficient to do so; it cannot alone provide the mystical powers necessary to achieve success in self-realisation and understanding the pure nature of the pure conscious Atma (12).

[Note—Refer also to verse no. 48 of this Canto as well as to verse no. 14 of the Yogtattva Upanishad which is Chapter 17 of this volume.]

13. Gyan devoid of Yoga is also equally incompetent to provide liberation and deliverance from the horrors of the above faults. Similarly, Yoga devoid of Gyan is also equally incompetent to do so. In other words, they have to go hand in hand if the spiritual aspirant is serious about obtaining success in his spiritual venture (13).

[Note—Refer also Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 14-15 of Chapter 17.]

14. Hence, those who are sincere about spiritual liberation and deliverance should painstakingly practice both Yoga and Gyan with equal steadfastness and diligence. [This is because if Gyan can enlighten a person about the Truth, follow up action in the way of practicing what has been learnt from the reading of the scriptures is equally important. Simple knowledge is as useless as mere blind pursuance of any line of action. The word 'Yoga' means to bring about a union or fusion of two entities. Hence, if Gyan can enlighten a man about the Truth and Reality of existence from the metaphysical perspective, Yoga would help him to actually reach this Truth and Reality by making diligent and synchronized efforts and maintaining a steady progress on this path. What good is any knowledge if it is not actually practices, and how can one practice if one does not know the correct way and the detailed method to be followed?]

The importance of Gyan in attaining Brahm cannot be underestimated or undermined. The reason is as follows—The attainment of the supreme transcendental Truth known as Brahm as well as the reality about one's own 'true self' as the pure conscious Atma is only possible by following the correct path and having the correct knowledge as to what they really mean and actually constitute of. This is known by the medium of Gyan and no other means. Therefore in a sense and metaphorically, Gyan and Brahm are synonymous with each other. If one has true spiritual knowledge or Gyan it is implied that he knows about Brahm and is a self-realised person. Others who pretend to have Gyan and do not have this knowledge are mere fraudulent pretenders and cunning imposters.

The way to such an eclectic and divine holy entity known as Brahm and the Atma is by the path of Gyan. It is holy path that is knowledge-based. [One cannot hope to reach one's goal by following a wrong path that is not compatible to one's aim. For example, one cannot hope to become a medical doctor by studying engineering. So if one wishes to become aware of Brahm, one has to follow the correct path that leads to it, and that path is acquisition of correct knowledge of what or who Brahm is. For, if one does not have the basic knowledge, erudition and wisdom, neither would he know what to do and how to reach his goal, nor would he recognise the symptoms of his progress in the correct direction, and whether or not he has actually obtained success when he has reached his spiritual goal of Brahm-realisation and self-realisation.]

Hence, primarily Gyan is the basic path or means to Brahm. It is Gyan which enlightens the spiritual aspirant as to what or who Brahm is, what methods are available to reach this divine spiritual goal of life, which option is the most suitable for the individual, what are the benefits of following this path and what rewards await him on attaining or reaching his spiritual destination known as Brahm (14).

[Note—Refer also Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 14-15 of Chapter 17.]

15. A person desirous of Moksha (spiritual liberation and deliverance, emancipation and salvation) should first understand what is ‘Agyan’ (ignorance and lack of correct knowledge of the reality and truth; the reverse of Gyan). Once one knows what constitutes Agyan, then the latter no longer remains Agyan; it becomes a sort of Gyan (knowledge)¹.

When the ignorance about one’s true self and its nature are removed, one becomes aware of the pure and supreme nature of the ‘self’ and its most exalted and eclectic stature. It is such a unique entity that it has no match and parallel, hence it is incomparable and unmatched. Therefore it is called ‘Kaivalya Param Pada’, i.e. the only state of existence of the ‘true self’ that is the best and supreme in nature, and is consequentially free from the various faults that have been enumerated above (in verse no. 10-11). This is true spiritual ‘Gyan’² (15).

[Note—¹When one becomes aware of anything, he does not come within the ambit of the word ‘ignorant’. So when a spiritual aspirant becomes aware of the fact that he lacks certain knowledge, then he cannot be described as a completely ignorant man—for he is aware of the limitations, shortcomings or imperfections. If he is a wise man, he would now endeavour to remove them. But the first step towards this endeavour is his knowledge that he has these limitations, shortcomings and imperfections. Therefore, in the primary stage he might be ‘ignorant’ of the path and the goal and hence labeled as an ‘Agyani’ or an ignorant man who is not aware of this path and the goal, but technically he is not an Agyani; he indeed ‘has knowledge’ of his shortcomings and limitations. This would make him feel humble and eager to overcome his lack of knowledge. In a similar vein, suppose a man has an expert knowledge of everything but he is full of pride, ego and an exaggerated sense of self-importance and vanity which makes him arrogant and haughty of his erudition, skills, wisdom and sagacity, then he is worse off than a totally ignorant man. In fact, such a man comes within the definition of being an Agyani—an ignorant man.

If one is not aware of one’s goal, he would not even attempt to reach it. This is the height of ignorance. When one becomes aware that one is unaware of this knowledge of one’s goal, then this marks the first step towards knowledge, for then one would strive to find out what the goal is. The next step would be to find out the path or the way to reach that goal. This is where the role of Gyan comes in—to enlighten one about his true spiritual goal in life and how to reach it. But merely knowledge wouldn’t take one to the goal, for action is needed. This is where Yoga comes into play. The exercises of Yoga and the contemplation and meditation that it incorporates in its ambit are the tools in this spiritual pursuit. Yoga means ‘union’, hence it brings about a union between the traveler and the destination; it establishes a link between the spiritual aspirant and his goal of spiritual enlightenment and self-realisation leading to Moksha which is liberation and deliverance of the soul from the endless cycle of birth and death and its attendant horrors, and its final emancipation and salvation. This is the main function of Yoga in the spiritual sphere.

If the Gyan (knowledge) is imperfect, for example if the man chooses the wrong destination or boards the wrong train, the entire exercise proves a nuisance for him; he was better off being ignorant because in both the case he never finds his real goal. He was better off being totally ignorant because he was at peace with himself as the sub-conscious wasn’t nagging him as he was unaware of his lack of knowledge and

therefore could be excused due to his innocence. But once he becomes aware of his shortcomings, he must make efforts to remove them for after becoming aware he cannot be excused of his shortcomings on the ground of being innocence. Now, if he follows the wrong path and incompetent advice, it is obvious that he is wasting his time, energy and efforts in vain. This is where Gyan plays a crucial role—it would show him the correct path, the correct way to follow this path, advise him to avoid the pitfalls, the symptoms of progress and success. This is where proper guidance of the scriptures and their correct and judicious interpretation comes in handy. Since there may be a number of trains to the designated destination and one must choose the most suitable one, this is like selecting the most apt path to reach one's spiritual goal.

Further, knowledge of one's destination enables one to recognise it when it is reached. So the knowledge of what or who is Brahm is as important as being aware of its existence. But there are degrees of knowledge—one of the best standards of knowledge would enlighten the spiritual aspirant that that Brahm whom he has embarked upon to attain is not somewhere in far distant corner of the universe which is beyond his reach, resulting in him feeling frustrated, dismayed and disheartened at its inaccessibility. For true and high standard of Gyan would tell him that Brahm resides in his own inner self as his pure conscious Atma residing in his subtle heart. So he has just to turn inwards to see and witness Brahm and experience the latter's divine and holy presence.

Thus, Yoga has brought about a meeting place for the ignorant Jiva, i.e. the living being, the worldly creature, and Gyan, i.e. the wise intellect and mind that enables the treasure of knowledge to be unfolded before the creature to remove his darkness of ignorance and its attendant delusions that had been miring him for so long. Yoga helps to forge a relationship between them, leading the creature by the hand on his spiritual journey of discovery.

'You know that you know nothing. Find out that knowledge. This is Mukti (liberation and deliverance from ignorance)'—Ramanna Maharishi.

'I am better off than he (a man reputed for wisdom) is, for he knows nothing, and thinks that he knows. I neither know nor think that I know—the truth is, O men of Athens, that God only is wise'—Plato.

'The Yogi (ascetic) whose intellect is perfect contemplates all things abiding in himself and thus, by the eyes of knowledge, he perceives that everything is Atma'—Adi Shankaracharya.

'He who knows and knows he knows, he is a wise man—seek him. He who knows and knows not that he knows, is asleep—wake him. He who know not and knows that he knows not, he is like a child—teach him. He who knows not and knows not that he knows not—he is stupid and ignorant, shun him'.

'There are things which are 'known knowns', i.e. we know about them; we know we know about them. Then there are things that are 'known unknowns', i.e. we do not know anything about them; there are some things we do not know about. Then there are 'unknown unknowns', i.e. things which are very uncertain and about which we do not know anything; we are ignorant even about their existence'.

Refer also Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 16-18 of Chapter 17.

²The *Kaivalya Param Pada* is the ultimate destination for a spiritual aspirant and a seeker of emancipation and salvation. The phrase consists of three words, viz. 'Kaivalya' meaning the only one of its kind, 'Param' meaning the supreme and transcendental, and 'Pada' meaning stature, designation, destination and state of existence. It is the culmination of all spiritual exercises such as Yoga and acquisition of knowledge called Gyan. It is 'self-realisation' or enlightenment about the true nature of the pure conscious Atma, and 'Brahm-realisation' or the eclectic truth about the supreme transcendental Brahm which is the eternal cosmic Consciousness from which the entire creation or existence has come into being. Besides having this Gyan (knowledge), the aspirant must also practice Yoga as an essential tool to bring about unification between the Atma and Brahm which alone would give him true

emancipation and salvation because then he would not have to take a birth again. This is the combined purpose of Gyan and Yoga.]

16. The pure conscious Atma which is the truthful identity of the Jiva (the living being, the creature) is primarily ethereal, pure, untainted and uncorrupt in nature (as opposed to the physical body in which this Atma resides, for the body is impure and corrupt). But this same Atma, under delusions caused by ignorance of its truthful identity and immaculate nature, begins to call itself a Jiva, i.e. a living being or creature which has an external physical gross body that is inherently subjected to numerous faults that are associated with this mortal and material world which is illusionary but appears to be very real.

Consequently, the Atma begins to identify itself as a 'Jiva' that is surrounded by all the faults inherent and natural to this physical gross world marked by imperfections and taints. In other words, being in the wrong company and having a wrong identity, the Atma is now called a 'Jiva' surrounded by such faults as Kaam (worldly passions, lust and yearnings), Krodh (anger, indignation), Bhaye (fears of all sorts) etc. (16).

[Note—Refer verse nos. 5-6 of this Canto 1. Refer also to Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 12-13; Dhyani Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 93/1-93/15.]

17. Since everything in existence is a manifestation of the same universal Atma which is revealed as the true 'self' of the Jiva, the living being, at the micro level, and as the ubiquitous all-pervading cosmic Soul, called the Parmatma, at the macro level, it follows that Gyan (all forms of knowledge, erudition and wisdom) is also a manifestation of the Atma¹. This Gyan is therefore wholesome and all-encompassing like its parent body the Atma.

Similarly and for the same reason, even negative traits such as Kaam (worldly passion, lust and desires) and Krodh (anger, indignation, spitefulness and wrath) are also a part of the same 'self' as nothing exists that is not the 'self' in the form of the Atma² (17).

[Note—¹This is because verse no. 14 has already established that Gyan and Brahm are synonymous with each other. And it is a universally established principle of the Upanishads that Atma and Brahm are the same, they are 'non-dual'.

²This is because the entire creation is a manifestation of the supreme transcendental Brahm whose micro level form is the Atma of the individual who is one unit of the complex structure of the mosaic that forms this vast existence. Since everything in existence must live within the boundary of existence as nothing exists outside of it, it follows that the good and the bad both must exist side by side in this creation as manifestations of the Sata and Tama Gunas respectively. Again since everything in existence is a manifestation of Brahm, it follows that the good and the bad are also included in this wide definition. Therefore, the negative traits mentioned in this verse and in earlier verse no. 10-11 must co-exist with the positive traits as manifestations of Brahm.]

18. Wholesome Gyan (wisdom and enlightenment) is that stage when one rises above narrow-minded considerations regarding what is acceptable and what is not. In this stage, he becomes full of equanimity and grace, treating everything alike and with the same degree of tolerance and broad-heartedness. That is, as long as the distinction of one thing being good and the other being bad is there, or till the time the person thinks that this thing is mine and that is yours, or the very notion of 'this and that' and 'me or mine and you or yours' is there, true enlightenment has not been achieved. When all

artificial distinctions and differences are erased, when complete equanimity and uniformity of vision is attained, when the eclectic state of non-duality is obtained, when a high degree of neutrality, non-involvement, non-partisan attitude and detachment become a norm rather than an exception, it is then said that one has obtained 'true Gyan', he has reached its pinnacle, he has understood the real purpose and intent of pursuing Gyan. This happens because true Gyan teaches one to be wise enough to be able to peer behind the exteriors and look at the reality behind it as the external façade might be misleading. The external world which is said to 'living' essentially consists of 'non-living' ingredients. For instance, the body of the creature consists of bones, flesh, blood, mucous, urine, stool, veins and capillaries, skin etc.—none of which have inherent factor of life in them. So surely there must be some factor that infuses 'life and consciousness' in such inane and lifeless entities. This vital factor is known as the Atma which is uniform and universal. It is the same Atma which injects life in one body as it does in the other body and the next. The bodies may vary but the Atma is ubiquitously the same. A person who understands this basic concept of existence is said to have acquired spiritual knowledge called Gyan.

Such a wise, erudite and highly enlightened man is eternally freed from all the fetters that shackle a creature to this artificial world of delusions and ignorance; he is deemed to have obtained Mukti or liberation and deliverance from all its traps (18).

19. Oh the one emerging from the divine Lotus (i.e. Brahma)! This state of eclectic realisation (when all distinctions and sense of duality are removed or erased) is true enlightenment (Gyan), and it marks the state when the Jiva (creature) has understood his universal, true and wholesome 'self'.

This is the ultimate truth about the 'true' nature of the creature. When he attains this exalted state of enlightenment, all his imperfections and worldly faults are got rid of, and he is deemed to be fulfilled and complete (19).

20. The 'Kali'¹ is very unsteady, ever changing and fickle. When the creature comes in contact with it and begins to interact with it, it is bound to be influenced by the latter. Hence, the creature becomes veiled in all the doubts and confusions that are so characteristic of Kali inspite of the fact that the primary nature of the creature is to be free from all such negative traits as he is a personification of Brahm² who is 'Nishkal', i.e. is without any taints, faults, shortcomings and imperfections, who is 'Nirmal', i.e. is pure, uncorrupt and immaculate, and who is like the 'Gagan'³, i.e. is like the sky element in its virtues of non-attachment and non-involvement inspite of being pregnant with so many impurities¹, its vastness, eternity and infinity (20).

[Note—¹The word *Kali* literally means some entity that is dark and foreboding, something that is tainted and tarnished, a character or quality that is marked by negativity such as delusions and ignorance that are the hallmarks of this artificial material world. In the present context, the word refers to the existing world called the Kali Yug which is the fourth era of the 4-era Hindu celestial cycle of birth and death. This era called Kali Yug is dominated by negative qualities called Tama Guna—which is a metaphor for darkness and ignorance causing delusions and creating phantoms. It causes spiritual degradation and general denigration of the creature. Since the living being called the 'Jiva' has to live in this environment, it is influenced by its inherent traits as enumerated in this verse.

²The virtues of Nishkal, Nirmal etc. have been described above in verse no. 5 of this Canto 1.

³The sky is full of so many things such as planets, stars, sun and the moon, asteroids and cosmic debris as well as with dust, gases and a horde of other forms of

impurities. But the sky always remains non-attached with them. It is proved by the fact that we see a cloud sky one moment, and a few hours later the sky becomes absolutely clear.

The sky or space is the subtlest of the five elements—viz. earth, water, fire, wind/air, space/sky. It pervades everywhere but is uncorrupt, unpolluted and faultless in all respects. The blemishes, faults, vices, evils, sins, corruptions, misdemeanors and all sorts of digressions present in the world are like suspended dust particles, smoke, moisture, clouds, the numerous other things such as the various birds and the celestial bodies high up in the sky which create an illusion of a sky that is spotted or dotted or polluted or coloured or overcast with these uncountable objects that are extraneous to the sky, that are not integral to it but nevertheless appear to be a part of the sky. The sky has nothing to do with them; it remains absolutely unconcerned with and untainted by them, for once they are removed from the scene the sky is uniform and spotless from one end of the horizon to the other. This example is very practical and can be observed by anyone. That is why 'sky' is used as a metaphor to describe anything that remains free from the influences of those things that appear to be an integral part of it but are in actual fact not related with it by even any remote chance.

The sky has the opposite types of characteristics present in it. For example, the space of the vast cosmos has no form but the space inside a bottle or a pot takes the shape of the bottle or the pot respectively. Similarly, the vast sky in its basic and truthful form is spotless and without any colours, but it appears to be spotted with so many stars and specs of clouds and smoke of different colours as well as with birds of different forms, colours and shapes flying here and there. The colour of the sky during the evening or morning hours present a canvas of so many colours which appear to be real, but they are obviously a reflection of the colours of the light of the sun as reflected from the various impurities present in the otherwise spotless sky.

This is what is meant here—though the Atma or Brahm are inherently and basically pristine pure and clean, but when they come in contact with this world, the different flaws and faults of the latter cast their shadow and make them appear to have some or the other kind of spots in them.

The sky has such grand and majestic attributes as being vast, measureless, uniform, immutable, spotless, clean, colourless, calm, all-pervading, all-encompassing etc. The sky is the measurement of Brahm in the sense that if it was ever possible to measure the length, breadth and depth of the sky, it would then have been possible to measure Brahm. But that is not at all the case. The calmness of the higher reaches of the sky is experienced by Para gliders and can even be witnessed on top of mountains which are high above the ground and located somewhere in the space around the earth, symbolised by the sky, where there is an eerie silence. The sky has no colours of its own; whatever colours that we see are actually the scattered sunlight.

Everything that exists does so in any one of these spaces. Every nook and corner where there is no solid or liquid is filled with space or 'Akash', which is a synonym of sky. It is omnipresent, all-pervading and all-encompassing. That is, these three forms of the skies, viz. the outer, the inner and that which is present inside the heart, are all the same; there is no distinction or demarcation or boundary or fundamental difference between any two skies. The apparent boundary or limitation imposed on the sky by the physical body or the membrane of the heart is only deceptive in nature. Once a person dies, for example, his body perishes, and the space present inside the heart merges indistinguishably with the space present inside the body when the body is cremated or decays when buried, and they together merge with the vast space present outside the body.

The 'sky', which was originally conceived as something that was 'void' or 'nothing', gets filled with 'air', simply because void can't exist, and the creation which came into being in this void needed some base for its origin and coming into

being. The molecules or atoms of air are in a state of continuous agitation and flux; they collide with each other, they form a chain of molecules which give rise to different layers or strata of air which extend from the surface of this earth to the stratosphere. This continuous turmoil produces 'sound'. Various physical and chemical processes come into play, producing gases of varying density and characteristic features. Air has particles of dust and different gases, which produce the perception of touch. Friction of the various molecules present in the air produces static electricity which is observed as a scintillating display of atmospheric discharge of electrically charged particles in the sky often observed at the poles. This sparkle of static electric discharge is synonymous with 'fire'. Perhaps the Upanishadic sage got this brilliant idea when he observed a meteor shower during the night. The two elementary gases hydrogen and oxygen combine to form the molecule H_2O commonly known as 'water'. With all these essential ingredients in place, the solidifying and cooling down process of nature starts its effect and produces soil and rocks which are symbolised by the 'earth' element. Then gravity and magnetic forces come into play, giving density, gravity and grossness, indicative of the grossness or heaviness of not only the earth but also of the air around it. Previously, before gravity and other forces of nature came into play, this air was subtle and very light; it spread universally and uniformly to all the corners of the cosmos. But with the gradual formation of different celestial bodies from the primordial cosmic gases, each having its own gravity and other natural physical and chemical forces, the air was pulled or sucked in, leaving the rest of the space beyond the reach of these celestial bodies into a big void.

The sky is pregnant with a wide variety of impurities. It is full of celestial bodies besides cosmic debris. It has the burning furnace of the sun as well as the cool pitcher of nectar symbolised by the moon. The black clouds of a storm with its stabs of ferocious lightening coexist with white fluffy clouds floating lazily across the calm sky. There are birds of prey and there are harmless kites flying in it. There is the polluted haze of the city as is the pristine clear atmosphere of a village and the mountain. There is the brightness of the day and the foreboding darkness of the night. But the wonder is that none of these really affect the sky at all—it remains clear and untainted in its basic nature and form. All these things cited here are extraneous to the fundamental nature and characteristic of the sky. The sky treats all of them with the same magnanimity and kindness. Similarly, a wise man treats all the creatures with whom he has to interact in this world with the same equanimity and fortitude as the sky.]

21. When the supreme transcendental Consciousness abandons its state of being all-knowing and omniscient, it gets trapped in the web of ignorance and delusions. As a consequence, it forgets its eternal, imperishable and infinite nature and thinks in terms of having a birth or origin, having an existence, and then coming to an end. It oscillates between these states of existence and never finds peace; it swirls, wobbles, tumbles and tosses about in the ocean represented by this cycle.

But why has it come to this sorry state of affairs? [This is because the consciousness or the pure 'self' of the creature thinks that it has a body and lives in the world, that the world is its home, that it does the various deeds and therefore must either enjoy their rewards or suffer from their consequences, and being identified with the body necessarily means that it would be subjected to all the incumbent problems that are so typical with the body. In short, it loses its pristine pure, neutral, eclectic and divine form and instead gets mired in all the shortcomings, flaws, imperfections or faults associated with and characteristic of the world.] (21).

22. Oh Mahabaho (the great, able-armed and exalted Brahma)! Being shorn of Gyan, this consciousness or Atma is subjected to the toss and flip caused by such opposing and contradictory emotions as feeling miserable, sorrowful, tormented and agonized on the one hand, and feeling happy, joyous, elated and ecstatic on the other on the other hand. The Atma gets torn between them. It is engulfed in and mired by uncountable delusions and their accompanying perplexities and confusions. Consequentially it begins to behave like an ordinary mortal creature that is rapacious and lustful about this world of sense objects and yearns for self gratification. This is the way it lives in this world, remaining perpetually restless and agitated in the turmoil created by this delusory world of artificiality and ever-changing illusions (22).

23. Therefore, if a man regards himself learned and wise but remains engrossed and submerged in pursuing this material world, if he has not been able to overcome his worldly desires and lust for its sense objects and their attendant pleasures and comforts, then he is no better off than a person who is openly ignorant and deluded. He is deemed to be a worldly man who is shackled to it rather than a liberated soul free from its fetters (23).

24. If one remains like an ordinary ignorant man who is unaware of the delusory and trapping nature of this artificial material world, the world which is an ocean of problems and unhappiness, then say what is the use of his acquiring Gyan (by studying the scriptures and attending religious discourses for instance)?

Only those who have resolutely inculcated in themselves the glorious and eclectic virtues of detachment, dispassion and renunciation, who are honest, steadfast and diligent in following the righteous, auspicious and noble path called the path of Dharma in their daily lives, and who have been able to control their sense organs in a comprehensive manner—only such people are able to have a firm foothold in the field of Gyan¹ (24).

[Note--¹This is because the charms of the world would not be able to sway a wise and enlightened man from his chosen spiritually exalted path of righteousness, auspiciousness, truthfulness, honesty, selflessness as well as exemplary nobility of thought and conduct. His life would be exemplary, it would be like a beacon for others, and in spite of having to live like an ordinary creature in this world, his true 'self' never allows him to get entangled in the world. A wise man cannot avoid the world for the simple reason that the Atma resides in the physical body during its sojourn in this material world due to its past ignorance of its true nature, but such a man would not repeat his previous mistakes by getting engrossed or entangled in this world of artificiality ever again. Instead, he would treat this body as a God-sent opportunity to strive hard to reach his goal of finding a way out of this quagmire, and find liberation and final deliverance from the endless cycle of birth and death and their attendant miseries. Once he makes this decision, he has crossed one important milestone in reaching the state of enlightenment. The rest follows as a natural progression if he is steady and resolute in his decision. Herein comes the role of self control and renunciation—because it is very hard and difficult to overcome natural urges of the senses which resist being controlled and which have an innate tendency to move towards their objects in this material world. The world is also difficult to rebuff because it pretends to be one's most precious possession, and of course its charms and pleasures are too enticing, convincing, strong and robust to resist.]

25. Oh Vidhe (Brahma, the creator who formed the codes of conduct for his creation, and hence the name 'Vidhe'—the formulator and giver of laws)! The creature cannot find Moksha, i.e. he cannot hope to obtain liberation from this gross physical body in

which the Atma is trapped, without the aid of Yoga (meaning physical exercises, actions and efforts in this direction).

Creatures with physical gross bodies are of two types—‘Paripakwa’ or those who are mature in wisdom and have the proper aptitude and mental preparedness for Yoga, and ‘Aparipakwa’ or those who are immature and do not have the correct aptitude and inclination to follow the tenets of Yoga (25).

26. Those who do not follow the path of Yoga are called ‘Aparipakwa’, while those who have Yoga as their chosen path are called ‘Paripakwa’¹.

The fire of Yoga makes the gross body subtler and lighter; it makes it cleaner and purer by removing its grossness, impurities, imperfections and other faults. The fire of Yoga helps to remove all sorts of problems associated with the body that torment the creature constantly² (26).

[Note—¹The ignorant people do not even know what Yoga is, and they do not bother about it because they do not wish to let their pampered body to suffer a bit. They would rather enjoy the comforts and pleasures of this material world and remain engrossed in seeking gratification for their sense organs. Their ignorance prevents them from even attempting to look beyond the body and its comforts—for them the world and the body is all there is to it in this world. They have no idea that there is something called the pure consciousness or Atma which is trapped in the body and from which entrapment it longs to break free. So who bothers, they think! Such people fall under the category of ‘Aparipakwa’. The concept of the Atma is too abstract for them to comprehend and grasp vis-à-vis the physical world and the gross body both of which are physically tangible and verifiable quickly; the presence of the body and the world can be witnessed first hand in material terms as compared to the presence of the Atma which requires a specially tuned mind-intellect and a high level of wisdom and enlightenment to be acquainted with. Therefore for ordinary persons it becomes a difficult exercise to neglect what is evident in the face of it, viz. the body and the world, and believe in the existence of something that is difficult to ascertain in physical terms.

Compared to them, there are wise and enlightened people who have realised who they actually are, that the main spiritual goal is not the pursuance of the material world and gratifying of the sense organs but to break free from this jail and let the Atma fly off to freedom from its encasement, from its bondage. How does the chick break free from the hardened shell of the egg? This example is before them. The chick has to make a diligent effort to break free from the hardened shell of the egg, for the egg’s shell would not break out of its own free will to allow the chick to walk out to freedom. The same thing happens here—in order to break free from the fetters of the body, the wise ascetic has to make efforts, and the ‘effort’ made is the following of the various codes of conduct, the different exercises and obeying of the pristine philosophy of Yoga. The codes of conduct help them to regulate their body and life, the exercises tone-up their bodies and prepares them physically by harnessing sufficient energy to enable their Atma or soul or pure consciousness to launch itself on to its onwards journey towards eternal liberation, and the philosophy prepares them mentally and intellectually. To obtain final deliverance, all the three legs or steps are necessary, for otherwise there are good chances of falling back or slipping even after the first few steps have been successfully taken to obtain freedom. It is just like the case when the rocket that is to be sent to distance planets must be provided sufficient energy and thrust so as to break free from the gravitational pull of the earth and go onwards on its outward journey; otherwise it would fall back on the earth even before reaching its outer atmosphere.

²This is just like warming cold water or food to kill its bacteria and making them lighter and agreeable for the body. It is observed that as the water is warmed, the

heated part of the water rises to the surface and the colder part sinks to the bottom of the vessel. In the cases of gases, heating makes them lighter and subtler so that they rise up. Extending this analogy to the body of the creature, practice of Yoga generates heat which not only cleans up the body of all trapped toxins by ejecting them out from their age-old niches in the body and eliminating them through the breath, sweat, mucous, urine and stool, but also activates the dormant energy reserves in the body by unclogging the various nerves and veins and other such ducts of the body, thereby making the practitioner of Yoga more healthier and disease free. A healthy body is not only happy and comfortable for the creature but it also allows him to pursue his goal more vigorously and diligently because the mind would not be engaged in various problems associated with a diseased body and would have the time, energy and freedom to pursue its objectives with greater tenacity, vigour, energy and concentration.

Yoga Upanishads detail how Yoga helps the practitioner to easily conquer the various hurdles created by the body, they list the numerous benefits of practicing Yoga, and how liberation and deliverance of the soul is possible through it.]

27. The physical body made up of the gross organs of action and different perceptions is called 'gross and mortal' (because it is subjected to all the grossness, faults, impurities, imperfections and shortcomings associated with the 'earth' and other grosser elements, including their natural propensity for decay and destruction). [In the absence of Yoga, it is this body that torments the creature no end.]

With the body's constant nagging and persistent gnawing, other mediums of obtaining liberation and deliverance such as Dhyān (contemplation and meditation upon the divine and holy deity) and other such means also become impractical. This is obviously because the mind and intellect are too pre-occupied by the various agonies and miseries that exert their push and pull on the gross body and its organs to find sufficient time and energy for more subtle and sublime issues. [For example, when one has a severe headache, it is impossible for him to concentrate on his studies. Or the case when one is hungry and thirsty, then his entire attention is diverted towards eating and drinking and not towards doing meditation or even any other physical activity such as doing household chores or running errands. The basic idea of Yoga is to clean the body internally, to over-haul it in order to optimize its functioning in a proper way without creating unwarranted problems for the creature. When the body is at ease and feels rested and rejuvenated, the mind-intellect would automatically be freed to divert its energy and attention to higher goals of life. Otherwise, the mind-intellect would be so entangled in and overwhelmed by the numerous demands of the body and meeting them that it would be exhausted of its energy and completely worn out.] (27).

28. It so happens sometimes that even if one is able to exercise self control over the organs of perception and action he still continues to suffer from heat and cold and other such external factors that are beyond his control on the one hand, and on the other hand from such emotional factors as sorrows and miseries or joys and happiness which together never allow his mind to rest and find peace, serenity and tranquility.

These are the hindrances which are like the different ailments that afflict both the body and the mind, and they constantly continue to bother the spiritual aspirant or the ascetic (28).

29. The mind and body of a man are constantly being tormented by numerous other factors of this world, such as the various problems created by other creatures, various

implements that are used to threaten and inflict injuries upon him, as well as the problems created by the elements such as fire, water and wind¹ etc. (29).

[Note—¹The ‘fire’ has to be constantly guarded against, for a little carelessness would be devastating. Similarly, ‘water’, though an essential element of life, causes floods on the one hand and its lack causes draughts on the other hand, keeping a man constantly worried about it and on his toes. ‘Wind’ in the form of severe storms uproots huts, trees etc., damage crops and cause widespread havoc; on the high seas it can upturn boats and affect maritime trade and commerce. In short, the man is kept on his tenterhooks because of these factors which are boons for his existence on the one hand, and his tormentors on the other.]

30. Finally, due to some reason, the time comes for a man to die. At this time also he is not left in peace, because death is associated with horrors unimaginable for him—his Pran (i.e. his life forces represented by the vital winds or airs) become agitated and restless, making the dying man extremely restless, agitated, anguished and tormented. His agonies and sufferings of life are compounded, and he begins to worry more and more as death approaches. [He recounts his past life of enjoyments and pleasures, he worries about his unfinished tasks and his family and assets, he thinks about the bleak and dark future and the yawning mouth of death staring on his face. How can anyone in this situation hope to find rest and peace? The prospects of death and its attendant horrors are too overwhelming for any man. They send shivers down his spine and leave him cold and dry so much so that if given a chance he would bargain anything or everything he has just to avoid death. Herein lie the beauty of the philosophy of life as expounded by the Upanishads which stress that the body that is suffering and is about to die is not the ‘true self’ of the man; this ‘self’ is the pure consciousness called the Atma which is eternal and imperishable, and hence beyond the reach of death. Therefore, ‘death’ occurs to the gross body and not to the Atma.] (30).

31. At the time of death, whatever the creature thinks and has in his mind, he takes a new birth accordingly. The memories and thoughts of the last moment of the present life are the base and cause for the new and next birth (31).

[Note—The eternal question ‘how does the Atma get entangled into the cycle of birth and death’ has been answered in Shwetashwatar Upanishad, 5/10-12 of Krishna Yajur Veda.]

32. What would happen after death, which new life would one get, where would he be born¹—no one can know it for certain. Then it appears that pursuing Gyan (making efforts to acquire knowledge and becoming enlightened) and Vairagya (renunciation and detachment from all worldly things and attachment with them) is a fruitless exercise; all efforts made in this direction is a waste of time and energy² (32).

[Note—¹These questions have been answered in a number of Upanishads—e.g. Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, 3/1/3, 3/2/11-12, 3/9/28, 4/3/12, 4/3/36, 4/4/1, 5/10-5/11, 6/1/1-6, 6/2/2, 14-16, etc.; Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 5, Section 3-10; Kaushitaki Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 1; Taittiriyo-panishad, Valli 2, Anuvak 6; Kathopanishad, Canto 1, Valli 1, verse no. 20; Canto 1, Valli 2, verse no. 1-6; Canto 2, Valli 2, verse no. 6-8; Canto 2, Valli 3, verse no. 4-17; Subalo-panishad, Canto 11. What happens to ignorant people after death is explained in Brihad Aranyak 4/4/1. The *three great Truths* to be remembered at the time of *death* have enunciated in Chandogya Upanishad, 3/17/6. They are—(1) You are eternal and imperishable; (2) You cannot be demoted, degenerate, become fallen and digressed; and (3) You are basically most sublime, subtle, atomic and a microcosmic image of the vast and macrocosmic supreme Brahm. The metaphor of the *tree* has been brilliantly

employed to explain 'what happens after' death in Brihad Aranyak 3/9/28, and in Chandogya 6/11/1-3.

²Such questions are asked by skeptics and doubting Thomases who do not bother to think long term; they do not take the effort to peer behind the curtain to find the truth concealed behind it. They call themselves rationalists, secular and modern in outlook. They are ignorant of subtle things of existence which defy physical laws of material science and are beyond definitions based on them. This is because the mind-intellect of such people is dominated by the deluding effects of the gross material world and its physical dimension so much so that it cannot be tuned to hear the call of the transcendental and sublime. Their 'radio set' would just not catch these frequencies!]

33. If an ant bites anyone, he becomes extremely agitated and his concentration on the work he was engaged in is affected. Then say how he can remain calm, poised, unruffled and undeterred when a scorpion bites him, for the torments of death are no less horrendous and painful than a scorpion bite (33).

34. Thus, that entity which is enigmatic, mystical and esoteric as well as transcendental in nature, which is beyond the grasp of comprehension and senses (such as the Atma is), cannot be understood by those people who are skeptical, argumentative and pre-maturely judgmental in their attitude. It cannot be grasped by those who try to understand it by physical laws and application of worldly logic. Such people rely more on the strength of their intelligence and rational mind to understand things and unravel esoteric secrets. But they forget that everything cannot be physically verified and understood; there are certain things which need a different set of mental qualities other than mere application of logic and intelligence to be understood; there are certain sublime and subtle aspects of this creation which are too complicated, too transcendental to be within the reach of the intelligent mind. There are certain things that can only be experienced and witnessed, and cannot be explained by logic and material proofs.

The way to this eclectic spiritual knowledge is different. The first step in this direction is the trouncing of 'Ahankar' (the sense of ego, pride and haughtiness about one's intellectual and physical prowess and strength; the pride that one has about his body and his intellect). That is, one must overcome the sense of pride in one's intellectual ability and mental prowess to know and ascertain something that is basically extremely mystical, esoteric, sublime, subtle and transcendental, something that is beyond the purview of worldly logic, arguments, proofs, rationality, debates and other laws of material science that are applicable to all material things of this physical world. There are certain things that cannot be determined by even the mind and intellect which are themselves subtle as compared to the body and its other organs which are gross in nature. When an ordinary man is not even able to see his own mind no matter how hard he tries, how can he expect to see something that is even subtler than the mind and extremely sublime? But does the fact that he is not able to see the mind mean that the latter does not exist—the answer is obviously 'no'. Therefore, the supreme transcendental Brahm whom he is not able to perceive, the Brahm that is beyond his conception and imagination, does indeed also exist inspite of his not being able to fathom and understand the latter (34).

35. The concept of Ahankar (i.e. ego, pride, vanity, exaggerated sense of self-importance) is very closely related to the gross body of the creature. So it is very essential to overcome Ahankar if one is to really make any tangible progress in one's

spiritual journey because it acts more like a cumbersome millstone around one's neck, not only hindering his spiritual progress but actually dragging him down in the opposite direction. When Ahankar is destroyed, the gross body is also deemed to have lost its importance. When Ahankar is eliminated, the dependence upon the powers and abilities of the body is also eliminated, thereby removing the importance of the body from the scene altogether. When the body is removed from interfering in one's spiritual pursuit, then all the ailments and problems associated with the body (and outlined in verse nos. 27-33) are also done away with¹.

The pure conscious Atma, which is the true identity of the man (or for that matter of all living beings) and which is the one implied when we talk about him, is not at all affected by any of the ailments that afflict the body².

When the body is removed from the scene for all practical purposes, then how can weapons, fire, water and wind ever hope to interfere in one's spiritual progress and disturb one's internal peace and calmness of demeanours? They simply cannot! (35).

[Note—¹A man is very proud of his body and its abilities. He thinks that his body can and has achieved great things and successes in life; the body can do astoundingly difficult tasks and achieve stupendous success. He is proud of his body both at the gross level as well as the subtle level. At the gross level he is proud of the body's physical strength, stamina, powers, virility and beauty, and at the subtle level he is proud of the magnificent and most majestic powers of the mind and the intellect. He believes that he is superior to other creatures of this creation because of this body and its mighty powers. His sense of over-confidence on the abilities of the body extend to the realm of spiritualism because he believes he can rival the supreme Lord of creation know as Brahm and lord over the world because the scriptures themselves say that he is a manifestation of Brahm. He believes that he can successfully do intense Yoga (meditation) involving rigid and difficult exercises by employing this body, thereby acquiring immense mystical powers that would invest him with the same authority and powers that are possessed by the Supreme Being. He believes that his true 'self' and identity is the body instead of the pure consciousness called the Atma or the inner self, and therefore feels proud in the achievements of the body. He believes that he can use the body and its faculties to reach the pinnacle of spiritual success and find emancipation and salvation from the torments and horrors of this world. In short, he has Ahankar in relation to the body. The question why the body cannot actually help him in his spiritual pursuit has already been answered in verse nos. 27-34 of the present Canto 1 above. This body is itself perishable and gross to the highest degree, so it cannot be instrumental in lifting one to a high pedestal of spiritualism; it is rather like a cumbersome millstone around one's neck, dragging him down and pulling him back instead of aiding his upliftment. So it is deduced that it is very essential to overcome Ahankar pertaining to the body if one is to really make any tangible progress in one's spiritual journey.

²In the previous case when Ahankar was not removed, the Atma had relied on the body and the mind to achieve its objective of finding liberation and deliverance by the path of Yoga and Gyan. But it had forgotten in the process that both these paths rely heavily on the prop of the body and the mind. The body and the mind themselves are a problem, so how can one entity that is a problem itself can remove other problems? So it becomes necessary to remove this primary hurdle that is the basic stumbling block for spiritual emancipation and salvation of the creature. How is it to be done? The answer is provided in this verse—remove Ahankar. With the removal of Ahankar, the reliance on the body and mind ceases, and then the Atma, the true identity of the creature, the true 'self', realises its astounding potentials.

Here it is relevant to note that when Brahm decided to create this world, i.e. when he voluntarily allowed himself to get trapped in the web represented by this vast

creation, the first element that came into being was 'Ahankar'. It is then from this seed that the rest of the Gunas, Vasanas and Virittis emerged which would together mould the future creation and give each unit of it its unique character traits. The Gunas are the different character traits and virtues that are inherent to all living creatures, while the Vasanas and Virittis are the different passions, desires, temperaments, habits and tendencies natural to them.

Had there been no Ahankar, the chain reaction would not have started in the first place. This fact proves that all the problems faced by the Atma have their genesis in Ahankar. Refer verse no. 8 of the present Upanishad as well as to verse no. 10-11 of Yogtattva Upanishad which is Chapter 17 of this volume.]

36. Sometimes it happens that the subdued Ahankar begins to rear its head once again, it begins to stage a come back with a vengeance. In such cases all the benefits derived by Yoga and other spiritual pursuits are lost. All the previous horrors of the world and the body re-emerge. [Hence, one should be on the guard against resurgence of Ahankar.] (36).

37. There cannot be any event without a cause. Without Ahankar, there cannot be any agonies and miseries associated with the body (in the field of spiritualism). [It is a sense of pride and ego in one's ability that one feels dismayed and distressed by failures. It is due to these negative traits that one does not acknowledge one's limitations and shortcomings. Unless one realises that he has certain shortcomings, imperfections and faults, he would not make an attempt to remove them. If one thinks that he has studied all the scriptures and knows all that is to be known, then he is proud of his knowledge and intellectual prowess; he is so stupid that he forgets that mere letters of the scriptures would not give him spiritual liberation for he would be more concerned with showing off his intellectual abilities and acumen and getting recognised for them that he would never like to retire to seclusion and turn inwards to seek that 'truth' of which he has learnt from the scriptures and has gone to town boasting about, but had lost the real gem (i.e. the 'truth') in the process of being proud and haughty of his knowledge. He would like to be surrounded by knowledge seekers, by a crowd of disciples instead of spending quality time at being peace with his own self. This could also happen later on when, as a reward of Yoga, he acquires certain mystical powers called the various Siddhis. Then he would become proud of his newly acquired divine powers and swept off his feet by the praise and adulation accompanying these Siddhis. This pitfall has been expressly mentioned in Yogtattva Upanishad in its verse nos. 51, 56. 60-62, 73-79. In short, a man with the dominant factor of Ahankar in him is proud of the achievements and successes that he has acquired with the help of his body, and since he is under the delusion that the body is his true identity, he wishes to show them off. The world is swept off its feet by people who possess some sort of super-human powers, and therefore the Siddhis or mystical powers displayed by an ascetic result in his gaining instant fame and name. The accompanying adulation and honours literally 'go into his head'; he becomes so intoxicated that he loses his bearings. He falls from the high moral ground and the exalted stature that he has gained so painstakingly with great labour, and instead lands in the marsh of this world from where he had planned to extricate himself when he had decided to do Yoga in the beginning. Ahankar becomes his greatest enemy, undercutting all his spiritual progress and proving to be his nemesis.] (37).

38. The physical body is the medium by which one can subdue and conquer all others in this world; it is the body by which one conquers vast lands and forces other

creatures into submission. But the wise ascetic is one who practices Yoga and utilizes its stupendous powers to subdue and conquer this body itself. [By conquering the body, he proves that he is more powerful than the body because only one who is superior to the other can he subdue the latter. By doing so, he literally declares himself the 'emperor' of the world, for obviously now he can order the body—which has been subjugating all other subordinate creatures in the evolutionary ladder of this creation till now and lording over them—to do what he wants, to obey his commands. The body is difficult to control, and should the ascetic be able to control it he would have virtually conquered the world because it is the body that ties him down to this world and its material charms.]

Once subjugated and brought under control by the ascetic, the body becomes his subordinate and subservient to him. Thereafter, the body can no longer trouble him; it would be easy for him to free himself from the constant nagging by the body because now he has become the master and lord of the body (38).

39. Those who practice Yoga are able to conquer or subdue all their sense organs (i.e. they are able to exert self control over them). Resultantly, they are also able to conquer and subdue Mana (mind) and Buddhi (intellect), as well as the different negative character traits as Kaam (various worldly desires and passions), Krodh (anger, indignation, wrathfulness, spitefulness etc.)

By this symbolic conquest, he becomes an undisputed leader of all; he becomes an invincible power. He cannot be shackled by any force then (39).

40. By the virtue of his progressive powers and authority, a Yogi (an ascetic who practices Yoga) is able to subdue and put under tight leash all the five primary elements and other secondary elements¹ in creation. [Since the entire creation has been formed out of these five primary elements along with the secondary elements, by symbolically exerting his authority over them he establishes control over the entire animate as well as the inanimate creation.]

This gross body is physically like a cage constructed out of seven ingredients called the Dhaatus which form the structure of the physical gross body of the creature². Since it is also a part of this creation, it naturally follows that when an ascetic had conquered the rest of the creation he would automatically have subdued this body and its organs. Not only this, the fire of Yoga would burn this body for him so that this cage is eliminated and his soul can fly off to freedom³ (40).

[Note—¹The five primary elements are sky, air, fire, water and earth. The various secondary elements have been listed in Sharrirako-panishad, verse nos. 16-20. This Upanishad is Chapter 20 of this volume.

²The gross body can be studied at two levels—the gross level consisting of its structural features called the *Dhaatus* which can be compared to molecular structure of any substance, and the subtle level consisting of the basic elements of Nature that constitute the fundamental units at the atomic level, called the Bhuts.

The Dhaatus are said to be seven in number. These stand for the structural constituent of the body which supports and sustains its existence. According to ancient Indian system of medicine, they are the following—(1) Rasa (lymph and mucous; sap), (2) Rakta (blood), (3) Maansa (flesh), (4) Meda (fat and muscles), (5) Ashthi (bones and cartilage), (6) Meja (marrow), and (7) Shukra (semen).

According to other interpretations, these seven Dhaatus which form the structural features of the gross body and give it its shape and support it are the following—(1) all forms of fluid ingredients such as blood, urine, mucous, lymph etc, (2) bone and

cartilage, (3) marrow, (4) flesh, fat and muscles, (5) abdominal organs such as stomach etc, (6) skin, and (7) Naadis (arteries, veins, capillaries and nerves).

This level resembles the molecular structure of any chemical substance or any thing in this world for that matter that is made up of certain basic elements. The molecules are also not visible to the naked eye just like the ingredients of the body mentioned above except some of them such as the skin and mucous.

At the next level comes the atomic structure, or the subtle level of constitution of the body. It is like the atoms of any chemical molecule that make up the basic building blocks or units of that molecule. For example, Benzene has a hexagonal structure which would be like the gross structure of the creature's body called the Dhaatu, while the Carbon and Hydrogen atoms (C_6H_6) that go in to form the basic and fundamental ingredients of Benzene are like its subtle structure called the Bhut.

Thus, the five elements that constitute the body of the creature are the five elements that came into being at the time of creation. They are sky, air or wind, fire or energy, water or fluid, and earth. The Shaarirako-panishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 1-2 and 5-6 describe in detail how these five elements developed into the complex structure of the body.

Refer also to verse no. 56, 68 and 147 below of this Canto 1.

³It must be noted here that Yoga involves rigid exercises directed to ignite internal energy hitherto lying dormant in the body of the practitioner. When this energy is ignited, it is like firing the firewood stored in a wooden box or cage—how can this box survive the fire raging inside it? It's obvious that the wooden box or cage would be reduced to ashes by this internal fire. This is exactly what happens by practicing Yoga. In practical terms, when one fasts and observes other austerities, forsakes pampering the body and subjects it to rigours it is not accustomed to, it naturally withers and become thin and lean. Worldly people would call such a man emaciated and suffering from lack of nutrition, but there unaware of the stupendous mystical powers that such a man possesses. From the practical point of view also, a thin and well toned body creates the least problems by the way of various diseases such as upset tummy, joint pains, malfunctioning internal organs etc.]

41. A Yogi becomes astoundingly powerful and mystically empowered. Even the exalted Gods are not able to fathom his spiritual powers and prowess. He possesses numerous mystical qualities and spiritual virtues, knows the secret of what constitutes happiness and what is sorrow in the real sense, and is liberated from the endless cycle consisting of birth and death along with its incumbent problems. Consequentially, he becomes synonymous with and one like the divine entity (known as Brahm) that is eternal, imperishable, eclectic, supreme and transcendental, and which also possesses uncountable number of mystical and esoteric powers as the ones possessed by the said ascetic. [That is, an ascetic who sincerely, painstakingly and diligently practices Yoga and observes its strict tenets becomes spiritually exalted and acquires such astounding mystical powers that he becomes no less powerful than the supreme Brahm himself. None of the numerous Gods can match him and his authority and powers. This is because these individual Gods represent one or the other aspect of Brahm's divine attributes, but the concerned ascetic becomes a personification of all the divine attributes of Brahm in their entirety.](41).

[Note—Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 51, 53-54, 59-60, 73-75, 87, 91, 94, 97, 102, 105-130.]

42. The body of a practicing ascetic becomes as pure, untainted, cleansed, holy and unattached with any thing in this world like the sky. In fact, it becomes purer, cleaner, holier and more detached than the sky itself¹.

He acquires such mystical and divine powers that he might become the grossest and heaviest thing in existence in the first moment, and then as easily turn into the subtlest and most sublime one in existence in the next moment. In fact, even while having a gross body like ordinary creatures and acting most oddly and unconventionally at times, he still remains very subtle and sublime internally in the form of his 'true ethereal self'² (42).

[Note—¹Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 98-102. The sky has a unique quality—it harbours the entire creation in its bosom as nothing that exists lies outside the outer periphery of the sky, but still it remains completely detached from each and every thing present inside it. The sky remains unaffected, uninfluenced, unattached with and untainted by anything that it harbours or shelters. Whatever visual attributes that one sees in the sky, such as its blue or azure haze, the changing colours at different times of the day, are only optical illusions created by various factors of Nature. Even the clouds or the sun in the day time and the stars and the moon in the night do not effect the neutral nature of the sky because while the sun is there the sky appears to be bright and sunny, and when the moon rises the same sky assumes the colour of the moonlight with no indication that it was so bright earlier. The overcast sky with dark clouds becomes crystal clear when the clouds go away, and the darkness of the night sky dotted with umpteen numbers of stars can give no indication that it would be brightly lit during the day with no trace of any single star. The plumes of pungent smoke being belched into the sky by factories and fires do not effect the bland and neutral form of the sky, for the sky absorbs them all with great equanimity and fortitude without being affected by them at all.

Everything in existence needs the sky to develop and grow. The fire needs space representing the sky to burn, the air needs it to flow, the earth needs it to remain in its place and move around the sun which in turn regulates the seasons and other environmental factors, the plants need it for their growth and development as is proved by the fact that they become stunted and die in the want of space to grow and spread their branches, the creature needs it to breathe, stand and grow, and so on and so forth. The air can be sucked out from an enclosed space to create a vacuum, but the 'sky' would still be there. The world would die and go into oblivion along with all its components, including the other four elements (earth, fire, water and air) at the time of conclusion of creation, but the sky would still be there; in fact it is in the vast bottomless pit of the sky that the creation would vanish then. And when the time comes for the emergence of the new creation, it would do so in the bowl of the sky. Nothing exists beyond the sky.

From the metaphysical angle, Brahm and sky are often regarded as being analogous because they exhibit almost identical properties and attributes—such as being fathomless, vast, eternal, imperishable, infinite, all-pervading, all-encompassing, incorruptible and untainted etc.

The sky or space is the subtlest of the five elements—viz. earth, water, fire, wind/air, space/sky. It pervades everywhere but is uncorrupt, unpolluted and faultless in all respects. The blemishes, faults, vices, evils, sins, corruptions, misdemeanors and all sorts of digressions present in the world are like suspended dust particles, smoke, moisture, clouds, the numerous other things such as the various birds and the celestial bodies high up in the sky which create an illusion of a sky that is spotted or dotted or polluted or coloured or overcast with these uncountable objects that are extraneous to the sky, that are not integral to it but nevertheless appear to be a part of the sky. The sky has nothing to do with them; it remains absolutely unconcerned with and untainted by them, for once they are removed from the scene the sky is uniform and spotless from one end of the horizon to the other. This example is very practical and can be observed by anyone. That is why 'sky' is used as a metaphor to describe anything that remains free from the influences of those things that appear to be an integral part of it but are in actual fact not related with it by even any remote chance.

The sky has the opposite types of characteristics present in it. For example, the space of the vast cosmos has no form but the space inside a bottle or a pot takes the shape of the bottle or the pot respectively. Similarly, the vast sky in its basic and truthful form is spotless and without any colours, but it appears to be spotted with so many stars and specs of clouds and smoke of different colours as well as with birds of different forms, colours and shapes flying here and there. The colour of the sky during the evening or morning hours present a canvas of so many colours which appear to be real, but they are obviously a reflection of the colours of the light of the sun as reflected from the various impurities present in the otherwise spotless sky.

The sky has such grand and majestic attributes as being vast, measureless, uniform, immutable, spotless, clean, colourless, calm, all-pervading, all-encompassing etc. The sky is the measurement of Brahm in the sense that if it was ever possible to measure the length, breadth and depth of the sky, it would then have been possible to measure Brahm. But that is not at all the case. The calmness of the higher reaches of the sky is experienced by Para gliders and can even be witnessed on top of mountains which are high above the ground and located somewhere in the space around the earth, symbolised by the sky, where there is an eerie silence. The sky has no colours of its own; whatever colours that we see are actually the scattered sunlight.

Everything that exists does so in any one of these spaces. Every nook and corner where there is no solid or liquid is filled with space or 'Akash', which is a synonym of sky. It is omnipresent, all-pervading and all-encompassing. That is, these three forms of the skies, viz. the outer, the inner and that which is present inside the heart, are all the same; there is no distinction or demarcation or boundary or fundamental difference between any two skies. The apparent boundary or limitation imposed on the sky by the physical body or the membrane of the heart is only deceptive in nature. Once a person dies, for example, his body perishes, and the space present inside the heart merges indistinguishably with the space present inside the body when the body is cremated or decays when buried, and they together merge with the vast space present outside the body.

The 'sky', which was originally conceived as something that was 'void' or 'nothing', gets filled with 'air', simply because void can't exist, and the creation which came into being in this void needed some base for its origin and coming into being. The molecules or atoms of air are in a state of continuous agitation and flux; they collide with each other, they form a chain of molecules which give rise to different layers or strata of air which extend from the surface of this earth to the stratosphere. This continuous turmoil produces 'sound'. Various physical and chemical processes come into play, producing gases of varying density and characteristic features. Air has particles of dust and different gases, which produce the perception of touch. Friction of the various molecules present in the air produces static electricity which is observed as a scintillating display of atmospheric discharge of electrically charged particles in the sky often observed at the poles. This sparkle of static electric discharge is synonymous with 'fire'. Perhaps the Upanishadic sage got this brilliant idea when he observed a meteor shower during the night. The two elementary gases hydrogen and oxygen combine to form the molecule H_2O commonly known as 'water'. With all these essential ingredients in place, the solidifying and cooling down process of nature starts its effect and produces soil and rocks which are symbolised by the 'earth' element. Then gravity and magnetic forces come into play, giving density, gravity and grossness, indicative of the grossness or heaviness of not only the earth but also of the air around it. Previously, before gravity and other forces of nature came into play, this air was subtle and very light; it spread universally and uniformly to all the corners of the cosmos. But with the gradual formation of different celestial bodies from the primordial cosmic gases, each having its own gravity and other natural physical and chemical forces, the air was pulled or

sucked in, leaving the rest of the space beyond the reach of these celestial bodies into a big void.

The sky is pregnant with a wide variety of impurities. It is full of celestial bodies besides cosmic debris. It has the burning furnace of the sun as well as the cool pitcher of nectar symbolised by the moon. The black clouds of a storm with its stabs of ferocious lightening coexist with white fluffy clouds floating lazily across the calm sky. There are birds of prey and there are harmless kites flying in it. There is the polluted haze of the city as is the pristine clear atmosphere of a village and the mountain. There is the brightness of the day and the foreboding darkness of the night. But the wonder is that none of these really affect the sky at all—it remains clear and untainted in its basic nature and form. All these things cited here are extraneous to the fundamental nature and characteristic of the sky. The sky treats all of them with the same magnanimity and kindness. Similarly, a wise man treats all the creatures with whom he has to interact in this world with the same equanimity and fortitude as the sky.

²It is often observed that a self-realised man acts most ordinarily and seems to be submerged neck-deep in worldly affairs. He may do things not expected of a sane man. For instance, he may speak incessantly for a long time like a chatterbox, appear to be most affable and malleable in one instant and then suddenly become silent like a reclusive monk, turning stubborn, taciturn and recalcitrant in his behaviour in the other moment. His behaviour is unpredictable because he is not bothered about what the world thinks of him, and also because he is not even aware of what his body does, because all deeds and behaviours are limited to the body and have nothing to do with the soul. His external behaviour does not reflect his internal 'self' in the least. It is only when one identifies oneself with the body that he becomes responsible for the deeds and actions of the body, but this does not apply to the ascetic who has virtually abandoned the body and identifies himself with the pure consciousness or Atma which does nothing and remains merely a neutral observer of what the body does. So the deeds and actions of the body neither affect him nor can they be linked to him.

Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 51, 107-111.]

43. An expert ascetic who has mastered the art of doing Yoga acquires astounding mystical powers that enable him to assume whatever form he desires¹.

He becomes free from all bodily ailments, especially continuous decline of the body and problems associated with old age (and such other physical ailments as well as mental, emotional and other psychological problems). He becomes immortal and not subjected to death as it occurs to other mortal creatures².

As a result, he can freely go anywhere he wishes in the three Lokas (the terrestrial, the nether and the heavenly worlds)³ (43).

[Note—¹Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 51, 73-75, 108-110.

²Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 45, 57-60, 87, 90-91, 94, 97, 104, 107-110, 127, 140-141.

³Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 73-75, 102, 105, 109-110.]

44. The mystical and enigmatic powers that the ascetic acquires are beyond imagination. He has acquired full control over all his sense organs. He not only is able to assume any form he wishes but also to change it by reverting to his original form or assuming a new form. (44).

[Note—These mystical powers are collectively called 'Siddhis'. They are eight in number, such as (i) 'Anima' 'अणिमा' means the power to become microscopic or so minute that one becomes invisible to the naked eye; (ii) 'Mahima' 'महिमा' is to have majesty, glory and fame; to be honoured and acknowledged for one's achievements, knowledge and skills; (iii) 'Garima' 'गरिमा' is to have weight, stature, dignity,

decorum, gravity and significance, (iv) 'Laghima' 'लघिमा' is to have simplicity and humility; (v) 'Praapti' 'प्राप्ति' is to be able to attain or obtain anything wished or desired; (vi) 'Paraakram' 'पराक्रम' is to have valour, ardour, strength, powers, prowess, potential and punch leading to triumph, glory and majesty; (vii) 'Ishwatwa' 'ईश्वत्वं' is to be able to have lordship or sway over others; and (viii) 'Vashitwa' 'वशित्व' is to be able to control and subdue others.

Refer verse no. 138 and 149 of Canto 1 of this Upanishad which says that all these Siddhis are possible when the ascetic is able to successfully complete the four steps of Yoga—i.e. the Mantra, Hath, Laya and Raaj Yogas. Refer also to Yogtattva Upanishad verse nos. 73-74, 104-111.]

45. Such an expert and acclaimed Yogi (ascetic) does not die in the conventional sense of death for he has already burnt his gross body and its sense of existence in the symbolic fire of Yoga¹. What has already been dead or burnt cannot die again or be burnt again².

So when he wishes to die under traditional meaning of the term 'death', he would do so by doing 'Hath Yoga'³ voluntarily rather than clinging greedily to the body, not wanting to abandon it, and suffering the horrors of death (as described above in verse no. 28-33). That is, he would not like to stick around till the time the body itself decays after it has almost outlived its tenure because of the fact that it is made of decayable matter and has to come to an end one or the other day; it is not eternal and imperishable as the pure conscious Atma. So, rather than wait for the body to start decaying as is its natural wont, the wise ascetic himself abandons it by doing the rigorous exercises of Yoga, called 'Hath Yoga', and voluntarily discards the body like the serpent discards its outer cuticle when it is ripe and old (45).

[Note—¹This 'death or burning' of the body and its organs is of great symbolic value for the ascetic, for now as long as he lives he feels as free as the 'ethereal spirit' can hope to be. This means that he has realised that 'he' is none but the 'eternally free ethereal spirit' called the 'sublime Atma or soul' that was trapped in the gross body from which it has now found liberation and deliverance by the means of Yoga. That is also why he can assume any form he wishes, and go wherever he wants. It is obvious that he wouldn't be able to do so if the body had been there with all its attendant practical restrictions and limitations. Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 81-109.

Conventionally a man dies when his body gets old and decays gradually to a stage when it is no longer able to sustain itself and all its organs fail to function and come to a standstill. This type of death is very painful and tormenting for the Pran or life forces present inside the body. This Pran is sort of torn off forcefully from the flesh and bones of the body much like an animal's hide is skinned or wool sheared from a sheep. The Pran tries its best to cling to the body but it is compelled to leave it, resulting in extreme agony for the creature. Now, who is this 'creature'? Herein lies the secret that an enlightened ascetic is privy to—it is the Atma and not the body; the pure self of the ascetic is his consciousness called the soul or Atma. That is why by burning the body with the fire ignited by Yoga he is not harming the 'self' but only burning the cage of the body in which it is trapped. Refer verse no. 40 above of this Canto 1.

This 'death' is the glorious interpretation of the term death as well as of Yoga; it has a metaphysical implication more than physical aspect of Yoga and death. The latter aspect is explained in the next stanza when it is said that the ascetic finally sheds his physical gross body by the process of 'Hath Yoga' after having symbolically eliminated the body and burning it in the fire of wisdom and enlightenment obtained by becoming acquainted with the profound philosophical and metaphysical teachings of Yoga that has led him to realise his true 'self' and its

astounding divine and mystical potentials. That is, he practices the physical exercises of Yoga, controls his vital functions and collects all the vital winds called the life-giving Pran from all the corners of the body, diverts them up the Sushumna Naadi, the central nerve going up to the top of the head from its base in the Kundalini, the coiled subtle energy center at the base of the spine, to finally reach the head. In the process, the consciousness called the Atma joins this Pran, riding piggy back on it, and ultimately both of them make their exit from the body through the Brahm Randhra, the hair-like slit on the top of the head, to merge with the wind and sky element outside the body and become one with the latter. Meanwhile, the body disintegrates into its constituent parts, such as the earth, water and fire elements which it was formed. The breakdown is completed and final Mukti, i.e. liberation and deliverance is obtained. This is called Kaivalya form of Mukti.

Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 106-109.

²So what has already died or burnt cannot die again or be burnt again. For all practical purposes the ascetic has already burnt his body when he has burnt his Ahankar (refer verse no. 35-37). That is why under traditional norms, the body of a dead ascetic is not cremated by fire but directly immersed in the water of a river. If that is not feasible, it is buried under ground. This is because his 'dead gross body' is just like the ash that remains after a normal human body is cremated by burning it on the funeral pyre after his death. The ash is collected and immersed in holy rivers or buried in pots underground if this emersion is not practically possible to indicate the merger of the elements that constituted the body with the primary elements of Nature.

³Refer also to verse nos. 133-134 of Canto 1 below in the present context. The concept of Hath Yoga has also been explained in Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 19, 129. Basically it involves rigorous physical exercises of breath control and other exercises such as the various Mudras and Aasans as enumerated in verse nos. 81-130 of Yogtattva Upanishad which is Chapter 17 of this volume as well as other Upanishads dealing with the concept of Yoga.]

46. That state which is regarded by ignorant worldly people as 'death' is deemed to be the state of 'life eternal' by the Yogi (practicing ascetic), while that state which is traditionally regarded by people as the 'living one' is deemed to be 'death' by him (46).

[Note—Traditionally to 'live' means remaining active in this material world, remaining engrossed in myriad worldly deeds and activities, establishing odd relationships and forging newer ones, procreating and then striving to provide for the new generation, acquiring wealth and generally contributing to material enhancement and growth of this material world, and in the process enjoying and suffering all the consequences that attend this involvement. This 'living' entails the involvement of the gross body in a world which is perishable and the cause of spiritual miseries.

Now, for a spiritually evolved ascetic, such involvement would be tantamount to killing his soul; it would destroy the very purpose for which his 'self' has obtained this gross body, which is to find spiritual liberation and deliverance instead of re-entering the cycle of birth and death once again by losing the golden opportunity which the body provides. How does the body provide him the golden opportunity? It is by the means of the human body that Yoga can be done and Gyan can be acquired; animals, insects, worms and plants cannot avail of this chance even though they also come under the category of living beings. So by allowing himself to be engrossed in this material world, the ascetic has virtually killed once in a lifetime opportunity to break free from the cycle of birth and death and its attendant horrors and delusions.

On the other hand, when the body becomes lifeless (i.e. when it stops showing signs of consciousness, life and mobility), or when Pran and other vital life forces leave the body and the latter becomes limp and a lifeless bundle of rapidly decaying skin, tissues, flesh and bones, it is regarded conventionally as 'dead'. But

metaphysically the creature has not died; it has not perished at all. The reason is that the body was not the 'true self' in the first place, because it is the conscious Atma or the soul which is inherently eternal, imperishable and immortal. When the physical body dies, it actually means that this 'true self' or the conscious soul of the person has simply left it for some other destination just like one leaves his home to find some new home after migration to a new country. Obviously therefore, there is no question of 'death or dying' for a self-realised and wise ascetic when the gross physical body is shed by him, either voluntarily as done by Hath Yoga when the ascetic decides to pull out his Pran out of the body willingly by rigorous meditation exercises, or involuntarily as done during Samadhi, the immortal, transcendental and trance-like sublime state of 'non-being' in this physical gross and mortal world. During 'Hath Yoga' he is doing rigorous exercises such as different Aasans and Mudras (sitting postures), Bandhas (closure of apertures in the body), Pranayam (breath control), Dhyan (meditation and contemplation), Yam and Niyams (observance of various self-control principles and other tenets of Yoga) etc., but during 'Samadhi' he is under no obligation to do any of these because he is so absorbed in contemplation and meditation that he is not even aware of his own existence in this physical world, he is so engrossed in his inner self that he is completely numb to all sensations, let alone the sense of awareness to observe this or that rule. Samadhi marks the exemplary state of transcendental neutrality and spiritual exaltedness when the attention is totally focused on the pure consciousness and the inner self with its attendant bliss and ecstasy that the practitioner has no inclination or time to think of anything else, what to talk of the gross body and what it is doing or is supposed to do in this gross world. In fact, in this state he is not even aware of the presence of the body at all.

These two states of Yoga—viz. Hath and Samadhi—are not in exclusion of each other but inclusive in nature. They both are parts of the composite structure of Yoga, complimenting and supplementing each other. The Samadhi is the culmination of Yoga, while Hath is the path leading to it; how can one reach the goal without treading the correct path, and what good is the path if the destination is not reached?

An enlightened, attained and self-realised ascetic does not die like an ordinary ignorant man who does not understand the real meaning of death, leaving him fretting and fuming during his last days and last moments because he wishes to make a last ditch attempt to retain this body. How stupid is he indeed! Is he not aware that the body cannot be made to 'live indefinitely' because it is inherently decayable and perishable? Everything in this material world has a fixed time-frame and fixed life span; they cannot last eternally. Even the fathomless and infinite cosmos has an end and it would come to an end one day.

Anything that is not eternal and not steady cannot be the 'truth' because the 'truth' is always uniform, immutable, unchanging, universal, eternal and everlasting. Since the body is constantly changing right from its conception in the mother's womb till the time it develops wrinkles and becomes decrepit and hopelessly problematic, and finally decays and falls down dead and lifeless inspite of the best of upkeep and care that one takes for it, it follows that it is not the 'truth'. Then, is it not the height of stupidity for grieving for such a body and regarding it as the 'self'? Besides this, the body is a nasty bundle of flesh and bones, of waste matter such as mucous, urine, stool etc. Is a man not ashamed at calling such a filthy bag as his 'self'? Of course the Yogi thinks otherwise; he regards his pure consciousness, the Atma or soul as his 'true self', and the latter never dies. After the so-called 'death' of the gross body, this Atma or the 'true self' of the Yogi simply migrates to some other place.]

47. The wise and enlightened Yogi has no obligations left. He is not attached to and interested in any deed or activity. [For he wishes to remain a neutral observer to what the body does out of its own volition.]

Such a Yogi is said to be 'Jivan Mukta', i.e. he is liberated and delivered even while he lives in this world with a gross body. He becomes free from all taints and other faults; he becomes immaculate and pure and completely cleaned in every way (47).

[Note—The various taints and faults have enumerated in verse no. 10-11 above of this Canto 1.]

48. There are certain categories of people who call themselves as 'Gyani and Virakta', i.e. they proclaim that they are wise, erudite, sagacious, learned and enlightened as well as renunciates who have the correct knowledge of the truth and have consequentially detached themselves from this artificial material world and its sense objects. But on close analysis they have no comparison with a Yogi, an ascetic who diligently practices the principles of Yoga.

This is because such people who boast of their knowledge, learning and wisdom are really imposters who are slaves of their bodies and its natural urges; they yearn for self-gratification and spend their entire life caring for the body, attending to its demands and feeding its insatiable worldly desires and aspirations. Their proclamations of renunciation sound mere hollow boasts made to merely enhance their stature amongst their followers to get more material mileage with them, for had they been truly enlightened and self-realised, they would not have been so worried about their healthy and well toned bodies and their worldly fame as they are usually found to be. They would not gather a crowd of disciples and followers and get worshipped and adored as they are usually seen to be doing.

Such people are contemptible and condemnable. They are nothing better than a mass of flesh (i.e. a body made of gross materials which has no real worth in the field of spiritualism). They can never be true Gyanis and Vairaagis. [That is, they can never qualify to be called truly enlightened, attained, wise and self-realised—or 'Gyanis', and they can never be truly called a person who has developed an extreme sense of renunciation, detachment, indifference and dispassion for all things that are not true and real from the spiritual point of view—or Vairaagis. If a person becomes enlightenment and spiritually exalted, it would automatically mean that he would have learnt the futility of boasting of his knowledge, for knowledge is like an ocean and no one can measure it from end to end; he would shun pursuing worldly fame and bothering too much about the gross and perishable body about which he is convinced that it is of no consequence. Previously it has already been emphasised that to feel proud of one's self and one's body, to advertise one's achievements and noble virtues such as the eclectic virtues of Gyan (knowledge) and Vairagya (sense of detachment), is in itself a sign of ignorance or Agyan which is the opposite of Gyan of which the ascetic is boasting about—refer verse no. 12, 15, 34-39 of this Canto 1.]

On the contrary, a truly enlightened, self-realised and wise Yogi is self-contained and inwards looking; he prefers seclusion and quiet; he prefers to spend his time and energy in meditation and contemplation along with enhancing and augmenting his spiritual achievements instead of milking it for material gains. He would not go around advertising his stupendous mystical powers. [Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 76-79 which expressly prohibit such things.] (48).

49. Even learned, erudite and the so-called wise people who are well versed with the knowledge contained in the scriptures, i.e. those who are called 'Gyanis', have to die and enjoy or suffer the consequences of their good or bad deeds done in the previous

life. After the rewards or punishment period is over, they have to come back to take a new birth again as a Gyani (49).

[Note—The person dies and takes a new birth to enjoy the rewards of good deeds done by him in his previous life, or to suffer from the bad effects of misdeeds. Once a stage is reached when all the past deeds and their consequences are exhausted and nothing remains as a baggage to be carried forward to the next life after death, it is then that an enlightened man becomes eligible or entitled to revert back to his original state from which came to such a horrible pass when he got trapped in the complicated cog and wheel structure of worldly delusions, the cycle of deeds and consequences and its accompanying cycle of birth and death to such an extent that he finds himself lost in the labyrinthine catacomb from which he finds it difficult to get out.

Freeing one self by getting rid of deeds is not so easy as it seems on the surface because the equation gets progressively complicated when in the second birth taken to enjoy or suffer the consequences of the first birth, he does other deeds which in turn produce their own set of consequences. This way the cycle continues, spinning out of control and getting more and more complicated and intertwined with each turn of the wheel of birth and death. It is only when true wisdom and enlightenment dawns on the person and he distances himself from the body which is actually doing the deed that he is qualified to be called a renunciate and detached from the deeds as well as being a truly self-realised and enlightened person. If this happens by good luck, then he is said to be back to square number one. Now comes his golden chance to break free from the cycle of birth and death. How? This question is answered next. See also note to verse nos. 51-52 also.]

50. If the good effects of deeds done by him weigh more in his favour combined with his true awakening, he comes in contact with a ‘Siddha’, or an ascetic who has succeeded in his Yoga and consequentially obtained certain mystical and divine spiritual powers that are only accessible after success in Yoga is obtained and not before. In other words, he comes in contact with a truly self-realised and enlightened person as compared with imposters and fame-seekers. This is his great fortune!

If this true Yogi (i.e. an ascetic who has become self-realised and is truly enlightened and spiritually attained) who is approached by a sincere spiritual aspirant or seeker of the ‘truth’ becomes pleased with him, i.e. if the former sees that the latter has the right aptitude and decides that his soul has reached spiritual maturity and has thus become eligible to be initiated into the path of Yoga, he blesses him. That is, the spiritually attained and expert Yogi accepts the spiritual aspirant as his disciple and makes him privy to the secrets of Yoga; he advises him on the various aspects of the path ahead and guides him along because he is the most competent man to do so as he has had himself a first hand experience of Yoga and its various landmark signs of successes as well as the numerous pitfalls that are encountered on the way.

This is the only way the spiritual aspirant and seeker of ‘truth’ can become a successful Yogi himself, and not otherwise. [That is, merely reading of Yoga in the scriptures is not enough without the able guidance of a true teacher. This is a very treacherous path and very dangerous to follow without proper guidance.] (50).

51. It is only then that the spiritual aspirant’s worldly fetters are broken; there is no other way out for him to break free from the cycle of birth and death¹. Oh Brahma! The words of Lord Shiva are not in vain and not without weight. [In other words, what Shiva speaks is indeed the truth.]

Gyan (knowledge of the reality and awareness of the truthful nature of the self, this wisdom) is not entirely able to give Moksha (liberation and deliverance) on its own without the support of Yoga (making relevant efforts to reach one’s spiritual

goal, to sincerely pursue it without wavering, and implementing the great tenets of Yoga philosophy in letter and spirit). [In other words, merely knowledge of what has been said in the scriptures about the pure self, the Atma, the supreme transcendental Brahm etc. are insufficient to achieve success in self-realisation and Brahm-realisation which leads the path towards breaking free from the cycle of birth and death. This profound and sublime knowledge has to be supplemented and complemented with making effort in this direction and practicing the great teachings in life.] (51).

[Note—¹Previously in verse nos. 48-49 of this Canto 1 it has been explained how and why even a person who is called a 'Gyani'—i.e. a person who has knowledge of the various eclectic truths expounded and enunciated by the scriptures, who has thoroughly studied them and is well versed in their doctrines and tenets, can still remain ensnared in the cobweb of ignorance and delusions as well as trapped in the cycle of birth and death. Normally a person who has acquired 'Gyan', i.e. who has become enlightened and realised, should not face this fate because Gyan is meant to bestow liberation and deliverance, and not trap anyone. If this objective of spiritual emancipation and salvation is not achieved for the reasons enumerated in the aforesaid verses and elsewhere then the very purpose of gaining Gyan is defeated. If a man remains trapped in captivity inspite of the knowledge of how to break free from his captivity and bondage, then there is no use of his having this knowledge, and all the efforts made and time and energy spent in this direction go down the drain. Hence, such a man is called an 'Agyani' for all practical purposes inspite of his having studied the scriptures and having a literal knowledge of their texts.

But there is a subtle difference between the man who is called Agyani because he has not even read the scriptures and is not aware of the reality, and a man who is Agyani because he has forgotten his goal and got charmed by the enticements proffered by the material world. In the latter case, a stage is reached when he is fed up of everything and wishes for true peace and rest. Then at least he has the required knowledge of what to do, how to do it etc. He has the technical know-how to proceed in the correct direction once he realises his follies and shortcomings; he knows how to repent and atone for his misdeeds and how to break free from this cycle of deeds and their consequences. As compared to this lucky man, the poor chap who is not even aware of the path and the means to find out the path gets completely lost. But even this man can achieve success if he has the will and the grit, though it would take more time and energy for him to obtain freedom as compared to the Gyani who has already done his initial homework previously but was misled from the chosen path due to his own stupidity.

A truly Agyani man would not even be aware that he is an Agyani, that he is trapped and needs freedom, that he is suffering from avoidable miseries which are his own creation, and there are ways to overcome them. He would think that it is his fate and blame the gods for his torments. On the other hand, the Gyani would realise that surely there must be some flaw in his method of handling things that has caused him so much suffering, and then he would patiently go about analyzing the reason for his sufferance and endeavour to find a way out of this quagmire instead of blaming his fate and the gods for them. So he approaches a wise, competent and expert teacher and guide to advise him, to show him the way to address and fix his spiritual problems. It is this 'teacher and guide', called a Guru', who is being referred to in this present verse. Though both the teacher and the disciple are Gyanis in their own right, the former is better positioned than the latter because he had successfully implemented what he had learnt from the scriptures and has reached his spiritual goal while the latter failed to do so and hence need expert guidance. The Guru has reached the exalted stature of self-realisation and has tasted the elixir of spiritual bliss, while the disciple is still on his way. See verse no. 52 below which reiterates this observance.

Refer also to verse nos. 13-15 of this Canto 1 of this Upanishad as well as verse no. 14-18 of Yogtattva Upanishad.]

52. Likewise, Yoga cannot be successful and its full potentials realised without the help and support of Gyan. They should be coordinated and judiciously mixed in order to achieve success and reap the combined benefits of both¹.

It is after many births (i.e. after a very long time and many ups and downs) that Gyan inspires an aspirant to pursue Yoga² (52).

[Note--¹It is an obvious observation. In order to succeed in any endeavour whatsoever, one must have a thorough knowledge of that field. Otherwise it would be like jumping in the ocean without proper preparation and knowledge of swimming—inviting certain death by drowning. If one wishes to cook food, he must also know how to light the stove and how to put it off; just the knowledge of switching on the electric oven is not enough if one does not know how to switch it off.

²This is because originally a spiritual aspirant was under the impression that obtaining knowledge and expertise as to what is the truth would empower him to obtain access to that truth. But in practice he gets bogged down in delusions and false sense of pride of knowledge. The result is far from his expectations, for though now he would refrain from indulging in misdeeds and sinful acts, but he would continue to do good deeds in the hope that their good effect would provide him liberation and deliverance. But they don't, and this fact has been stressed earlier in verse nos. 48-51. When finally true wisdom dawns upon his intellect and he wonders why this situation has arisen, he then strives to find out the cause and the remedy—and it is then that Gyan comes to his aid once again. It enlightens him that he needs to practice Yoga in order to fully realise the benefits of obtaining Gyan. In other words, he must implement the knowledge that the scriptures teach in their correct fashion, with the correct perspective and in the proper context. The word 'Yoga' itself means to forge a union between two entities. So he realises that all the limbs of Gyan, all its various branches and sub-branches are to be effectively coordinated to bring about some meaningful benefit from them. Its like an orchestra—every step of music played by different musical instruments have to be in perfect and constant harmony with each other; each member has to be perfectly in sync with all the other members of the team—otherwise the music of the orchestra comes apart; even one misstep would grind the entire orchestra to a halt.

The effort to effectively bring about the union of the individual Atma with the supreme Atma of creation is called Yoga, and the attainment of the ultimate destiny of the soul whereby it finds eternal peace and tranquility is the real purpose of Gyan. It helps in obtaining final liberation and deliverance of the soul, called realising Moksha, an achievement that provides the ultimate emancipation and salvation to the creature. After that, he would not have to enter the cycle of birth and death anymore. Hence, Yoga and Gyan are like the two legs of a person by the help of which he reaches his spiritual destination easily.]

53. On the contrary, if one is empowered by the spiritual strength that Yoga (meditation and contemplation) provides, Gyan (truthful knowledge of the reality the soul and its stupendous potentials; self-realisation) can be obtained in one lifetime itself (i.e. in a short time span and without much effort)¹.

Hence, there is no better path for obtaining Moksha (liberation and deliverance from ignorance and delusions about this world and body) than Yoga² (53).

[Note—¹To understand how this is made possible, we can take the following simple example. A science student learns the basics of science more easily if he sees the principles being applied in practice as compared to the case when he has to grasp their meaning merely from text books in an abstract manner. Practice is a better tool

for learning than mere theory. So by practicing the principles of Yoga, of which meditation and contemplation are important and unavoidable tools, a spiritual aspirant is better placed and equipped to understand the real meaning of the concept of the terms 'true self' and 'self-realisation' than merely reading about them in theory form in the voluminous texts of the scriptures and hearing about them in long religious discourses. Yoga is a quicker and more effective method, a sort of practical laboratory for implementing and putting into effect the knowledge acquired through the process of Gyan.

²This is because meditation and contemplation would wizen the spiritual aspirant about his true self, and he would then realise that the body which he had hitherto being treating as his 'self' is a fallacious notion. In other words, he breaks free from this basic fetter; he manages to liberate himself from this ignorance and its attendant delusions. Once the body-factor and its attending problems are eliminated, there is freedom of the 'spirit'; the aspirant does not have to get tied to the deeds done by the body and neither is he bothered about this world which he had needed to look after this body, to take care of the body's needs. This is called Jivan Mukti. Refer also to verse no. 47 of this Canto 1 above.]

54. A spiritual aspirant thinks that by practicing Gyan, i.e. doing meditation and contemplation, for a long time would lead him to obtaining Mukti or Moksha. That is, he thinks that acquisition of knowledge and deeply meditating upon its profound truths would lead him to obtaining liberation and deliverance from this world of ignorance and delusions; it would help him to break free from the fetters of this perishable body by dissociating himself from it and the deeds done by it. But this is a long drawn and time consuming process. It cannot provide an instant liberation and deliverance (as is possible by Yoga). (54).

[Note—Essentially this verse means that Yoga is able to deliver results in a shorter time span as compared to following the path of Gyan. The word 'Yoga' itself indicates this fact—it brings a union between two units; it acts like a coupling used in trains to join two coaches. It brings to fruition more quickly the benefits of Gyan. This is because Yoga puts to test the theoretical knowledge obtained by Gyan. Here the word 'Gyan' is to be interpreted as knowledge and erudition, as expertise in the knowledge of the scriptures, while 'Yoga' would be its practical application. This is supported by verse no. 98 which says that a Gyani, a person who has Gyan, continues to take birth and death and remain engrossed in worldly pursuance. How is it ever possible to do so if he is an enlightened and wise and self-realised person in the first place? It proves that his Gyan is merely superficial and he has not obtained any real benefit by studying the scriptures.

Herein lies the role of Yoga—it bridges the gap between theory and practice. Only by putting foot on the bridge can one cross the river; merely sighting the other bank of the river or the knowledge of what lies there would be of no practical value. Asking others about what lies on the other side of the river and imagining of it and spending one's lifetime in such thoughts is like mere pursuance of Gyan, while actually crossing the river on the bridge is like taking the help of Yoga to reach the other side. Refer verse nos. 49-53.]

55. Even if hundreds of births have passed, whenever one finds Mukti (liberation and deliverance; emancipation and salvation) it is only thorough the strength of Yoga.

Yoga helps one to break free from the cycle of birth and death. Those who practice Yoga do not have to take repeated births and die again and again (55).

[Note—It ought to be noted here that since this Upanishad is Yoga-centric, it is obvious that it would stress the importance of this spiritual field and emphasise that it is the only superior path to liberation and deliverance. It is not to demean the

importance of Gyan in spiritualism, because it has already been stressed in the very beginning that both Yoga and Gyan are needed for spiritual liberation and deliverance—refer verse no. 13 of this Canto 1 above.]

56. Yoga enables one to mix the two vital winds called Pran (the breath) and Apaana (the wind that moves down in the intestines and which is responsible for digestion and elimination of waste from the anus). This is like bringing about a union of the sun and the moon². This creates such a rare symbolic configuration of cosmic forces of Nature that it becomes possible to kindle the hitherto dormant but all-pervading subtle cosmic energy symbolising the inherent divine powers and strength of the ‘self’ or pure consciousness that lay hidden inside the body made up of the seven basic structural ingredients called the ‘Dhaatus’¹ (56).

[Note—¹The seven Dhaatus of the Body are the structural features or basic ingredients of the gross physical body. They have been elaborately explained above as note to verse no. 40 of this Canto no. 1.

²Verse nos. 68, 116-117 and 133-134 of this Canto describes how a symbolic union of the sun and the moon is brought about, and what the reward of this union is.
]

57. With the awakening or kindling of this latent divine dynamic energy inside the body brought about by Yoga, all the ailments and hurdles that had been tormenting the ascetic are removed. In this state, the ascetic has no fear of the body being pierced by any sharp thing, or its decay and falling down. This is because the ascetic has no relationship with the physical gross body any longer in this state of self-realised existence during which he lives not as someone with a gross body but as someone in the sublime and subtle form of the all-pervading ‘sky’ element.

In other words, he lives not as someone with a gross physical body having a fixed form and shape and subjected to all sorts of limitations that are incumbent to things that are gross and physical in nature but as one who is to be identified with the ethereal Spirit known as the pure conscious Atma, and this Atma in its primary form as the eternal and infinite spirit is uniformly dispersed throughout the length and breadth of the creation just like the air element is uniformly distributed and ubiquitously present in the entire space that is defined as the ‘sky’.

The Spirit and the Pran (i.e. the ethereal Atma and the vital life-infusing wind element respectively) are synonymous with each other for all practical purposes. Since the air or wind element pervades throughout the length and breadth of the sky, it is a natural corollary that the Spirit is also ubiquitously present everywhere where there is the sky, and there is no place in creation where the sky is not present! As compared to them, the gross body is limited to a particular point in space; it cannot be uniformly diffused and universally omnipresent in the entire creation like either the sky or the air element (57).

[Note—When the ascetic is able to extract himself from the entanglements of the web-like body consisting of the gross ingredients as enumerated in note to verse no. 56 above, he finds liberation and freedom to move around without the limiting and shackling effects of the cage-like body. This body is both cage-like as well as web-like. The external features of the body such as the skin and the bones act like the cage, the blood and mucus act like the moat around the fort in which the creature’s Atma is trapped, and the veins and nerves act like the web or net tied around its neck and legs with which this Atma is shackled to the cage. The fire of Yoga burns this web or net along with the cage, and lets the bird in the form of the Atma fly off to freedom.]

58. What is the use of saying anything more or stressing the point further? It is sufficient to say that a true and self-realised Yogi (i.e. an ascetic who sincerely practices Yoga in a holistic manner) does not die. He lives in this world like any other living being who has a body, but like a piece of camphor that has been burnt out (58).

[Note—When camphor is in its raw state, it is white and its presence is felt immediately by its strong smell; it is volatile, easily catches fire and burns rapidly, giving a lot of smoke and light. This situation symbolises an ordinary living creature. His body is attractive, it emits a body odour, he is emotionally and bodily restless, and he is easily aroused and becomes angry. On the contrary, burnt-out camphor has none of these qualities. So the ascetic who had burnt all his sense of pride and ego (called Ahankar) which symbolically burns his body has nothing of worldly qualities left in him. Besides this, a piece of burnt-out camphor is of no use to anyone. Similarly, an ascetic who has burnt all his worldly ties is of no good to others, thereby freeing him of disturbances created by them. Prior to its burning, the physical piece of camphor could be seen, smelt, tasted and touched, but when it is lit it burns and vanishes into oblivion, leaving no trace behind.]

Similarly, the ascetic uses Yoga and its stupendous energy to burn himself up and merge his elements with their primary cosmic forms, leaving no trace of his 'self' after death. Even while he is alive he is deemed to be non-existent because the gross body which lives in this world is not his 'true self', for the latter is his Atma which gradually vanishes into the cosmic Atma or the Supreme Self just like a piece of camphor that gradually starts to reduce in size and shape and ultimately vanishes into thin air even though it is not lighted.]

59. The Chitta (the sub-conscious, the conscience and the subtle aspect of mind) is invariably attached to the Pran (the vital spark of life that sustains consciousness in the living creature's gross body)¹.

Similarly, the Mana (mind and the subtle aspects of the heart; the thoughts and emotions) of a creature has bound the latter in fetters like a bird tied with a strong string or cord² (59).

[Note--¹This is because only as long as there is life inside the body would it think and feel anything. As soon as the Pran leaves the body, such as at the time of death, the body stops to feel any sensations, and in spite of all the organs present in it as they were before death, it would be un-conscious. It cannot think, it cannot see, not hear, nor taste, nor speak etc. In short, the Chitta ceases to function.]

²The Mana is attached to the gross material world because it appears so very attractive and charming for the senses. The enchanting world offers a chance for the Mana of the creature to satisfy his yearning for self gratification. The body would rather enjoy the sense objects of the world than to suffer hardships which renunciation and other spiritual paths demand of it. The Mana would never let the creature believe that the world is false and the body is perishable. Instead, it makes the creature live in a make-believe world of magical charms, creating an illusion of immense joys and happiness in this involvement. So it is metaphorically said that the Mana has tied the creature like a bird tied with a string, preventing the pure 'self' to detach itself from the world and get freedom from its falsehoods and illusionary charms by following the rigorous path of Gyan and Yoga.]

60. The Mana cannot be controlled or reined in so easily by any method, no matter how much thought is given to do so. The only way to subdue or conquer the Mana is to exercise control over the Pran factor; there is no other way (60).

[Note—When an ascetic has been able to exercise control over his sense organs and natural urges by rigorously following the tenets of Yoga and Gyan, it is only then that he is automatically able to control his Mana (the thoughts of his mind and the

emotional impulses of his sentimental heart). If he remains a serf of his senses and remains engrossed in appeasing them at all costs, then the control of the Mana is out of question for him. The control of Pran is equivalent to exercising rigorous self-control or self-restraint because controlling of the Pran or the vital winds is possible only through the process of Pranayam which are breath controlling exercises that involve strict control over the body and its external organs of perception and action. In other words, 'controlling the Pran' is a metaphoric way of saying 'controlling the self'.]

61. Oh Vidhe (the one who established the codes and laws of conduct for the creation; Brahma the creator)! This Mana cannot be controlled or reined in by logics, debates, reasoning, the web created by scriptures, various magical charms, tactics, maneuverings, skill and other devices. It can be done only by the well established and proved method of Yoga. [This is because Yoga gives direct and practical guidelines of how to control the body and its sense organs, thereby setting the stage for controlling of the Mana.] (61).

62. If one is not aware of how to truly control the Prans (the vital winds present in the body) and embarks on doing Yoga, then he is subjected to great miseries, tribulations, sufferings, distress, pain, frustration and ultimate failure due to his half-baked knowledge of how to do Yoga successfully and in a holistic manner¹ (62).

[Note—¹It should be observed here that mere physical control of breath by claspings the nostrils is not the aim of Yoga or the meaning of controlling the Prans, and this fact would be amply clear in the next verse. As far as the physical exercise of controlling of breath is concerned, nearly all the Upanishads that deal with Yoga and its physical aspect consisting of various exercises describe elaborate methods of controlling it. One such universally acknowledged and well known method is called 'Pranayam' whereby the breath is controlled by a series of steps divided into three basic units—Purak referring to inhalation, Kumbhak referring to holding of the inhaled breath, and Rechak referring to exhalation.]

63. Those who try to gain true control over the vital air element (called the Pran) by merely relying upon physical exercises (such as Pranayam) and hope to attain the stupendous glories and spiritual powers available to real Yogis (i.e. acclaimed and self-realised ascetics) through this method are as foolish as someone who is trying to cross a great ocean sitting atop a mud pitcher which is half-baked (63).

[Note—This verse implies that proper knowledge of the philosophy of Yoga, a clear and holistic understanding of its objectives and its real spiritual benefits of providing liberation and deliverance, is very essential to an aspiring ascetic and must be properly understood by him in a comprehensive manner before he starts on this journey. Earlier also it has been emphasised that Gyan, true knowledge, wisdom, erudition and enlightenment, is an important tool for success in Yoga. This Gyan not only means knowledge of the various steps in the physical exercises of Yoga, but more importantly about the deep and far-reaching metaphysical imports of each tenet of Yoga and how the physical exercises can be related to these tenets so as to pave the way for the practitioner's spiritual emancipation and salvation. Physical exercises would give him certain super human powers, such as the various Siddhis which would entitle him to lift himself from the ground and float in the sky, assume any form he wishes, go wherever he wishes without any hindrance, become invisible and enter any body he desires, but these are mere magical charms and gains of Yoga limited to this gross world. They would not relieve his soul from the horrors of the cycle of birth and death. The latter should be the main objective of doing Yoga, the main purpose for which one has embarked on this arduous journey in the first place.

Unless the ultimate goal is achieved and the objective fulfilled, the entire exercise is futile. Both Gyan and Yoga are complimentary to each other—‘Gyan’ enlightens the aspirant about his goal and the correct path to be followed to reach it and ‘Yoga’ actually helps him to go there. Gyan is empowerment through knowledge and wisdom, while Yoga is its implementation.]

64. Even if the ascetic is successful in controlling his Prans (his vital winds, by the virtue of doing various Yoga exercises such as Pranayam), he still finds it hard to control his Chitta (i.e. his sub-conscious mind which is regarded as his second inner self after the Mana, the subtle mind). As a result, the Chitta never allows him to become free from taints, faults and impurities that cast their dark shadow on him (64).

65. Oh Padmaj (one born from a lotus; a reference to Brahma the creator)! It is only when the inner self and its sub-conscious is cleansed of all its blemishes, faults and impurities that taint them and act as a veil eclipsing the inherent illumination emanating from the self-illuminated pure consciousness called the Atma that its brilliant splendour and glory shines through. It is the ‘light’ which comes from self-realisation; it is the light of enlightenment called the ‘light of Gyan’ or the illumination provided by knowledge and self-awakening that is called ‘enlightenment and self-realisation’. This makes the Yogi a true ‘Gyani’—i.e. the ascetic who has acquired true wisdom, erudition and knowledge of the reality and the ultimate Truth, who has become enlightened about the real aim and purpose of doing Yoga in the first place is the one who is entitled to be called a truly attained and realised Yogi, a wise, self-realised and enlightened ascetic.

This spiritual attainment and realisation of the Truth and Reality is only possible on the strength of Yoga (65).

[Note—This verse emphasises two basic points—one, that true and real benefit of Yoga is obtained by taking the help of Gyan because the latter not only shows one the path to be followed but guides him along, and two, that true Gyan can be obtained by following the correct path of Yoga because the latter leads to self-realisation and tapping one’s inherent spiritual strengths. They complement and supplement each other and act like two strong legs of a man which helps him walk steadily to reach his goal without stumbling and falling over midway. Refer also verse no. 12-15 of this Canto 1.]

66. Hence, a sincere spiritual aspirant should diligently practice Yoga with resilience. Those seeking Moksha (liberation and deliverance; emancipation and salvation) should practice the control of Pran (i.e. they should practice control of the sense organs of the body by controlling the vital forces of life called the Pran; they should learn self restraint).

[This verse can be read as follows—those spiritual aspirants who seek Moksha should learn to control their Pran by constant and diligent practice of Yoga.] (66).

67. Yoga is the best auspicious thing to do for a spiritual aspirant. Yoga is Shiva personified (i.e. Yoga is an embodiment of all the glorious virtues that Shiva stands for, for instance beauty, auspiciousness, truthfulness, holiness, renunciation and enlightenment of the highest order).

It is the finest path of spiritualism and it helps one to realise one’s spiritual powers and obtain one’s objectives. There is nothing better than it (67).

68. Yoga makes it possible to establish a union of the two apparently opposite forces in creation which are otherwise irreconcilable, such as for example it can forge a union between the Pran (the breath which remains restricted to the upper part of the body and has a tendency to move upwards and escape through the nostrils) and the Apan (the vital wind which moves downwards in the intestines and escapes through the anus)¹, between the various Dhaatus (elements) of the body (of which there are five primary elements, seventeen and twenty three secondary elements which would depend upon the system of classification adopted, nine tertiary elements, and finally the seven structural elements)².

It helps metaphorically to establish the union between the moon and the sun. [That is, it has the stupendous ability to bring together and establish a bondage or union between two such opposite forces of Nature as the moon and the sun, the former being an epitome of the eclectic virtues of remaining cool, calm and soothing while the other symbolises the dynamism displayed by the natural forces of creation such as energy, heat and fire. The moon is cool while the sun is blazingly hot; the moon shines in the night while the sun shines in the day. It is unimaginable to think that they can co-exist. But Yoga is so powerful that it can bring this about in a symbolic manner in order to effect a neutral state of existence when these two opposite forces of Nature cancel each other out.]

Therefore Yoga, with its majestic powers and astounding potentials, is the well chosen and correct instrument that can actually bring about a union between the creature's individual Atma, his 'self', and the Parmatma, the cosmic and supreme 'Self'.

[Yoga can perform this seemingly impossible task of bringing together the individual creature called the Jiva-Atma and the supreme transcendental Brahm called the Parmatma because it has this stupendous potential and astounding powers to effect this union. This has been symbolically emphasised by saying that it can bring the moon and the sun together; it can unite the Pran and the Apan.] (68).

[Note—¹The Pran wind is present in the upper part of the body, while the Apan wind is located in the lower half. The former is upwardly mobile while the latter is downwards mobile. From all practical point, the chances of their ever coming together are almost negligible. But the practice of various exercises of Yoga makes this actually feasible and possible, thereby establishing its claim to bring about the union of the Jiva-Atma and the Parmatma.

² The gross body can be studied at various levels depending upon the classification used to study its constitution and structure. The structural elements are variously called the Bhuts, the Dhaatus and the Tattvas.

(a) The *Primary level* of the elements—This consists of the five primary elements called the 'Pancha Mahabhuts'. They were formed at the beginning of creation, and consist of earth, water or fluid, fire or energy, air or wind and sky or space elements in increasing degree of subtlety.

They can be studied at two levels—one at the very core level, and the other at the more general level.

(a) (i) The study of the body at the core level of the five Bhuts consisting of the five primary elements consisting of the sky or space, air or wind, fire or energy, water or fluids, and earth. Refer verse nos. 1-2, and 5-6 of Shaarirako-panishad which is Chapter 20 of this volume. Briefly, the earth element formed the solid part of the body, the water element formed the fluid part, the fire element formed the warmth and heat of the body, the movement of the body is revelation of the air element, and the subtle space between various organs and tissues of the body, both at the external as well as internal levels, is the sky element.

(a) (ii) The next level would be the various Koshas or Sheaths that are made of a combination of these five elements. They are the following—Anna Maye Kosh (the

food sheath), Pran Maye Kosh (the vital wind sheath), Manomaye Kosh (the mind sheath), Vigyan Maye Kosh (the intellect sheath), and Anand Maye Kosh (the bliss sheath). These Koshas are also like the elements or units that decide the complexities of the creature's body and its position in the hierarchy of evolution.

All the living organisms can be classified into the following five types depending upon the number of Koshas they have—(i) Udbhij—these are those life forms that are born from seeds, such as members of the plant kingdom. These have only one Kosha, the Anna Maye Kalaa. In other words, they depend on food and become food for others higher up in the evolutionary ladder. (ii) Swedaj—they are those which are born from dampness and sweat, such as fungi, algae, bacteria, germs, mosquito, lice, flies etc. They have two Koshas, viz. Anna Maye and Pran Maye. That is, they are formed from food, they live for food and they die as food. Besides this, they also exhibit signs of life, e.g. the mosquito and lice have life like any other member of the animal kingdom. (iii) Andaj—they are placed higher up in the evolutionary ladder, and are born from eggs, whether inside the mother's womb or outside. Such birds as pigeon, sparrow, parrot, peacock etc. come under this category. They have three Koshas which are Anna Maye, Pran Maye and Mano-maye. The last Kosh refers to the fact that such creatures have a mind and heart which enables them to think, albeit in a primitive level. (iv) Jaruyuj—these are the creatures that are born as embryo that develops inside the mother's womb. Under this class come the animals such as horses, cows, dogs, elephants etc. They have four Koshas, such as Anna Maye, Pran Maye, Mano-maye and Vigyan Maye. The last Kosh refers to their ability to have a higher level of thinking ability called intelligence. The human being comes under this last category with the added benefit of having five Koshas. Besides the four Koshas mentioned above in other creatures of this category, the man has the fifth one and it called the Anand Maye Kosh. It is only possessed by a man and not by other creatures in the sense that the man can realise the true meaning of the terms 'bliss and happiness that is eternal and substantial' by the virtue of his attaining higher level of intelligence and his ability to delve into the secrets of the concept of truth itself and then realising that kind of happiness and bliss that is not superficial and which is not limited to enjoyment of the sensual pleasures of the body and the material comforts of the world, but which has a holistic and all-inclusive dimension that incorporates the spirit or the soul.

(b) The *secondary level* of study of the body and its structure would be at the level of the Tattvas. It consists of the Linga Deha made up of the seventeen Tattvas which are seventeen dimensions or units or elements that constitute it—the five organs of perception (ear, eye, nose, tongue and skin) + the five organs of action (hand, leg, mouth, anus and genital) + the five Prans (the five subtle forms of the vital winds present inside the body—such as Pran, Apaana, Samaana, Vyan and Udaana) + one Mana (mind) + one Buddhi (intellect) = seventeen units or elements of creation at the micro level. [Reference Shaarirako-panishad, verse no. 16.]

The gross body can be further classified as consisting of twenty three elements. They are the following—

(1) The five gross organs of perception present in the body such as the ear, skin, eye, tongue and nose make up the five gross units or elements of creation at the micro level of the body of the creature. [Total 5 organs of perception.]

(2) Then there are the five organs of action such as the anus, genital, hand, leg and speech (mouth). These are the five gross organs which add their count to the number of elements or units or dimensions that exist in this creation at the micro level. [Total 5 organs of action.]

(3) Besides these, there are the five subtle sense perceptions such as the perceptions of hearing (relevant to the ear), feeling or touching (relevant to the skin), seeing various forms and shapes (relevant to the eye and the faculty of sight), taste (relevant to the tongue) and smell (relevant to the nose). [Total 5 senses of perception.]

(4) The eight Vikaars such as one Mana (mind) + one Buddhi (intellect) + one Ahankar (pride and arrogance) + one Akash element + one air element + one fire element + one water element + one earth element = total of eight elements that cast their shadow on the purity of Nature (just like the shadow of the earth casts its shadow on the bright moon to result in the lunar eclipse). These elements are called the eight 'Vikaars' (literally meaning faults, errors, shortcomings or imperfections) that are present in Nature and affect the basic nature of all living beings.

Thus the tally comes to twenty three elements of creation as follows—5 organs of perceptions + 5 organs of action + 5 senses of perceptions + 8 Vikaars = total 23. [Reference Shaarirako-panishad, verse no. 17-19.]

(c) The next level of study of the body is the *tertiary level*. The tertiary elements that constitute the body all living beings would be the following nine—the three Gunas such as the Sata which the best quality in creation, the Raja which is the medium quality, and the Tama which is the lowest quality (refer Shaarirako-panishad, verse nos. 7-13), and the six aspects of Anatahakarans which is the inner self of the creature consisting of the sub-conscious or conscience that governs his innate character. The five aspects of Anthahakaran are the following (1) Mana or mind, (2) Buddhi or intellect, (3) Chitta or the faculty of concentration and memory; knowledge and consciousness, (4) Ahankar or ego, pride, arrogance, (5) Vrittis or inherent character, traits, habits, inclinations and temperaments of a creature based on these basic components of the subtle body—refer Paingalo-panishad, Canto 2, verse no. 3), and (6) the various Vasanas (worldly passions, lusts and yearnings—Muktiko-panishad, Canto 2). The total comes to $3 + 6 = 9$. These nine decide the inherent character and basic nature and temperament of the creature.

(d) The 7 Dhaatus—The structural features of the gross physical body consists of the so-called seven *Dhaatus*. These stand for the structural constituent of the body which supports and sustains its existence. According to ancient Indian system of medicine, they are the following—(1) Rasa (lymph and mucous; sap), (2) Rakta (blood), (3) Maansa (flesh), (4) Meda (fat and muscles), (5) Ashthi (bones and cartilage), (6) Meja (marrow), and (7) Shukra (semen).

According to other interpretations, these seven Dhaatus which form the structural features of the gross body and give it its shape and support it are the following—(1) all forms of fluid ingredients such as blood, urine, mucous, lymph etc, (2) bone and cartilage, (3) marrow, (4) flesh, fat and muscles, (5) abdominal organs such as stomach etc, (6) skin, and (7) Naadis (arteries, veins, capillaries and nerves).

(e) The structure of the body as explained in the Upanishads can be easily understood when we analyse it in the context of modern science of chemistry. This gross body of a creature can be compared to the molecular structure of any chemical substance or any thing in this world for that matter that is made up of certain basic elements. The molecules are also not visible to the naked eye just like the ingredients of the body mentioned above except some of them such as the skin and mucous much like the external features of the finished chemical product.

At the next level comes the atomic structure, or the subtle level of constitution of the body. It is like the atoms of any chemical molecule that make up the basic building blocks or units of that molecule. For example, Benzene has a hexagonal structure which would be like the gross structure of the creature's body called the Dhaatu, while the Carbon and Hydrogen atoms (C_6H_6) that go in to form the basic and fundamental ingredients of Benzene are like its subtle structure called the Bhut.

To understand how one element can transform itself into so many forms, we can take the example of isomerism in chemistry. The word 'iso' means the 'same', and 'meros' means 'parts'. Hence, isomerism refers to the phenomenon whereby two or more compounds that are composed of the same chemical formulae, i.e. they have the same molecular composition but different three dimensional structures; they differ in physical or chemical properties. Such things are called 'isomers' of the principal element.

Extended further, this phenomenon of isomerism would apply to the concept of the same Atma residing in all the living beings having a mind boggling variety of physical structures, besides the fact that all the creatures have the same Atma as well as the same basic elements as their essential identity.

Then there are two types of isomerism—i.e. structural isomerism and stereo isomerism. The concept of structural isomerism refer to those isomers which have the same molecular formulae but different structural arrangement of atoms or groups of atoms around the central atom or ion called Structural Isomers and this phenomenon is called structural isomerism. This would be like different species of living organisms which have the same Atma at the core, the same set of fundamental five elements set up around this basic core, and then comes the arrangements of secondary elements around this basic core to give rise to varying structural variations in the species as they evolved. Stereo isomerism is when the same molecular formulae represents two or more compounds which differ in the spatial arrangement of atoms or groups of atoms. Such compounds are called Stereo Isomers. In this case, we deal with one given species such as the human species which have all the gross features the same but the internal geometric patterns in which the secondary and tertiary elements exist determine the individuality of a particular man and sets him aside from all others of his ilk.

A related concept is isomorphism wherein there is apparent similarity of form between individuals belonging to different races or species. In the field of chemistry it refers to the existence of two or more chemical compounds with the same crystal structure; they differ in chemical composition but have the same crystalline structure. This would be like speaking of the entire human race, or of all the mammals for instance who would exhibit similar external features but have different internal chemistry in the sense that all have their own set of characteristic qualities, virtues and values, their own independent personality, intelligence, emotional quotient etc. Their mental and intellectual setup, their emotional and sentimental quotient, their inherent natural temperaments and inclinations etc. would differ from one individual to another depending upon the combination in which the three Gunas (Sata, Raja and Tama) exist in them.

In this context, the three Gunas that determine the individual character of the creature, that determine his 'individuality' as compared to the general character of the group to which that individual belongs, are like the isotopes in chemistry. The isotope refers to the phenomenon wherein one of two or more atoms of the same chemical element that contain the same number of protons but different numbers of neutrons in their nuclei and therefore have the same atomic number and chemical properties but different mass numbers and physical properties. For example, two brothers have the same genes and the same inheritance, but the presence of the three Gunas in different ratios between them changes their personality and thought processes. One may be a highly righteous man while the other might be just the opposite. Their parents are the same, their upbringing is the same, they have attended the same school and ate the same food, but there is a deep chasm when it comes to their character as individuals.

Refer to verse no. 40, 56 and 147 of this Canto no. 1 in this context.]

69. In other words, merger and mutual nullifying of all the opposite natural forces and qualities in creation so as to bring about a state of non-duality marked by exemplary neutrality, homogeneity, uniformity, universality and equanimity of the highest order and of the purest form is the purpose of Yoga.

Now I shall preach you about the eclectic knowledge which is called 'Yog Shikha'¹ (69).

[Note—¹The word Yog Shikha refers to the pinnacle of spiritual achievement obtained by following the great tenets of meditation and contemplation. The word 'Shikha' means the tip or apex, while the word 'Yoga' means meditation and

contemplation done to bring about a union of two or more forces of Nature together—like the case of bring together of the sun and the moon cited above in verse no. 68. Yoga brings into effect the union of the individual soul with the cosmic Soul; it forges an everlasting relationship between the micro and the macro level of existence so that the false sense of duality and distinction are eliminated and a wholesome uniformity is established. Yoga is the process by which the two sides of an equilateral triangle are extended to meet at the apex which symbolises the climax of one's spiritual endeavours.]

70. When the practitioner of Yoga sits in the Padmaasan posture (the lotus posture) or any other comfortable posture suitable to him and meditates using a Mantra (a mystical formulae consisting of syllables, letters, words or phrases), his body begins to shiver and vibrate in a subtle manner (70).

[Note—Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 52-54.]

71. The spiritual aspirant should sit with ease and exercise full control over his limbs (both the hands and legs). [That is, he should stop constantly fiddling with his hands and shuffling his body in a fidgety manner. He should sit absolutely quietly in a calm and composed manner.] He should withdraw his attention from wandering anywhere in the external world, and instead of allowing his sight from jumping from one object to another he should focus it on the tip of his nostrils while meditating upon the divine Mantra OM and contemplating upon its divine glories (71).

72. A wise and erudite aspirant should enshrine the transcendental Supreme Being in his own heart (as his pure conscious Atma which is self-illuminated and radiant with divine effulgence) and concentrate his attention on him through the medium of meditation and contemplation or Yoga.

He must contemplate that this body is like a majestic palace having only one pillar or foundation to support it (in the form of the one Atma or the pure conscious soul personifying the Supreme Being whom he has enshrined in his heart). [In other words, he must concentrate on the fact that his entire being represented by the gross as well as the subtle components of the body relies upon the Atma or the pure consciousness that lives inside it to not only give this body its life, strength, vigour and vitality but also its worth, significance and importance as a living entity. If this Atma is removed from the body, the latter would not even be worth its gross weight as proved by the fact that as soon as a man dies, his dead body is cremated or buried as early as possible as it begins to decay and emit a foul smell.]

This palace has nine doors¹; it has three supporting posts²; and there are five Gods who reside in this body³ (72).

[Note--¹These are the two ears, two eyes, two nostrils, one mouth, one anus, and one urethra; refer Shwetashwatar Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, 3/18.

²These are the three Gunas of Sata, Raja and Tama which determine the character of the creature and his qualities, or the three basic elements which determine the constitution of the body such as Pitta (bile), Kaph (mucous) and Vayu (wind).

³These Gods are the patron Gods of the five elements from which the body is made. These five elements and their Gods have been enumerated in Yogtattva Upanishad as follows—(a) Brahma the creator is the patron God of the earth element (verse no. 85-86); (b) Vishnu the sustainer is the patron God of the water element (verse no. 88-89); (c) Rudra, the angry form of Shiva the concluder, is the patron God of the fire element (verse no. 91-93); (d) Ishwar who is the mouth of the entire creation in his macrocosmic all-encompassing and all-pervading form of the air element without which no life is sustainable in this living world is the sustainer and

the patron God of the air element (verse no. 95-97); and (e) Lord Shiva called Mahadev, the great God, is the patron God of the sky element (verse no. 98-99).

Refer also to Canto 1, verse no. 165 and to Canto 5, verse no. 2 in this context.]

73. During the time one is doing meditation, he should not pay any attention to the body, but instead concentrate his attention on the illumination emanating from inside his body from an ethereal, divine and holy entity whose rays of light resemble that of the radiant sun. [This sublime and subtle entity is the pure conscious Atma residing in the subtle space of the heart and shines with its own illumination just like the celestial sun does in the sky.] (73).

74. The aspirant should contemplate upon this splendorous subtle form of the sun and focus his attention on the fiercely burning fire in its center. This fire is like the flame on the tip of the wick of a burning oil lamp. This divine vision is the vision of the supreme Parmeshwar, the Supreme Being revealed in the inner self of the aspirant (74).

[Note—The sun is a metaphor for the splendorous Atma residing as the pure consciousness inside the individual creature, and this Atma is as glorious, radiant and splendorous as the sun. In metaphysics, the celestial sun is invariably regarded as a manifestation of the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic revelation of the Supreme Being known as Brahm. The sun is the only celestial body in the sky which provides ‘light’ to the entire world—another way of saying that the sun infuses life, energy and vitality into this creation so much so that existence sans the sun is not imaginable. This fact is employed here to draw a parallel between the Atma and the sun because without the Atma the body is a dead entity much like the world which would be dead without the sun; it is the Atma as the pure consciousness that ‘lights’ up the inner self of all living beings much like the sun that lights up the external world for him.]

75. Progressing further in his meditation, the aspirant goes beyond this splendour of the subtle sun. He submits himself to the Supreme Being through the second opening (end) of the Sushumna Naadi¹ (75).

[Note—¹This Sushumna Naadi is the tubular duct passing through the center of the spinal cord, with its lower end blocking the mouth of the Kundalini, the coiled subtle energy center lying at the base of the spinal cord, and the upper end opening out through the Brahm Randhra, the hair-like slit on the top of the skull. It is believed that an expert practitioner of Yoga is able to divert all his vital life forces through this Kundalini into this Sushumna Naadi, push them upwards right up to the Brahm Randhra, and then finally make his exit from the body by rupturing this area of the skull. This is his final liberation—or ‘Kaivalya Mukti’. His Pran winds merge inseparably and eternally with the air element present outside the body in the cosmos, never to re-enter the body again, while the latter would soon disintegrate into the primary elements from which it was formed in the beginning, i.e. into the earth, water, fire, air and sky element. This is called ‘Videha Mukti’ because it is obtained by discarding the gross body, and since it is the only one of its kind in the sense that reversion to the gross body is not possible even if one wants, it is also called ‘Kaivalya Mukti’.

The phrase ‘submit himself to the Supreme Being’ means to have a divine glimpse of Brahm who is said to have his abode in the area of the head around the Brahm Randhra. This is a symbolic depiction of the fact that Brahm stands for intelligence, thoughts, erudition, sagacity, enlightenment and wisdom which are the functions of the brain located in the head. It ought to be noted here that the Atma, the conscious soul, has its abode in the subtle space of the heart, the place designated as

the center for such eclectic virtues as compassion, mercy and kindness. This is also the location of the symbolic lotus present in the subtle heart where the Atma lives.]

76. By rupturing the suture in the skull, known as the Brahm Randhra, a successful practitioner of Yoga is able to have a divine glimpse of the supreme Pada, i.e. he is able to have a holy vision of the grand abode of the Supreme Being.

If unfortunately an ascetic becomes lazy or careless in his spiritual pursuit, or he becomes over confident of himself, he would not be able to have this divine vision or any tangible success in his efforts (76).

77. An aspirant is able to get the full auspicious benefits of doing Yoga if and when he successfully adheres to its strict tenets and obeys all its doctrines diligently and resiliently in all the three phases of time¹. That is, when he constantly practices Yoga sincerely and steadfastly without any negligence and callousness on his part, it is only then that he is entitled to reap its full benefits; otherwise not.

I (Shiva) have narrated this Yoga to you (Brahma) in brief (77).

[Note—¹The three phases of time when he is expected to be vigilant in doing Yoga are the following—(a) when he is a young adult, during his middle ages and during his old age—i.e. throughout his life; (b) during the three points of the day called the three Sandhyas, i.e. at dawn, at noon and at dusk; (c) the three points of time measured on a larger scale such as the past, the present and the future.

In other words, an expert ascetic is expected to be vigilant in doing Yoga, or constantly observing the strict tenets of meditation and contemplation no matter what time or phase of life he is passing through. For a wise ascetic, each moment is to be spent in doing Yoga for each passing moment is as precious as the one gone by and the one coming ahead. Not a second of life is to be wasted.]

78. When he is able to harness the stupendous powers and astounding spiritual strength inherent in Yoga, when he is empowered with Yoga's mystical and majestic powers after numerous births (or after a long period of time and prolonged and sustained practice)—it is then that all his sins and their evil consequences are destroyed; it is then that he is able to happily realise the quintessential knowledge of the ubiquitous supreme Ishwar, the Supreme Being called Brahm (78).

[Note—Yoga helps him to realise his own true 'self' and its stupendous glories and powers. It is already mentioned in verse no. 72 above that the primary condition for meditation and contemplation is to visualise that the Supreme Being is enshrined in one's subtle heart, and verse no. 71 says that he must use the Mantra OM for the purpose of it. This OM is a word symbol of Brahm, incorporating in its ambit the entire gamut of creation right from its beginning through its development and culminating in its conclusion, only to restart the cycle again. So this present verse is an extension of these two verses.]

79. When the above becomes a reality, it is said the ascetic has become a 'Siddha', i.e. his efforts to do Yoga have borne fruits for him and he has successfully accomplished it; he is rewarded by numerous spiritual and mystical powers collectively called the various 'Siddhis'. All his worldly fetters are broken and he is able to pierce through this hardened shell known as the world and find his true and final liberation and deliverance (much like a chick emerging from inside the shell of the egg to find freedom from the hellish and suffocating confines of the egg shell).

Now I (Shiva) shall narrate the process of doing Yoga (i.e. the exercises of Yoga) (79).

80. Only a person who has successfully been able to exercise control over his own two vital winds called Pran (breath) and Apaana (the vital wind that moves down in the intestines), i.e. one who is a successful practitioner of Yoga himself, should be made a guide and teacher of Yoga. [Obviously, this is a very practical advice because Yoga relies more on practice than mere philosophical understanding of metaphysical and spiritual concepts. It involves complicated postures and exercises, and for this an expert hand is needed to guide a new comer. If Yoga exercises are not done under proper guidance, they are very dangerous for the ascetic for they might result in serious injuries to the body. A person who does not know the pitfalls and the intricacies of Yoga, who is not well versed in the intricate detailed process of various steps involved in numerous Yoga exercises would be more dangerous if chosen as a guide than not doing Yoga at all.]

The aspirant should first obtain the Guru's (teacher's) blessings by serving him devotedly. [When the teacher is pleased with his disciple, the former would feel a sense of affection and have a moral obligation towards the latter, and would then be more sincere and willing to impart him full knowledge like he would be doing to his own son. Otherwise, the whole exercise would lack sincerity and commitment.]

The aspirant should now prepare to conquer the Prans (vital winds) himself (under the guidance of the teacher) (80).

81. The area of the body where the focus of his attention should be fixed has a length measuring twelve fingers-width, and breadth measuring four fingers-width. It is soft, supple and delicate, and white or grey in colour (81).

82. By carefully learning the process of activating the vital energies trapped inside the body from the wise and erudite Guru (teacher of Yoga), the aspirant should diligently make relevant efforts to control the vital winds forcefully (because the wind is an element that does not want to any harness to be put on it and so it is an uphill and arduous task to bridle it. The wind is like a wild horse that is very difficult to tame and control.

The Kundalini is a coiled subtle energy center having three and a half loops in the coil. It becomes straightened as a result of the process mentioned here (by which the vital winds are controlled and the latent energies are activated). [This process releases the trapped energy in the Kundalini.] (82).

83. The anus should be constricted (so that the Apaana wind does not escape through it during the pressure to be exerted for activating and straightening of the Kundalini) and the Kundalini should be jerked so that it is aroused from its dormant, hibernating or sleeping mode, and instead coaxed and activated¹.

If the aspirant is successful in doing so, i.e. if he is able to activate the Kundalini and harness its stupendous treasury of cosmic dynamic energy that lies latent in it in a dormant form, he is able to symbolically conquer death; he would have no fear from death. [This is because for one, he would have all his organs under his control, his body would be very healthy and toned up, he would not have to suffer from numerous ailments that afflict the body and which cause insurmountable torments for an ordinary man, and secondly, should he decide to finally discard the body and free himself from its limitations he would easily channelise all his vital winds up through the Sushumna Naadi with the aid of energy provided by the Kundalini and make his painless exit by rupturing the Brahm Randhra at the top of the

head. He would not have to suffer the normal horrors of a declining body and the final moments of death.] (83).

[Note—¹This phenomenon is like uncoiling a hose pipe full of very cold water during winters. The water and the pipe have been lying under frigid conditions for a long time and the pipe needs some amount of warming and vigorous shaking to uncoil it, soften it up and remove its rigidity, make it flexible so that its water content is released and it begins to flow again.

In the present case, the Kundalini is the subtle energy center that traps the dynamic energy of creation in the body of the individual. It is located at the lower end of the spine. Its mouth is closed by the Sushumna Naadi. The Kundalini is compared to a serpent whose mouth is shut by this Naadi. When the serpent is shaken and jerked into life, the hot breath of it would melt the clogging wax in its mouth and release the venomous gases trapped in this snake's elongated body. When the anus is shut tight, the heat in the lower bowls and abdomen create sufficient energy that would unclog the Kundalini and melt the wax sealing its mouth, thereby releasing its hitherto trapped energy which would then snake up the only opening available to it, i.e. the tubular Sushumna Naadi—see verse no. 86 of this Canto below. This released energy snakes up through this Naadi and reaches the other end of it at the top of the head (skull) in the area of the Brahm Randhra (the cranium).

The process of activating the Kundalini has been elaborately described in the book 'The Serpent Power' by Arthur Avalon & Sir John Woodroffe.

According to the Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 36 of Sam Veda tradition, the energy of the Kundalini is located above/at the top of the 'Kanda' in the form of a coil having eight spirals. It covers the mouth of 'Brahma Dwar' (literally, the doorway leading to Brahma). It remains ever present, but dormant, in that place.

The Dyanbindu Upanishad, verse no. 69 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, which is Chapter 15 of this volume describes how to activate and ignite the latent cosmic energy present in the Kundalini. This verse is quoted here—"The person desirous of activating the Kundalini and releasing its subtle energy for his spiritual benefit as well as to empower him with great mystical and occult powers should sit steadily in the Padmasan posture. The palms of the two hands are placed one on the top of the other, face upwards and put on the heels of the two legs (which have already been folded in from the knee joint in such a way that the heels are just opposite the navel, the sole is pointed upwards and inwards towards the body, and the toes of the leg of left side rest on the thigh of the right side and of the right leg on the thigh of the left side). The chin is drawn in and held tightly near the pit of the throat below the Adam's apple.

While sitting in this posture, the practitioner should focus his mind on the patron deity of the ascetic, usually on Lord Shiva who is the supreme Brahm as manifested in the form of the 'pure self'. The Apaana Vayu (i.e. the wind in the lower part of the body, especially in the lower intestines and pelvic region) is drawn or pulled upwards, while at the same time the Pran Vayu (i.e. the breath moving in the upper part of the body, especially in the nostrils and lungs) is made to divert inwards or held from escaping. [This physical exercise is very difficult and requires a lot of practice and patience. It results in mixing these two primary winds in the body. This is effectuated when the Apaana wind is pulled up by the upwards tug of the Pran wind, and the latter is pulled down by the downwards tug of the former, resulting in a balancing effect.]

The net result of this exercise is that the practitioner is able to experience the astounding potentials of the released powers of the trapped subtle cosmic energy that was hitherto lying dormant in a hibernating state in the Kundalini. [When the two winds cross each other's path, they create enough force that shakes the Kundalini and unplugs its mouth to release the energy trapped inside its coils. This is like doing physical exercises in a gymnasium to unfold rigid muscles and tone them up.] (69).

The benefits of activating the Kundalini and the process do so have been succinctly described in Krishna Yajur Veda's Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 81-84 which is Chapter 17 of this volume.

An entire Upanishad called the Yog Kundali Upanishad belonging to the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition is dedicated to this theme of activating the Kundalini. It is Chapter 27 of this volume.]

84. This is a very esoteric and secret knowledge that I have divulged to you in brief. One should sit in the Vajra Aasan¹ and constrict the upper part of the body. [That is, he should control the Pran or breath from escaping like the Apan wind was restricted by closing the anus in verse no. 83 above.] (84).

[Note—¹The *Vajra Aasan* is the following—the body is curved or arched backwards like a bow in such a way that the head touches the upturned soles of the feet. To give effect to this Aasan, one should sit on the ground with the two legs bent backwards from the knee and the soles pointing upwards behind the buttocks. The upper part of the body is slowly bent backwards until the rear of the head touches the upturned soles from behind. This posture is called Vajra after the weapon of the same name held by Indra, the king of Gods, which gives him invincibility in the entire creation. In other words, the practitioner of Vajra Aasan too acquires such great powers that he too becomes invincible and infallible. Refer Yog Kundali Upanishad, verse no. 6 in this context.]

85. The fire needs air to remain kindled, and that is why when one is able to control and harness the vital winds and concentrate their energy on the Kundalini, the dynamic energy present in a subtle form in the latter remains perpetually active; it is not allowed to subside and get doused; it is not allowed to flicker and die away.

The Kundalini has immense dynamic energy trapped inside it. The intensity of it is so powerful that it can effectively conquer all the three worlds (in a symbolic manner)¹ (85).

[Note—¹Here the term *conquering of the three worlds* have two connotations—(a) The three states in which the consciousness exists—i.e. the waking state called the Jagrat, the dreaming state called the Swapna, and deep sleep state called the Sushupta. This happens for the following reasons. (i) By controlling his sense organs during the waking state of consciousness, he has literally vanquished the material world which is the focus of attention of these organs; this world no longer disturbs him. (ii) Next, since he has controlled the mind and its sub-conscious, he remains free from their influence during the dreaming state. Since the dreams are the result of the sub-conscious mind at work and the latter has already been conquered, there is no question of his mind creating a world of dreams which he would not like to exist, or which is not according to his temperament and inherent nature. The mind would not dream dreams that the ascetic would not like to dream of. In other words, he has controlled the wayward mind and through it his dreams, because dreams are the playfield of the mind and the sub-conscious. (iii) When he has been able to conquer the first two states and crossed into the third state of consciousness, called the deep sleep state, both the gross body and the subtle mind are non-existent; they have no role to play now. But under ordinary circumstances, this state is very temporary for the man in a deep sleep state reverts back to the earlier two stages when the time comes for him to wake up to the realities of this material world where he lives. When it happens, the temporary bliss that he had obtained during the deep sleep state vanishes in thin air. But in the case of a realised and expert ascetic this does not happen for he remains perpetually in a state of bliss, ecstasy and oblivion, unconcerned with this artificial world of material objects driven by the mind and the intellect on the one hand, and by the sense organs of the body on the other hand. In

other words, he has crossed this third state of Sushupta, which is transient, by conquering it to proceed to the fourth state called Turiya, a state of bliss, ecstasy and happiness that is perpetual.

This is a metaphoric way of saying that an ascetic who is able to harness the energy of the Kunkalini by practicing Yoga has conquered the three worlds by not only controlling himself in his waking state by self restraint of his sense organs, but also controlling his world of dreams by controlling the sub-conscious mind, and then the higher existential state of consciousness called deep sleep. That is, he is in total control of his self and is like an emperor who is invincible for his enemies, the latter being the uncountable worldly detractions and inherent faults of character created by various Gunas that tend to mar his spiritual progress.

(b) The other interpretation of the term 'three worlds' refer to the stupendous mystical powers called the Siddhis (of which there are eight in number) that he gets by being successful in Yoga. Armed with these Siddhis, he can perform super-human tasks and achieve success in doing things that a normal emperor's army is unable to do. He can go anywhere he likes in the three worlds consisting of the terrestrial world where humans live, the nether world where subterranean creatures live, and the celestial world of Gods and Spirits. He can assume any form there, defeat even the strongest of enemies and the fiercest of animals, and even defeat death itself which is otherwise undefeatable. (Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 51, 73-75, 59-60 in this context which explicitly state this fact.)]

86. When the subtle energy of the Kundalini is stoked by the concentrated vital winds present inside the body (by doing various Aasans and as described in verse nos. 82-84), it rises up and snakes up the Sushumna Naadi. [This Naadi is the tubular duct whose lower end opens into the mouth of the Kundalini. So when the mouth is unclogged by heating the Kundalini by Apaana wind, the energy thus released naturally would enter this tubular duct.]

It is metaphorically said that it has entered the Chandra Mandal, i.e. the realm of the moon because the entrance of the vital winds and the energy into the Sushumna Naadi causes a sense of titillation and ecstasy for the ascetic. Such emotional feelings as titillation, joyfulness, ecstasy, exhilaration, elation and exultation are associated with the Moon God.

It is said that now it pierces through the Brahm Granthi¹ (86).

[Note—¹The word *Granthi* means a knot. It also refers to the ganglions that help to coordinate the different nerves just like major junction boxes in the network of electric wires in a building. The word Granthi also refers to the glands that control all the major nerves and veins in the body. Just like a knot binds something, these Granthis of the body bind the subtle energy present in the body from being released. If we treat them as representing the ganglions then it means that by the process of Yoga in which the subtle energy of the Kundalini is released in the spinal cord, or the Sushumna Naadi to be precise, these hitherto clogged and inactive ganglions are reactivated and they begin to function in prime shape. If we consider them as glands then it would mean that the functioning of these glands is restored and this in turn helps the body to work properly.

The Brahm Vidya Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse nos. 70-71 describes the three main Granthis where these three Gods have their symbolic abodes in the body of the individual creature—viz. Brahm Granthi, Vishnu Granthi, and Rudra Granthi.

According to Tantra literature, there are three Granthis—viz. Brahm Granthi, Vishnu Granthi and Rudra Granthi. They obstruct the upwards movement of the energy or power of the Kundalini. Each of the six Chakras (whirling energy centers of

the body) has two Granthis on either side. The Brahm Granthi is situated between the Muladhar Chakra and Swadisthan Chakra.

Refer also to Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 67-74 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition which describes how the energy of the Kundalini passes through the various Granthis and reaches the top of the head. This Upanishad is Chapter 27 of this volume.]

87. Then the energy of the Kundalini pierces through the Vishnu Granthi¹ and establishes itself in the Rudra Granthi². At this stage, the aspirant should practice the Kumbhak phase of Pranayam³ repeatedly and replenish the strength of the vital winds present inside the body. [This is made possible because the inhaled air which is rich in oxygen is first sucked in through the nostrils during the Purak phase of Pranayam. It is then allowed to stay inside the body for some time during the Khumbhak phase of Pranayam to enable it to oxidise all the tissues and remote corners of the body besides rejuvenating the vital winds of the body. The toxic gases which were earlier trapped inside the different parts of the body have been yanked out due to the heating of the body by Pranayam, activating the Kundalini and holding the Apaana wind from escaping from the anus by closing the latter. These toxic gases, such as carbon dioxide etc., are then collected and exhaled during the Rechak phase of Pranayam.] (87).

[Note--¹The *Vishnu Granthi* is situated between Manipur and Anahat Chakras.

²The *Rudra Granthi* is located between Vishuddha Chakra and Agya (Gyan) Chakra. The energy or cosmic divine powers of the Kundalini has to pierce through these three knots before it can reach the Sahasraara Chakra at the top of the head.

³The word Pranayam refers to control of the breath and *Kumbhak* is the phase of Pranayam when the inhaled air is held inside the body for a certain pre-fixed time before being exhaled.]

88. The aspirant should then practice the piercing of the 'Surya Mandal' or the realm of the subtle sun in the body. By doing this successfully he finds peace, calmness and fulfillment. This is brought into effect by doing the Kumbhak phase of Pranayam four times. [This is a reference to the fact Kumbhak would have resulted in his body becoming light as all the toxic gases are by now eliminated and all the tissues are well oxidised and charged. The body feels rejuvenated and fresh. The sun is a cosmic reservoir of fire and heated gases. The Khumbhak phase of Pranayam is compared to this sun because like the latter, the body of the practitioner acts like a pitcher in which the heat is trapped along with the vital airs. This result in a virtual cauldron of fire and the body symbolically acquires the same properties as the sun—it glows radiantly, gives out a shine that forms a radiant halo around it, and it acts like a center around which all life revolves much like the planets going round the celestial sun. Even as no impurity can ever tarnish the sun, no worldly impurities and imperfections ever affect the purity of the Atma and the body of a practicing ascetic. His body is not an ordinary mortal gross body like that of ordinary people but is a divine entity empowered by spiritual strength and cosmic energy much like the sun in the sky.] (88).

[Note—Refer verse no. 73 of this present Canto 1 in this context. Refer also to Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 85-87.]

89. Having pierced through the three knots (as mentioned in verse no. 86-87) which had been acting as a millstone around his neck, tying him down and preventing the stupendous divine energy of the Kundalini from reaching the Brahm Randhra, the aspirant is now freed from all fetters and becomes eligible to attain Brahm. [That is,

now he can enjoy the extreme bliss and happiness which comes with self-realisation and Brahm-realisation.]

Now I (Shiva) shall narrate the signs of such an acclaimed and realised spiritual aspirant (89).

90. A spiritual aspirant should stay in a lonely and calm place. He should eat less and concentrate his energy on spiritual pursuit, such as meditating and contemplating upon the various aspects of Pran and other metaphysical concepts which form the quintessential path that can lead him to the elixir of eternal life. It is an unmatched remedy for all the worldly ailments—both physical and spiritual—that had been tormenting him in the past (90).

91. The practitioner of Yoga should do Purak (inhalation of air/breath) through the Surya Naadi (the Pingla duct passing through the right nostril), withhold this breath inside the body according to the prescribed method of Yoga during the second phase called Kumbhak, and then do Rechak with it (i.e. exhale it) through the Chandra Naadi (the Ida duct passing through the left nostril) in the third and final phase of Yoga (91).

[Note—The three phases of Pranayam done to unfold the trapped energy of the Kundalini have been described in almost a similar fashion in Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 20-31.]

92. This form of Yoga involving the Surya Naadi (the right nostril) should be repeatedly done as it is able to eliminate a number of bodily ailments, such as those related to the stomach and abdomen as well as diseases associated with worms in the body (92).

93. In the beginning of the process, the practitioner should inhale full breath through both the nostrils and pass it down the body and press it out near the Kundalini. In other words, full breath should be inhaled so that the abdomen is filled with wind, and then the abdominal walls are to be pressed hard so that whatever trapped wind there is in the intestines is eliminated as flatus passing through the anus. [This is a sort of preliminary and preparatory stage for the next phase of Pranayam involving holding in the abdomen of the inhaled wind, or doing Kumbhak.]

Then the inhaled wind or breath that had been earlier pulled in through the Pingla Naadi (right nostril) should be held in the abdomen and finally expelled or exhaled out of the body through the Ida Naadi (the left nostril) (93).

[Note—Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 37-42.]

94. This exercise helps to remove the diseases associated with cough in the throat. The body's warmth is enhanced indicting the rejuvenating of the fire element present inside it. This dries up the excess water content of the Naadis, hence reducing the amount of mucous etc. present in them and other channels of the body, such as the throat. This also helps to remove the various faults and impurities of the various essential elements of the body which are fluid in nature, such as blood, lymph, semen, the different enzymes, hormones and other such vital secretions of the many internal organs of the body. [This cure is effected by their being heated by the body's rejuvenated fire element, and the numerous faults associated with excessive presence of water inside the body such as odema etc. are also taken care of.] (94).

95. This all-powerful 'Kumbhak Pranayam', i.e. holding of the inhaled breath, can be done effectively even during walking as it can be done while sitting.

If it is done while walking, the inhalation is to be done through the mouth (by opening the mouth and taking in a big gasp of air, instead of through one of the nostrils as done during sitting Kumbhak). After holding this wind in the abdomen for a certain fixed time, the exhalation is to be done through the nose (by closing the mouth) (95).

96. This process helps to cool the body. It helps to overcome the problems caused by excessive bile (which is hot in nature) as well as hunger and thirst.

The practitioner should pump in air in his chest just like an ironsmith pumps it in his furnace where he melts the iron (96).

[Note—A close reading would show that the wind should be pulled in with full intensity through the mouth, held in the stomach for sometime and then expelled through the nose with all the strength that one can muster. Even a trial of this exercise would prove its effectiveness—it completely oxidises all the tissues of the body and it feels active and rejuvenated after this walk instead of feeling tired and fatigued. The expulsion of the wind through the nose ensures that its congestion is removed and any trace of mucous clinging to the nostrils is blown out, thereby cleansing the air duct and facilitating unhindered flow of the Pran wind in and out of the body. This verse is obviously 'Yoga in action'!]

97. Coming back to the normal mode of doing Pranayam, i.e. while sitting, one should continue to do Rechak (exhalation) and Purak (inhalation) till the time he is not tired. The inhalation is to be done through the Surya Naadi (i.e. the Pingla Naadi implying the right nostril) (97).

98. [If the inhalation is done through the Surya Naadi or the right nostril, then obviously—] The Rechak Pranayam, i.e. the exhalation of the wind, should be done through the Chandra Naadi (the Ida Naadi, implying the left nostril).

This helps to calm down the bad effects of disturbed Vaat (mucous), Pitta (bile) and Vaayu (wind) in the body. It results in enhancing the strength of the latent fire element in the body; it is kindled and stoked to remain active and warm (98).

99. This above-mentioned process helps to activate the Kundalini and remove the problems (ailments/diseases) of the mouth. It is auspicious and gives comfort to the practitioner. It clears the Brahma Naadi (the Sushumna Naadi) and eliminates the numerous diseases of the mouth such as accumulation of mucous etc. (99).

100. The 'Bhastra Kumbhak' (inhalation through the mouth and then holding the wind in the abdomen) should be done as much as possible. While doing Pranayam, the aspirant should sit comfortably and steadily in one of the Asanas (sitting postures). This helps to unravel the secret of the three Granthis of the body¹ (100).

[Note--¹In other words, by doing Pranayam properly one is able to open the knots present at strategic points in the body. These knots, called the Granthis, act like blocks that impede the free flow of energy, vital stimuli and nutrients in the body through the various Naadis (the network of various nerves and veins). Yoga exercises help the body by untying these knots, resulting in reinvigorating the body. The three Granthis have been described in verse nos. 86-87 of this Canto above.

The Bhastra Kumbha has been explained in detail in Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 32-39.]

101. Now I shall narrate about the three ‘Bandhs’ (closures). By practicing Pranayam that helps to do them on a daily basis, one is able to win control over the vital winds of the body (101).

[Note—Essentially this verse means that the vital winds present inside the body would escape during the practice of Pranayam if certain exit points are not closed tightly. This closing is called ‘Bandh’. The various Bandhs have been described in Upanishads dealing with Yoga practices, the chief being Yogchudamani Upanishad of Sam Veda tradition (verse no. 46-51), Dhyanbindu Upanishad (verse no. 73-78^{1/2}), Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 47-52, and Yogtattva Upanishad (verse no. 112-128) of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

102. The process of Kumbhak helps the ascetic to break through or overcome all the four hurdles¹ that he faces in his spiritual endeavour, hurdles which impede his progress and create obstacles in his path to success. Kumbhak should be accompanied by practice of the three Bandhs that I (Shiva) shall describe to you (Brahma) now (102).

[Note—¹The four hurdles of Yoga are the following— Though it is not mentioned clearly what these four hurdles are, they are the following—1 gross body with its external organs of action and perception + 1 Mana or mind + 1 Buddhi or intellect + 1 Ahankar or ego, pride and a false sense of self-importance = 4.

From the perspective of Tantra philosophy, the four hurdles that Kumbhak helps the ascetic to overcome so that his Pran wind can provide him liberation and deliverance are the four ‘Peeths’ described in verse nos. 170-175 of this Canto 1. They are the Kaam Roop Peeth, the Purna Giri Peeth, the Jalandhar Peeth, and the Uddiyan Maha Peeth.]

103. The first is called ‘Mool Bandh’, the second is ‘Uddiyan Bandh’, and the third is called ‘Jalandhar Bandh’. Their signs are as follows (in the verses narrated below) (103).

104. The anus is pressed hard by the heels of the leg, and at the same time it is constricted voluntarily using the muscles of the rectum. By repeatedly doing this, the vital wind (i.e. the Apaana Vayu) is diverted upwards. [That is, when the anus is closed, the intestinal wind called the flatus would not be able to pass down and out through it, and naturally then it would force itself in the upward direction.] (104).

105. When this is effectively done, the Pran (the wind that is located in the upper part of the body; the breath), the Apaana (the wind in the intestines that has been blocked from passing out by blocking the escape route through the anus), the Naad (the cosmic sound that is heard when one concentrates and does meditation) and its accompanying Bindu (the dot present on the top of the symbol of Naad, symbolising the focal point in the cosmic bowl from where this sound is generated and where the mind is supposed to be focused during meditation so that Naad can be heard)—all these four are made to unite due to Mool Bandh. This exercise of Mool Bandh helps this to become a reality; the practitioner becomes an expert in uniting them by doing the Mool Bandh successfully. There is no doubt about it (105).

[Note—Refer verse no. 157 below of this Canto 1, as well as Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 46.]

106. The next Bandh is called ‘Uddiyan Bandh’. It should be done at the end of the Kumbhak phase of Pranayam but before the Rechak phase. [That is, it should be done

when one prepares to exhale the wind which was held inside the body during Kumbhak.]

This helps the Pran (the vital wind force in the body, referring to the breath and other vital winds) to get established in the Sushumna Naadi (106).

107. Since this is done while the heated air is still inside the body (because it is done prior to exhalation), it helps to literally 'lift' the vital airs inside the Sushumna Naadi, and hence wise ascetics have given it this name 'Uddiyan', meaning to 'fly or lift from the ground'. Elderly ones assert that it is easy to accomplish it (i.e. it is not as difficult as it sounds) (107).

[Note—Refer Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 47-50.]

108. One should not be lazy or careless in doing this Mool Bandh. By practicing it, even old people can become young. Effort should be made to strengthen the area around the navel with this Bandh (108).

109. By practicing this continuously for a period of six months one is able to conquer death. [That is, his body is sufficiently well tuned that it can withstand the onslaught of old age and its attending problems with great ease and resilience.]

The third Bandh is called 'Jalandhar Bandh'. This should be done at the end of the Purak phase of Pranayam. [That is, it is to be done when the inhalation process is complete.] (109).

110. During the Jalandhar Bandh, the throat is constricted, resulting in creating of an obstruction in the path of the wind (i.e. the breath). It should be done in a determined manner by constricting the throat, and concentrating the vital wind in the region of the heart (or the upper part of the chest) (110).

111. This Jalandhar Bandh fulfills the thirst of the practitioner for Amrit, the elixir of eternity and bliss.

The throat is constricted and the wind inside is pushed downwards (111).

[Note—Refer Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 51.]

112. Around the center of the neck, this wind is made to expand and enter the Brahm Naadi located at the back of the neck. [This Brahm Naadi is the Sushumna Naadi going up to the head through the spinal cord behind the throat, and entering the head region from the base of the skull.]

At this stage, the ascetic should sit in the Vajra Aasan (refer verse no. 84), and stir the Kundalini into activity¹ (112).

[Note--¹He should shake the Kundalini by voluntarily moving his muscles in the lower abdomen and the pelvic region. It ought to be noted here that when one has to do any strenuous exercise or make any strenuous effort, such as for example lifting a heavy weight or pulling something heavy with a rope, he has to hold his breath and tighten his abdominal muscles to prevent the flatus from escaping through the anus in order to garner sufficient strength and stamina to perform that arduous task in hand. This is a thing that anyone can experience any time. This is done almost involuntarily by the body in order to collect itself to face the ordeal in front of it. The same effect is brought about here in Yoga, but this time it is done voluntarily, forcefully and systematically.]

113. He should focus on activating the energy of the Kundalini like the ironsmith ignites his furnace by pumping air into it through the bellows¹.

This helps to pierce through all the three Granthis². It is just like the case when a red hot iron rod is pushed inside the bamboo stalk, resulting in the knots on the bamboo being burnt from the inside and a hole bored through them (113).

[Note—¹This pumping is done when all the exit routes for the vital winds have been effectively blocked by doing the three Bandh exercises—viz. the Mool Bandh, the Uddiyan Bandh and the Jalandhar Bandh. The trapped air is heated and then the Apan wind is made to enter the Kundalini. This is aided by exercising the muscles of the lower abdomen and pelvic region, moving them so as to felicitate the opening of the mouth of the Kundalini and allow the pressurized air to sneak into the bore-hole.

²The Granthis have been described in verse no. 86-87 of this Canto 1.]

114. This is the way how the vital winds are used to pierce through the various Granthis located at the rear part of the body (along the vertebral column). When this happens, a sensation of pricking is felt which resembles the bite of an ant (114).

115. The practitioner should practice to hold the vital wind in the Sushumna Naadi. With this, he is successful in piercing through the Rudra Granthi (see verse no. 87) and becomes a personification of Lord Rudra (one of the forms of Lord Shiva). [In other words, by harnessing sufficient energy to untie the Rudra Granthi, the ascetic assumes spiritual and other mystical powers of Yoga that makes him senior and most respected amongst ascetics, and this is metaphorically said when he is compared to Lord Shiva who is the patron deity of all ascetics.] (115).

116. When the Chandra Naadi and the Surya Naadi (i.e. the Ida and Pingla Naadis corresponding to the left and right nostrils respectively) are brought in harmony, i.e. when they are equally de-clogged and breathing through both of them is done equally easily¹, the aspirant is deemed to have pierced through the three Granthis symbolising the three inherent Gunas (i.e. the three qualities of Sata, Raja and Tama) that are present in all persons².

Having managed to pierce through this barrier, the ascetic attains a state of existence that transcends it, i.e. that is not conditioned by any of the three Gunas. Therefore he becomes an embodiment of Lord Shiva himself; he inculcates in him all the auspicious virtues possessed by Shiva along with all the mystical powers, called the various Siddhis, that accompany success in Yoga (116).

[Note--¹Until the time when all the three Granthis are not pierced and the vital wind has not entered the Sushumna Naadi, the person is not able to breathe freely from both the nostrils. The very fact that the passages of the two nostrils are free and allow a free way to the inhaling and exhaling exercise proves that all the toxins in the body have been eliminated and the person has reached the stage when he has successfully achieved the aim of doing Pranayam—to detoxify the body and prepare it for the ultimate goal of Yoga, which is to make one experience the inherent divinity and the shine of the pure consciousness present inside the person's own self. This shine of the conscious 'self' and the glory of its divinity were marred by the various faults and impurities that had wrapped the person's true 'self' in a dark veil of delusions and ignorance. The various Gunas are the paints that had virtually obscured the real colour of the soul. When they are scrapped off by means of Yoga, the original shine of the pure consciousness comes to the fore. Refer also to verse nos. 56, 68 and 133-134.

²A person who is spiritually inclined and has a clear conscience is the person who is a true Yogi (a true ascetic) and is the one who has symbolically vanquished the

three Granthis representing the three Gunas. These Gunas are compared to ‘knots’ or Granthis because they are impediments in realisation of one’s natural qualities and powers of the soul; they prevent the inborn divinity and auspicious spiritual nature of the creature to come to the fore. These Gunas act as conditioning elements, influencing the creature and its overall character. These three basic Gunas or qualities that are present in all the persons in different ratios decide his individual temperament, behavioural patterns, thought processes, and other character and personality traits. The best of the three is Sata which refers to noble traits of auspiciousness and righteousness; a man having a greater proportion of Sata would naturally be a holy, pious and a spiritually inclined man. The second is Raja which makes him inclined towards the world and its mundane affairs and frantic life; he would like to enjoy the world and the comforts provided by its material and sense objects. The last is the Tama quality which makes him pervert, sinful, of a low mental caliber, and very selfish. Such a man is said to be covered by a dark veil of delusions and ignorance.

This conditioning by the varying ratios of the three Gunas results in the creation of myriad variety of characters and temperaments in the creatures, whereas the Atma, the pure conscious soul in all living beings, is the same in all of them. This ‘piercing of the three Granthis’ is a symbolic way of vanquishing of these three Gunas, or being able to overcome their influences. A person who is free from their fetters is a free man. This is equivalent to his obtaining Mukti, or getting liberation and deliverance from all conditionings effects of and influences exerted by all extraneous elements which mar his own spiritual nature.]

117. This state of accomplishment in Yoga when the two divine forces of Nature are united, i.e. when the Shiva element (represented by the Chandra Naadi or the Ida Naadi) and the Shakti element (represented by the Surya Naadi or the Pingla Naadi) are united by the process of Pranayam done as matter of routine during Yoga, the ascetic experiences extreme sense of elation, ecstasy, bliss and joy which is comparable to the one experienced by a thirsty elephant who is able to drink cold water through his trunk to his heart’s content (117).

118. The Sushumna Naadi is like a strong duct which is as robust as Vajra (the sturdiest and the strongest material in existence from which Indra, the king of Gods, had his weapon crafted). The practitioner holds the vital winds (the Apaan wind along with other winds collected from the other parts of the body, such as Vyan, Samaan and Udaan) in this Naadi. At that time, a scintillating display of light is witnessed there in this Naadi which symbolically resembles the simultaneous appearance of twenty-one glittering gems (118).

119. All these splendid twenty one gems (scintillating spots of brilliant light like sparklers from a fire-work display) appear to be threaded together in the Sushumna Naadi like a garland of splendid gems.

The spiritual aspirant proceeds on this path towards obtaining Moksha, or finding his liberation and deliverance for his ‘self’. Hence, this Sushumna Naadi is regarded by ascetics as the royal highway to obtaining Moksha, and therefore to acknowledge this fact they have called it the ‘Vishwa Roopani’, or the personification of the best way to obtaining Moksha in this world. [In this sense, the scintillating light would be like the lamp-posts along this highway which not only illuminates the way for the ascetic as he progresses in his meditation, but also act as signposts to indicate the level of success he has attained.] (119).

120. Just like the sun and the moon which move continuously and in a systematic manner all through the day and the night respectively in a regular cycle, the wise and expert ascetic ensures that his Pranayam and its accompanying exercises (Purak, Kumbhak and Rechak) continue uninterrupted and unhindered day and night.

This constant practice of Pranayam enables him to retain the wind during Kumbhak for a prolonged period, as the body would have become accustomed and trained to retain it involuntarily. [In other words, after a long practice, the Kumbhak phase would become so natural for him that while he sleeps, his natural breathing would stop. The wind drawn in would be held inside the body without causing any discomfort to the ascetic all the while he sleeps. For all practical purposes, his body would lie like dead because his breathing function—consisting of inhalation and exhalation—has stopped and the abdominal muscles show no movement.] (120).

121. This process of Kumbhak should be repeatedly done by inhaling air/wind through the left nostrils (called the 'Pashim Dwaar'). This is a shortened form of full Kumbhak. [The full form would be to inhale through one nostril and exhale through the other nostril in the first round, and then reverse the process by inhaling from the second nostril and exhaling through the first. This cycle is alternated with each inhalation and exhalation.] (121).

122. When the air is drawn in through the left nostril, it fills the entire body during the phase of Kumbhak. [In other words, the breath oxidises all the tissues of the body while it is held inside during Kumbhak.] It is then expelled during the Rechak phase of Pranayam. [Though it is not mentioned here, the exhalation is done through the right nostril. The only difference between this brief form of Pranayam and full version of Pranayam is that in the former case the inhalation is once again done by the left nostril and not through the right nostril as would be the case in regular and full-fledged form of Pranayam.] (122).

123. No matter where the body is located, i.e. in whatever condition it is and whichever place it is in, the wise and erudite ascetic is able to successfully control both his body and mind to concentrate on doing Yoga. [The necessity of a secluded place is an ideal situation, but sometimes it is not practically feasible. This verse addresses this problem.]

Only such an ascetic is truly able to attain success in Yoga. [This is because he has been able to exercise real and full control over his senses and prevent them from getting distracted by the cacophony created by the mundane world and its frantic life in which he is forced to live due to various existential circumstances.]

He is deemed to be eligible for and has the right competence to obtain Mukti (liberation and deliverance). He lives in this world without a trace of Ahankar (ego, pride and haughtiness of his spiritual achievement or mystical powers that accrue to him as a reward of Yoga). This makes him happy and blissful. [This is because Ahankar is at the root of all problems that come in the way of blissfulness and happiness in this world. It creates in its wake a chain of jealousy, ill-will, spite, anger, emotional and sentimental restlessness etc, never allowing the person peace at any time.]

Those who are stupid enough to take repeated births and die consequentially are self-destroying their chance for emancipation and salvation. Such people can never hope to step on this eclectic and divine path of Yoga (123).

124. As one progresses further in his Yoga practice, he will reach a stage when his sub-conscious has been sufficiently eliminated from existence, i.e. his sub-conscious mind ceases to function and recollect any sensations pertaining to the body or the sensory inputs originating in the external world. In this stage, the practitioner does not even feel the distinction between the various winds, i.e. all his Pran Vayus become indistinguishable from one another; they merge into one another to become one single 'air element'. [That is, he is unaware of the fact that he is breathing or not; whether the wind held inside has been expelled or not. This is the perpetual state of Samadhi, the trance-like state of oneness of existence.]

When he has reached this stage, if he still seeks the guidance of scriptures that deal with Yoga or even consults a Guru no matter how expert he is, the ascetic cannot hope to obtain Moksha (final liberation and deliverance from the fetters of the body, and with it from the world). [This is because he is still doubtful and skeptical of his success; he is not confident and certain of himself. If anything is done without being certain of its effectiveness and the fruits or rewards that come on its successful completion, then it is natural that it is done half-heartedly and the result would not be up to the expected mark.] (124).

125. Even as the leech sucks out blood from the body, the Brahm Naadi (the duct leading up to the head; the Sushumna Naadi) of an expert ascetic who is constantly doing the various Yoga exercises as enumerated in this Upanishad, is able to weaken all the elements of the body (and that is why the body becomes thin and emaciated) (125).

[Note—When an ascetic has ventured to do this stern form of Yoga in the first place, he is mentally ready and prepared to shed the body voluntarily in order to obtain liberation and deliverance from its cumbersome burden. He does not wish to suffer the horrors of old age and a failing body and the intense pain of the last moments of life, and wait for them to happen in the normal course by hoping to retain the body, for then it would be too late for him. So naturally he is not bothered by this gross body becoming weak and thin. He has more than compensated for this by a robust Spirit and the attainment of majestic mystical powers called the various Siddhis.]

126. When practice of the various Bandhs and other aspects of Yoga (such as Pranayam) are done regularly, the Chitta (the sub-conscious mind) and the Atma (pure consciousness) become one; they virtually merge into one another. Then the Bindu does not fall; it is not expelled; it is not destroyed and ruined (126).

[Note—The word 'Bindu' literally refers to the 'dot' on the top of the symbol for the divine Mantra OM, but more practically here it refers to the 'semen' which represents the distilled and concentrated form of life-injecting vitality and stamina present in the body of the practitioner. Usually when strenuous exercises are done by a person of a weak physique, this semen is involuntarily ejected. So this verse stresses the point that this does not apply to the ascetic who also does strenuous exercises and has become physically weak in the gross body, but it does not imply weakness of his internal organs or any loss of his inherent strength, vitality and stamina.]

127. In the higher stages of Yoga when the practitioner does not have to do Rechak (exhalation) and Purak (inhalation) but remains in the Kumbhak state of filled air (i.e. when he has learnt to control his breathing for prolonged periods), he begins to hear various sounds collectively called Naad¹. This is the cosmic sound which is heard by him. During this stage, he also tastes the Amrit, the elixir of eternal bliss, dripping from the Chandra Mandal². [The 'Chandra' is the moon which is supposed to be the

heavenly pitcher full of this Amrit where it was stored by the Gods for their own use. It is like the honeycomb full of sweet honey and so full that the honey leaks and drips for anyone to pick up its drops.] (127).

[Note—¹Refer verse no. 147 of Canto 1 below.

²Refer verse no. 146 of Canto 1 below.]

128. Then thirst and hunger along with all other shortcomings of the body are eliminated. The ascetic remains perpetually submerged in his own state of eternal consciousness (128).

129. It is out of great affection for you (Brahma) that I (Shiva) have narrated these signs of Yoga.

The four broad types in which Yoga is divided into are basically the Yoga which has been outlined by me. However, these four types of Yoga are the following—Mantra Yoga, Laya Yoga, Hath Yoga and Raj Yoga (129).

[Note—Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 19.]

130. All these four types of Yoga are in fact the same thing, and hence the combined form of Yoga is called 'Maha Yoga', i.e. the great Yoga. It incorporates all the details of these four independent forms of Yoga. [In other words, a comprehensive Yoga would be one in which all the four forms are an integral part.] (130).

131. Usually everyone uses the Mantra 'Hans-Hans' to do Japa (repetition). But by the grace of a wise teacher the ascetic realises that the real Mantra that ought to be repeated during the course of Yoga in which the wind rises up in the Sushumna Naadi is 'So-a-ham, So-a-ham'¹ (131).

[Note—Refer Canto 2, verse nos. 5, 8-11 and Canto 6, verse no. 20, 51-54 of this Upanishad which highlight the importance and significance of this Mantra. Briefly this Mantra means 'That is me'; or 'that supreme transcendental entity in none but me'. The word 'me' refers to the awareness of the pure consciousness and does not refer to the physical gross body of the ascetic. The word 'Hans' literally means a Swan which is considered as the wisest bird and is used as a metaphor for something that is extremely pure and divine. Hans is the vehicle of Saraswati, the goddess of wisdom and knowledge, as a symbolic iconographic depiction of the fact that the auspicious virtues of enlightenment, wisdom, erudition and possession of truthful knowledge of the reality are borne by an entity that is called Hans. In the realm of metaphysics, this Hans refers to the Atma, the pure and conscious 'self' of the creature. That is why this Mantra 'Hans-Hans' is same as 'So-a-ham'; the latter is the implied and essential meaning of the Mantra 'Hans'. Since a Yogi is expected to choose the best and leave aside the not-so-important aspect of anything, he chooses the Mantra 'So-a-ham' over the Mantra 'Hans'.

There are a number of Upanishads that describe the Mantra 'Hans'—viz. (a) Krishna Yajur Veda—Shwetashwatar Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 6; Canto 6, verse no. 15; Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 3-4; Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 24, 61-65; Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse nos. 16, 20-28, 34, 60-64, 78-79; Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 9-11, Canto 6, verse no. 20, 52-54; Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 99. (b) Shukla Yajur Veda—Hansopanishad is exclusively dedicated to explain the concept of the pure conscious Atma by way of using the metaphor of a Hans. (c) Sam Veda—Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 31-35, 82-83, 93.

The Mantra *So-a-Ham*—This Mantra is extolled in a number of Upanishads as a synonymous of the Mantra 'Hans'. For instance—(i) Sam Veda = Yogchudani

Upanishad, verse no. 83. (ii) Krishna Yajur Veda = Braham Vidya Upanishad, verse no. 34, 78-79.]

132. [This verse describes what is known as Mantra Yoga.]

The Yoga done with the aid of this eclectic Mantra 'So-a-ham' is the one which is called 'Mantra Yoga'. The divine effects of this Mantra is witnessed through the 'Paschim Dwaar', the left nostrils (from where the elixir of bliss and happiness, called Amrit, drips and tasted by the ascetic—refer verse no. 127). [In other words, when the ascetic does Pranayam using the left nostril to draw in air as described in verse nos. 121-124 above, the Mantra which he should use is So-a-ham. See also verse no. 143 and 145 of this Canto 1 below.] (132).

133. [This verse describes what is known as Hath Yoga.]

'The letter 'ha' of the Mantra So-a-ham stands for the sun and its divine glories. The letter 'sa' of the Mantra So-a-ham stands for the moon and its divine glories'—when the ascetic does the full exercise of Yoga with this eclectic understanding and faith, he symbolically establishes a union between these two divine entities because they are part of the same Mantra. Such Yoga is called 'Hath Yoga' (133).

[Note—Refer verse nos. 56, 68 and 116-117 in this context.]

The letter 'Sa' is a silent sound made while one draws in breath, i.e. does Purak, and since this is done through the Ida Naadi, also called the Moon Naadi passing thorough the left nostril, it represents the Moon God. On the other hand, the letter 'Ha' is the silent sound made while exhaling breath through the Pingla Naadi, called the Surya Naadi passing through the right nostrils, and hence it stands for the Sun God. In other words, the letter 'Sa' is the Mantra for the Moon God and 'Ha' is the Mantra for the Sun God. During the Kumbhak phase of Pranayam, both exhalation and inhalation are stopped and a mixing of the air takes place inside the body. This would be tantamount to bringing together of the Moon and the Sun. The Sun is hot while the Moon is cool; therefore this process neutralizes them both and brings about evenness and homogeneity. All restlessness, agitation, state of flux and fidgeting are stopped. A state of profound calmness and serenity is established. This process of doing Pranayam by inhaling through the left nostril symbolising the Moon God and exhaling through the right nostril symbolising the Sun God has been outlined in Krishna Yajur Veda's Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 9-17. It is called 'Saraswati Chaalan'.]

134. When a union between the individual Atma (soul) of the practitioner of Yoga, called the 'Kshetragya'¹, and the Parmatma (the supreme Soul) is brought about by this practice of Hath Yoga², then this Yoga eliminates the very cause of all spiritual and other problems that have been tormenting the ascetic till now³ (134).

[Note—¹The word *Kshetragya* means one who is the Lord of a particular realm and knows about everything there; he is responsible for everything being done in his realm and is almost like a commander or magistrate for that area. Since the Atma, or the pure conscious soul of a person is the supreme authority as far as that individual person is concerned, it is not only responsible for what that person does but is the true identity of that person much like the magistrate or the commander represents the king or the government in his person and all his actions are deemed to be done on behalf of the king or the government though he is an independent person.]

²The *Hath Yoga* is the Yoga that teaches how to bring about the union of Pran (the breath, the vital wind that resides in the upper part of the body) and the Apaana (the wind that moves down in the body and helps in digestion and excretion, the vital wind that lives in the lower part of the body) by means of strict following of the eight

fold path of Yoga such as observance of Yam, Niyam, Aasan, Pranayam, Pratyahar, Dharna, concentration and visualization of the presence of the Supreme Being in the point of the forehead where the root of the nose meets the middle of the eyebrows, and Samadhi. It teaches the practical aspects of spiritual Yoga and includes various exercises—Bandhs, Aasans, Mudras and Pranyam.

³The union of the individual soul and the supreme Soul is the main spiritual objective of Yoga. It therefore strives to bring about a meeting of the Kshetragya and the Parmatma. All problems that the creature faces is due to the fact that it has forgotten its high pedigree and origin; it has forgotten that it is the Supreme Being personified. This is because the pure consciousness of the individual and the cosmic consciousness is the one and the same, albeit viewed on different scales—the former is at the micro level while the latter is at the macro level of existence. Had the creature been aware of this basic tenet, there would have been no question of it getting bogged down and entangled in worldly delusions and their attendant problems. To remove this apparent artificial dichotomy is the main spiritual purpose of Yoga. As has been outlined in note of verse no. 124, 133 above, this union is symbolically brought about in the Kumbhak phase when not only the inhaled and exhaled winds but all other vital winds present inside the body are mixed and homogenized into one ‘air element’. This removes artificial distinctions between them and a universal harmony is established in their functioning. This unification is symbolised as a union between the Atma and the Parmatma.]

135. Persistent and consistent practice of Hath Yoga results in Laya Yoga¹, i.e. it helps in the merger and dissolution of the individual soul of the creature, called the Jiva, with the supreme Soul of creation known as Brahm; it helps to bring about oneness between them. The Chitta (the sub-conscious mind and its power to think, remember and act as a referral bank of the intellect) dissolves in the Atma, and the vital winds in the body lose their inherent restlessness and become calm and quietened² (135).

[Note--¹The word ‘Laya’ means merger and getting dissolved. Hence, *Laya Yoga* refers to the merger of the individual soul with the supreme Soul of creation as described in verse no. 134 above. Refer also to Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 23 in this context.

²In other words, as meditation and contemplation progresses, the ascetic’s restless mind becomes quiet and calmed down. He enters that phase of Yoga which is called Samadhi, because all his bodily awareness of the external world of sense objectives also ceases in a gradual manner, and with it the restless tendencies of the sense organs. This happens because the sense organs of the body have a natural affinity towards this material world of sensual pleasure and comfort for it (the world) provides these sense organs the opportunity to gratify themselves. The sense organs are not concerned what effect this has on the creature’s long term spiritual interests; they want immediate gratification. Hence, when the mind and its sub-conscious are pulled away from this world, the body naturally becomes quiet and calm. This is symbolised by saying that the vital winds in the body have become calm and quiet, because all efforts of the body are made possible by one or other of these winds.

According to *Subalo Upanishad*, canto 9, verse no. 14 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, there ten winds in the body, and they perform specialized tasks as follows. (1) Pran—this controls eyes and the faculty of sight (verse 1); (2) Apaana—this controls ears and the faculty of hearing (verse 2); (3) Vyan—this controls nose and the faculty of smell (verse 3); (4) Udaan—this controls the tongue and the faculty of taste (verse 4); (5) Saman—this controls the skin and the faculty of touch (verse 5); (6) Vairambh—this controls speech (verse 6); (7) Mukhya—this controls the hands (verse 7); (8) Antarayaam—this controls the legs (verse 8); (9) Prabhanjan—this controls the anus (verse 9); (10) Kurma—this controls the genitals (verse 10); (11)

Shyen—this controls the Mana or the thoughts and emotions (verse 11); (12) Krishna—this controls the discrimination, intellect and wisdom (verse 12); (13) Shwet—this controls Ahankar or the notion of ego, pride, arrogance, vanity etc. (verse 13); (14) Naag—this controls the ‘Chitta’ or the faculty of concentration, memory, sub-conscious, reasoning (verse 14).

Under ordinary circumstances the mind is constantly restless because it is being fed by stimuli received by the sense organs of perceptions and must simultaneously respond to them by ordering the organs of action to act accordingly. By attaining success in Hath Yoga, the physical gross body consisting of both the organs of perception and action is controlled, which in its wake would help to control the mind and its sub-conscious. When Hath Yoga is successfully done, the sense organs are forcibly stopped from being attracted towards the various sense objects of the world; the mind would therefore have no cause to be distracted. This results in obtaining a state of great tranquility, serenity, calmness and quietness. This is another way of saying that the ‘winds have become quietened’ because all the activities of the body are made possible by the winds.

These winds are like the many horses of the king’s royal chariot which together help pull the latter under the control of an expert charioteer. An expert ascetic who has successfully done Hath Yoga is deemed to have established control over these winds by controlling the body and its sense organs. The winds now become one and stop their individual random activities which had hitherto been buffeting the creature’s mind, tossing it in various directions, thereby acting as an impediment in his ability to focus his attention and concentrate his mind on any given task at hand. This is metaphorically indicated by saying that he has established ‘Laya Yoga’ by merging all the different units of his existence and establishing them in one unit called the ‘consciousness’ (the Atma) at the micro level, and with the supreme cosmic consciousness (Brahm) at the macro level. In other words, an expert ascetic who has been successful in controlling his sense organs as well as his mind by doing Hath Yoga has virtually reined in all these winds much like an expert charioteer controls the numerous horses of the king’s chariot. Once this happens, all the winds work in sync with each other, i.e. their independent activities cease and they become one unit which is easy to handle. The harmonized wind or air element can now be focused on spiritual pursuits so that the boat can move ahead without being tossed and kicked around by ever-changing directions of the wind and reach its destination smoothly and with ease. This harmonizing and unification of the various functions of the body which results in its calming down and overcoming of its restlessness is like the case of the chariot moving comfortably and pleasurably if the horses move in a coordinated manner instead of pulling randomly here and there to rock the vehicle, or like the case of a boat whose sails are full of wind blowing in a single direction without changing course frequently and violently. Refer also verse nos. 66-69 of this Canto 1.]

136-137. The extreme sense ecstasy and a feeling of utter bliss obtained by the union of the Atma and the Parmatma brought about by Hath and Laya Yogas is comparable to the one obtained at the climax of intercourse when the male semen is ejaculated in the female vagina to bring about a union between the male sperm and the female ova (137-137).

138. Raaj Yoga¹ helps in obtaining the various Siddhis (mystical powers) such as Anima etc. [Refer note to verse no. 44 above.]

These four Yogas (Mantra, Hath, Laya and Raaj) are possible when the Pran and Apaana Vayus (the two main vital winds) are merged with one another. That is,

when a union between all the functions of the body is brought about and full control of the mind and body is established (138).

[Note—The Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 129 states that when an ascetic is successful in doing Raaj Yoga, he need not worry about doing Hath Yoga any longer. This is because Raaj Yoga entails total control of the mind and intellect. Once this objective is achieved, i.e. once the restlessness of the body and its wayward sense organs are brought under control, there is apparently no necessity for making special efforts to control them. These have been the cause of so much distress, restlessness and discomfort for the mind, and through it for the Atma of the creature. Once the mind is controlled, the body would automatically be controlled. The Raaj Yoga, which deals primarily with the control of the mind, ultimately leads to the state of Samadhi.

¹The *Raaj Yoga* is therefore the primary form of the two aspects of Yoga concerned with 'self control', the other being the Hath Yoga. Whereas the Hath Yoga deals with the control of the body and its sense organs by strenuous exercises involving various Mudras, Aasans, Bandhs and Mantras, the Raaj Yoga is dedicated to control of the mind. Therefore, Hath Yoga is merely an instrument to aid the Raaj Yoga. In other words, the main objective of Hath Yoga is to enable the practitioner to achieve success in Raaj Yoga. Thus we see that the Yoga propounded by Patanjali is the one which is known as Raaj Yoga because it fulfills the objective and definition of this ultimate and noble form of Yoga by observing certain strict rules of conduct and self control.]

139. Oh Brahma! I (Shiva) have described this process of Yoga to you. Success in it can be obtained by constant practice; there is no way except this. [In other words, there is no short cut for it.]

This is the considered view of Shiva and hence it cannot be otherwise (139).

140. By practicing Yoga in a persistent and consistent manner for a very long time, one can gradually obtain Mukti (liberation and deliverance) from the fetters of this mortal and gross body in this world. For example, it takes a lot of practice for a monkey to reach a high place on a tree. [The monkey starts at the lower branches and gradually makes its way up a tree with a dense covering of foliage. Likewise, the ascetic starts with Pranayam and other simple exercises and gradually proceeds with his Yoga exercises to ultimately reach its higher level attain complete success in it.] (140).

141. If total success in Yoga is not obtained in this life due to some reason, such as being lazy and doing it half-heartedly, and the ascetic dies, then he has to take a new birth depending upon the various Vasanas (unfulfilled worldly passions, yearnings and desires) of his previous life. [In other words, one of the main causes for remaining unsuccessful in Yoga is the prevalence of various Vasanas in life. This acts as impediment in successful completion of Yoga. Hence, attempt should be made to vanquish all the Vasanas.] (141).

142. In the next birth, if the creature has some pending rewards of his past good deeds, then he becomes fortunate to come in contact with a learned and self-realised Guru (moral preceptor, guide and teacher). With his help he enhances his spiritual stature and obtains quick rewards by proceeding ahead in his spiritual endeavours on the symbolic path called the 'Pashim Dwar'¹ (142).

[Note—¹The word *Pashim Dwar* refers to the auspicious and noble path of Yoga by doing Pranayam especially through the left nostril, because the word 'Pashim' means

the left. This form of Pranayam has been described in verse nos. 121-124 and 132 of this Canto 1 above.]

143. By the good effect of the practice of Yoga done in one's previous life, a speedier result is obtained in the current life. [This is the reason why some acclaimed ascetics are able to achieve success in a short period of time while others spend a life time for the same effect.] This is called 'Kaak Mat'¹ (143).

[Note—¹The word 'Kaak' means the 'crow', while 'Mat' means 'according to someone's view'. Therefore the composite word *Kaak Mat* means the view expressed by some great sage who had to assume the form of a crow due to some deeds that he had done in his past life. But even in this body of a crow he could successfully do Yoga and find his liberation and deliverance. It refers to the great legendary sage named Kagbhusund who retells the story of the Ramayan, the epic story of Lord Rama, for the benefit of Garud, the great bird which is a vehicle of Lord Vishnu. This episode is narrated in the epic Ram Charit Manas by Goswami Tulsidas in its 7th Chapter called the Uttar Kand, from Doha no. 63 to no. 125.]

144. There is no better advice than the one given by Kaak Mat. By following this advice one can easily find Mukti, i.e. one can get liberation and deliverance in whatever body one lives. This is the teaching of Lord Shiva (and hence is correct and truthful) (144).

145. By doing Hath Yoga the creature is able to conquer the world (because he would have established full control over his sense organs which are the basic cause of his remaining tethered to this world of sense objects).

But without practicing the famous 'Paschim Marg/Dwar' form of Yoga he would not find Moksha (emancipation and salvation; final liberation and deliverance)¹ (145).

[Note—¹The Paschim Dwar form of Yoga refers to doing steady Pranayam involving the left nostril and the use of the Mantra 'So-a-ham', meaning 'I am that Brahm'. Continuous repetition of this Mantra has a profound psychological impact upon the practitioner, and by and by he indeed becomes one like Brahm. This form of Mantra Yoga leads to the Laya Yoga—i.e. the use of this Mantra leads to the situation whereby the practitioner identifies himself with the supreme transcendental Brahm instead of his body. As soon as this happens, he is deemed to be liberated from the fetters that tie all the creatures to this body and the world. This is obtaining Moksha through the Paschim Dwar Yoga. Refer verse no. 121-124 and 132 of this Canto 1 in this context.]

146. First all the different diseases of the body are eliminated and then, as a consequence of this, the body itself feels light and detoxified. Then the ascetic becomes uniform and steady in whatever circumstantial situation he has to live in this world; he never feels uneasy, distressed, anguished and agitated¹. In this eclectic and divine state of quietude, equanimity and fortitude, he enjoys the bliss obtained by drops of Amrit, the elixir of eternal bliss and happiness, dripping from the moon (which is said to be the celestial pitcher of this elixir)² (146).

[Note--¹That is, he has managed to effectively exercise self control over himself in a holistic manner. Nothing ruffles him, whether it pertains to the external world or to his own body. This is because since he has effectively controlled his sense organs of perception as well as his mind, the latter are not attracted by the illusionary charms of this material world of sense objects, and since he has been regularly practicing exercises of Yoga his body has been toned up and detoxified of all the poisons that

had been at the root cause of all his physical ailments. Resultantly, he becomes quietened and characterised by the virtues of equanimity and fortitude.

²The moon's light is very cool, soothing and comforting for agitated nerves, and its effect on the nerves is the opposite of that of the sun. Here it means that when an ascetic has reached that state of success in Yoga when all his individuality has been lost, when he has been able to exercise full control over his gross body and its sense organs as well as his subtle body and its mind, heart and vital winds, he enjoys the same calmness and quietude that is enjoyed when one lies under the open sky in the shine of a full moon after a long hard day at work. Refer verse no. 127, Canto 1 of this Upanishad as well as Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 73.]

147. An ascetic should learn to control the vital wind forces in the body¹, and then harness their stupendous powers to effectively control his essential elements called the Dhaatus².

When the fire of Yoga has been kindled in this way and is burning vigorously, one hears various types of sounds or roars called 'Naad'³. Besides this, the body becomes very malleable and flexible (because all the stiffness of the body and its muscles and arteries has been eliminated by being made supple and elastic by constant exercises and getting detoxified and warmed by the heat generated during Yoga) (147).

[Note—¹Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 95-97, 106.

²Refer verse nos. 40, 56 and 68 of this Canto 1.

³The word *Naad* has two connotations here. One refers to the sound heard when one stands near a blazing fire, and the other refers to the cosmic sound heard in the head when all external sound-interferences having their origin in the external world cease. The first sound is the one heard when one stands near a blazing fire. In this case, one naturally hears different genres of sounds typical of a burning fire—such as for example a hissing sound, a sputtering sound, a crackling sound, a rustling sound, a whistling sound, a roaring sound etc. They are caused by the crackling of firewood and various impurities in it as well as the ingredients added to keep the fire burning brightly along with the friction created in the various layers of air which are at different levels of temperature around the fire. In the present context, the same effect is obtained when the ascetic does Yoga because the internal airs get heated and this burns the different impurities present inside the body. As this heated air rises, its sound is heard more distinctly in the ears. To this is added the cosmic sound of Naad heard in the head when all sounds originating in the external world are excluded during concentration of Yoga. Refer verse no. 127 above of this Canto 1.]

148. The ascetic is able to overcome the effects of various seasons such as rainy and winter seasons. [That is, he is the same all year round; no changes in weather or circumstances ever ruffle him.] His grossness and languor are eliminated. He becomes so light that he can move through the sky (like a bird). He can assume any form he wishes and has the speed and agility like that of the wind element. He becomes all-knowing, all-wise and omniscient (148).

[Note—Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 51, 73-75, 97, 102, 108-111, 126-127 etc.]

149. All the three worlds (the celestial, nether and terrestrial) becoming accessible to him and he can move in them at his free will¹. All the eight Siddhis² are accessible to him. Say, when camphor is burnt, how can it have any hardness left in it? [Here the ascetic is compared to camphor that has been burnt and has lost all its earlier stiffness and grossness.] (149).

[Note—¹Earlier, verse no. 85 of this Canto has described how to conquer the three symbolic worlds.

²The eight Siddhis have been enumerated in note to verse no. 44 of this Canto.]

150. In the same way (like the burning of camphor), how can hardness and rigidity indicating arrogance, stubbornness and haughtiness ever remain in an ascetic when his 'Ahankar' (ego and false sense of pride) is eliminated.

A spiritual aspirant free from Ahankar is so enriched with glorious powers of the real 'self' (the pure consciousness) that he can do anything he wishes¹.

An ascetic who has conquered his Ahankar becomes the best ascetic amongst his peers. He is deemed to have obtained his freedom (from the bondage of Ahankar which acts like a formidable shackle too difficult to break). He can assume as many forms as he wishes (by the virtue of the various Siddhis he has obtained—refer Yogtattva Upanishad, 105, 109-111) (150).

[Note--¹In other words, it is the Ahankar that prevents a man's true potentials from coming to the fore. For example, there are situations when one has been stubborn and inflexible in dealing with certain circumstances, but in due course of events he realises his follies and understands that he was at fault. But ordinarily he would desist from accepting his mistakes because it would hurt his exaggerated ego, inflated self-pride and a false sense of self righteousness; he is too proud to admit that he has indeed committed a grave mistake. He would rather suffer from the consequences and blame others for his misfortunes than accepting his errors. If his haughty and stubborn behaviour has hurt others and caused unwarranted mental or physical agony to them, he would refuse to relent and ask for forgiveness—for he is too proud and full of Ahankar to do so. This is what is meant here. A true ascetic has stupendous mystical powers but he is never proud of them or his spiritual achievements. He is pious, humble, and simplicity personified.]

151. Such an accomplished ascetic becomes Mukta (liberated and delivered) even while he is alive in this world and lives in this physical gross body. [This is because this body becomes irrelevant for him; he has obtained complete control over it so much so that the normal bodily functions such as output of urine, stool, saliva, mucous and sweat etc. have come almost to a standstill—refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no.57-58. This is called 'Jivan Mukti'.]

Worldly Siddhis (accomplishments, successes and eclectic specialized powers) are of two types—Kalpit and A-Kalpit¹ (151).

[Note--¹The *Kalpita Siddhis* are the ones which are created with efforts made for them using various means and methods. They have a limited scope, are perishable, and have predictable and imaginable powers and potentials that can be foreseen. On the other hand, the *A-Kalpita Siddhis* are those which are self-generated and cannot be created by any artificial means, are natural and with unimaginable mystical potentials and powers that cannot be predicted. Refer also Canto 5, verse nos. 46-55 of the present Upanishad as well as the Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 56-102, and the Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse nos. 23-24.]

152. The 'Kalpita Siddhis' are those that are obtained by diligent efforts and conscious endeavour on the part of the ascetic or any spiritual aspirant. Success in obtaining mystical powers and acquiring spiritual authority in this case of Kalpita Siddhis is done with the help of various juices and essences called the various 'Rasas' (such as the Som Rasa used in fire sacrifice as an offering to the Gods and is said to be divinely blessed), the different medicinal herbs called the 'Aushadhis' (which are also used in fire sacrifices to clear the environment of toxic gases and germs), all the different

deeds called ‘Kriyas’ (which are auspicious, righteous and noble in character and would therefore result in creation of positive energy and right circumstances conducive to one’s all round welfare and well being, here referring to the numerous rituals associated with formal fire sacrifices and other religious activities), and practice of ‘Mantras’ (i.e. doing Japa or repetition with them—this helps to harness the stupendous positive energy encrypted in their letters and words as well as to help the mind to learn concentration which in turn helps in training it to become calm, quiet, rested and focused on the work at hand, thereby achieving desired results with full attention of the mind’s faculties at work) (152).

[Note—These Siddhis are called *Kalpita* because their powers and potential effects can be predicted and imagined depending upon the medium used to acquire them. Such as for example, if one particular herb is consumed during the course of Yoga, its benefits as well as harms can be well predicted in advance. Similarly, the effects of the Mantras, Kriyas (deeds), and Rasas (juices; extracts) can well be ascertained before hand; they can be predicted with a great degree of accuracy.]

153. These Kalpit Siddhis are not everlasting; they are transient in their effect, and their mystical powers are less effective and less potent. Some of them can be obtained easily without much hassle and even without employing any special means, while others require some sort of special effort and employment of special means or ways or measures as well as some degree of diligence on the part of the aspirant to be successfully accessed (153).

154. The A-Kalpita Siddhis, on the contrary, are those whose stupendity, far-reaching mystical powers and grand effects cannot be imagined, pre-conceived, foreseen and predicted in advance. Such Siddhis are the exclusive domain of the Supreme Being called the Ishwar; they are possessed by him and are under his command. Such Siddhis are numerous and of different genres. They are available to (or can be accessed by) an honest and sincere ascetic who is engaged in self realisation with steadfastness of purpose, with persistent consistency and diligence. He is independent of any other props to support his spiritual journey except following the eclectic path of Yoga (meditation and contemplation). That is, he relies on Yoga only for his spiritual emancipation and salvation (154).

[Note—In other words, such an aspirant who sticks to only one path for his spiritual liberation and deliverance, i.e. who follows the path of Yoga as envisioned in this and other Yoga Upanishads, is the only one who can successfully acquire such mystical powers and astounding potentials as the ones that come under the classification of ‘A-Kalpita Siddhis’. He therefore would not take the help of any kind of external help in accomplishing his spiritual goal of attaining self-realisation and liberation from the bondage of this gross and perishable body. He would not use medicinal drugs or their spin-offs in the form of various juices and essences such as the Som Rasa used during formal fire sacrifices to keep him going in his spiritual practice and maintain the level of his energy, strength, stamina and vitality, nor does he rely upon so many other ways and paths said to provide liberation and deliverance to the soul as proffered by various versions of different scriptures and their myriad interpretations. He relies only on one eclectic path of Yoga to the exclusion of all others. No one can judge the intensity and reach of his spiritual powers because they are unimaginably great and astounding.]

155. Such A-Kalpita Siddhis are obtained by acclaimed ascetics by practicing Yoga for a long period of time. Those ascetics who have no Vasanas (worldly passions, yearnings and desires) are the ones who can acquire them, and their acquisition gives

them immense strength and powers. They can assume any form they wish. These Siddhis are eternal and everlasting; they are not perishable (155).

156. Besides using them to attain oneness with the Parmatma, the supreme Soul of creation, the supreme Brahm, the ascetic should otherwise keep them a top secret. To be in possession of such stupendous mystical powers is a sign of a successful and accomplished ascetic who is Brahm and self realised (156).

[Note—Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 73-79.]

157. Just like high-flying birds cruising through the sky have a panoramic view of different pilgrim sites as they move ahead towards their destination, these Siddhis also provide the ascetic many different grand visions of the magnificent glories that are associated with their acquisition, but he remains unconcerned and unruffled by them, and instead moves ahead on his spiritual journey steadily and unwaveringly (157).

[Note—Such wise, erudite and enlightened ascetics have a broad perspective and a broad vision of life and its existential Truth. They are not narrow-minded and stringy in their approach to life and its problems. They look at everything from a high moral ground and with a spiritual perspective. Their view of the world rises above the mundane and the selfish, and inspite of living in it they remain totally aloof and dispassionate. Their demeanour and world-view resembles that of a bird that is flying over a pilgrim site—it sees it from a broad angle and the holiness of the place passes as a fleeting thought through their mind as they fly across it overhead, only to move ahead and put it behind. The bird might even take a short break from its flight and rest for a while, but it never gets emotionally and physically attached to the pilgrim site in the hope of finding salvation by staying put in it. Likewise, the wise ascetic does his duties and remains totally detached from this world, always remaining focused on his spiritual goal by being meditative and contemplative every moment of his life. He experiences everything in this world, he experiences and witnesses the benefits of Yoga, acquires the various Siddhis and witnesses the accompanying acclaim and stupendous powers, but they do not go to his head. He is not tied down by them; he is not shackled by anything. The glamour and adulation of success in Yoga which results in acquisition of different Siddhis do not bother him the least and they do not disturb his calm demeanours. Instead of boasting of them and employing them for worldly gain, he utilizes them to further his efforts in obtaining final liberation and deliverance from this life and its problems.]

158. When an ascetic is not at all affected by loss or gain, i.e. when he remains steady, calm and unmoved under all circumstances, whether they entail great emotional and physical distress and anguish such as when caused by losing something that is very dear to one, or the much excitement and elation that accompanies when something precious is obtained by an ordinary man, it is only then that he is entitled to be called a truly realised ascetic. All the eclectic and mystical Siddhis are easily accessible to him on their own; he won't have to make special effort to acquire them (158).

159. Even as an expert goldsmith is able to tell the purity of gold, the possession of different Siddhis and how the ascetic tackles them is a good measure to identify an ascetic who has attained Jivan Mukti. [The Jivan Mukta ascetic is one who enjoys the benefits of Yoga without letting the charms of the various mystical powers that accrue with it to trap him in their snare of worldly fame; he remains totally detached from the world and the body inspite of remaining alive and doing his duties normally. He remains ever engrossed in doing meditation and contemplation.] (159).

160. The stupendous mystical powers possessed by an accomplished and enlightened ascetic are rarely witnessed or seen openly; they remain hidden and secret with him; he never divulges them or boasts of them. [This is because he does not wish to advertise them for gaining worldly fame and popularity, and he should not even do so as it is prohibited by the scripture—refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 76-79 in this context which proscribes exhibition of one's spiritual powers.]

An ascetic who has no Siddhis (but boasts of possessing them by showing some sleight-of-hand tricks) is regarded as being shackled and tied in fetters. He has no chance of obtaining Mukti (liberation and deliverance) whatsoever (because he is an imposter and fraud) (160).

161. A person whose gross body is freed from the decrepiting and disabling effects of old age and who is free from the fears of death is the one who is deemed to be Jivan Mukta¹ (i.e. one who is freed from the fetters imposed by the gross perishable body on his eternally and inherently free spirit).

On the other hand, those who continuously die (to take birth again) are no better than animals, chicken, worms and insects. [Why this happens is explained in the next verse no. 162.] (151).

[Note--¹A person who sincerely follows the tenets of Yoga has a well tuned body which is free from all the evil effects of decay and old age. This point is repeatedly stressed in Yoga Upanishads. The practical reason is the rigorous physical detoxifying and revitalizing exercises that are part of Yoga. They rejuvenate the body and keep it in prime shape. So, the bad effects of the normal aging process have no influence upon them. Refer various verses of this Canto 1 itself on this topic, viz. 2, 5, 10-11, 43, 92, 84, 99, 146 etc.

Besides this physical benefit, an accomplished ascetic is wise and enlightened enough to realise that the body is not his true self, but it is the pure consciousness Atma residing in that body. Such a person is the one who has truly understood the meaning of bondage as well as of freedom. The body is like a prison for him from which he would want to break free. But he realises at the same time that till the time he lives in this world he cannot do so, for the body is the habitat of the Atma. So, when he has freed himself from the deluding effects of the body by becoming totally indifferent to it and its natural instincts to be pulled towards this material world and its charms and then subsequently get trapped by them, he has in fact broken free from this prison and obtained liberation (Mukti). This body would not be able to trap his soul any longer. The self-realised person would not be bothered by what the body does; he would remain like a neutral spectator of all the deeds done by the body. As such, he would not be responsible for these deeds and their results, the root cause of all worldly problems and the reason why the soul remains trapped in the cycle of birth and death. Such an existence is indeed one which is the life of a free man who is not enslaved to any master. He can do whatever he likes, go wherever he wants, and live as he wants. This in the context of Siddhis would be tantamount to his acquiring them; he is enabled by this Siddhis to do whatever he wants, go wherever he wishes, and live a life the way he wants.]

162. Oh Padmaj (i.e. Brahma, the one born from a divine Lotus)! Such creatures (as those who are mentally and emotionally attached to the body and enjoy it because this body affords them the chance of self gratification and enjoyment of the material comforts of the sense objects of this deluding world) die only to shed their physical gross body, but they do not find true liberation and deliverance from it because they have to take another birth again with a new gross physical body. The creature's Pran—i.e. his primary forces of life representing his 'self' and his 'being', the

essential life forces and consciousness that represent the true identity of the creature—is tied (emotionally attached) to the body to such an extent that it does not wish to forsake it, and the result is that at the time of death when the body has to be abandoned under compulsions of its natural decay and destruction process which is conventionally known as ‘death of the body’, this Pran immediately finds a new body for its self for it (the Pran) cannot or does not want to live without it (the body).

Under this circumstance, how can this creature ever hope to get rid of the burdensome encumbrance known as the body; his Atma, which is his ‘true self’, would remain shackled to one or the other form of the gross body. [This is the called the cycle of birth and death.] (162).

163. True Mukti (liberation and deliverance; emancipation and salvation) is only possible when this situation of having a gross perishable body and being emotionally attached to it is done away with. If this body was not perishable and had it been eternal, it would have been the supreme transcendental Brahm personified. But since the former condition is not true, it follows that the latter is also not true.

Therefore, for a truly realised and wise ascetic who is enlightened about this truth vis-à-vis the body, the latter becomes totally irrelevant. With this enlightened view, he regards his ‘essential self’, i.e. his pure conscious Atma, as being separate and distinct from the body, and therefore ‘he’ (as his Atma, and not the body) becomes an ethereal, sublime and subtle entity that is a ‘non-body’. In other words, he does not show any of the typical characteristics of the gross physical body such as to become old and die. He, on the contrary, becomes eternal, imperishable, subtle and sublime which are the divine characteristics of Brahm.

In this way, this spiritual aspirant becomes truly liberated and delivered in spite of having a physical gross body, and consequentially becomes one like the supreme Brahm¹. [In other words, as soon as the ascetic realises who ‘he’ truly is, i.e. when he understands the fact that his true self is his pure conscious Atma and not the gross and perishable body, he becomes an entity that is no longer identified by the body but by the soul. And this soul has the eclectic virtues of being sublime, eternal and non-perishable, the virtues possessed by Brahm. Hence, the soul or Atma of the ascetic representing his ‘true self’ becomes one like Brahm. In fact, these two entities—Atma and Brahm—are the same entity in two forms, they are both the non-dual entity known as the universal, ubiquitous and quintessential Consciousness, the only difference being that the former has an existence at the individual level of creation, i.e. at the micro level of existence in the form of the individual Jiva (creature), and the latter has its existence at the macro level of creation as the all-pervading and all-encompassing Brahm.] (163).

[Note--¹Brahm and Atma are not two separate and distinguishable entities but are essentially one and the same non-dual consciousness that pervades uniformly throughout this living world. The only reason why they appear separate and distinguishable from one another is the way they are visualised by the perceiver. The Atma is seen at the micro level of existence whereas Brahm is visualised at the macro level of creation. For an ordinary man of low intellect and who is ignorant of the profound spiritual truths as expounded in the scriptures, these two have different existences, but for a wise and erudite man there is no difference between them; it is only the perspective of viewing that creates an illusion of difference. These two ways at viewing the same thing might distort its reality but the basics, the fundamental nature and primary form of this one non-dual entity would not change or get affected due to distortions in view and illusions of perception.]

To illustrate how this is possible, we can take a simple example. There is only one moon in the sky, but if say ten pots of water are placed on the ground then we will have ten independent images of this same moon in the water of these ten pots. Does it mean there are ten + one = eleven moons? If the answer to this question is an emphatic ‘no’, then the same answer would apply to the universal truth that there is no difference between the Atma of uncountable creatures and Brahm.]

164. An ascetic who thinks of nothing but Brahm, who contemplates upon none but Brahm, it is only then that such an enlightened ascetic is deemed to be liberated and delivered. Such a wise and enlightened ascetic does not treat his body and its sense organs as the desired objective or goal of his life. That is, he does not believe in pampering and gratifying the body. On the contrary, he treats the body as a prison from which he ought to liberate his Atma by being detached from and uninterested in the body. He loses all attractions for the body and its charms, and even begins to loathe them (164).

165. When the self-realised and enlightened ascetic becomes one with the supreme Brahm and indistinguishable from the latter, his body no longer remains a mere city with ten gates or doorways and ten avenues represented by the ten chief Naadis¹. But upon self-realisation, this body dissolves its independent existence and becomes one with Brahm and indistinguishable from the latter in the sense that it is henceforth identified by the primary elements called the Bhuts—earth, water, fire, air and sky elements—from which it is primarily made just like the bubbles of water merge and vanish in the water from which their were formed initially² (165).

[Note—¹The body is likened to a *city* because the pure consciousness known as the Atma and the true ‘self’ of the creature lives in it. The Pran, which refers to the vital winds present in the body and which keep the body alive and active, enables the Atma to enjoy its residence in the body, for had the Pran not allowed the body to remain alive and active, the latter would have been useless for the Atma. A body without the Atma is like a dead city.

The *ten doors* of this city are the following—two ears, two eyes, two nostrils, one mouth, one anus, one urethra and one Brahm Randhra (the hair-like slit present on the top of the head).

There are said to be *ten chief Naadis* in the body. They are the chief ducts present inside the body through which the Pran—vital life-consciousness represented by the vital winds and life impulses present in the body which keep the body alive and distinguishes a living body from a dead one—moves while the man sleeps (refer Paingal Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 12 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition. They are likened to broad avenues of a grand city in which the Atma lives. According to Yogchudamani Upanishad of Sam Veda tradition, verse no. 15-17, they are the following—Ida, Pingla, Sushumna, Gandhari, Hasti-jivaha, Pusa, Yashaswani, Alambusa, Kuhu and Shankhani.

Refer Canto 5, verse no. 2 in this context.

²The entire creation has come into being from one single source known as Brahm. The five elements called the Panch Bhuts (earth, water, fire, air and sky) are the primary building blocks or bricks that are cast from the same original source called Brahm. The gross body of the creation was moulded from these five elements. Therefore it follows as a corollary that the creation can be regressed and traced back to come to that single point. Since the elements from which the gross body of the creature is crafted are lifeless entities, it follows that the former is also lifeless. The factor that makes the body ‘alive and living’ is called the pure consciousness and it is the ‘self’ of all living beings. In other words, a wise ascetic sees the body as a

revelation of the elements, while his 'self' as a manifestation of the cosmic Consciousness called Brahm which infuses life into this otherwise lifeless body.]

166. This body is filled by ten types of vital winds¹. It has ten Indris or sense organs (five organs of perception and five organs of action)². The body is supported by six Chakras (swirling subtle energy centers)³, and it roams around in a great forest consisting of six Vishayas (objects of the sense organs of perception)⁴ (166).

[Note—¹The *ten winds* are the following—Pran, Apaana, Samaana, Udaana, Vyan, Nag, Kurma, Krikar, Devdutta and Dhananjay. [Refer—Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 77-87 and Subala Upanishad, canto 9, verse no. 14 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition.

These ten Prans are divided into two broad categories—viz. the five main Prans and the five subsidiary Prans. The main Prans, their functions and locations in the body in brief are the following—(1) Pran— this is the main vital wind and usually refers to the breath without which life is not possible; it is the vital wind located in the upper part of the body. It is the wind that is exhaled as well as inhaled, and which is responsible for infusing and sustaining life in the body; it is considered the chief wind in the whole setup because without this wind infusing life in the body no other wind would be of any significance to the creature. It is present in the mouth, nose, heart, navel, big toe of the leg. (2) Apaana—this is the wind that passes down the intestines, and is responsible for ingestion of food, its digestion in the intestines and the final excretion of the waste product from the body—its grosser content through the anus and its fluid contents through the urinary system of the kidneys. This is the wind that moves down in the body and is chiefly located in the lower part of the body—in the intestines and anus, lower abdomen, thighs, knees. (3) Samaana—it is uniformly present throughout the body and as the name itself suggests it is responsible for uniform pressure and balance in the body besides equal distribution of nourishment throughout the body by maintaining proper circulation of blood. It is said to be especially present in the ears which are said to be the specialized playing field for the Samaana wind as it helps maintain balance in the body through the semi-circular canals in the ears. It also helps to coordinate the ears and the intellect because the latter would base its decisions on what it hears with the aid of the ears. (4) Udaana—this is the wind that helps the body to rise and move about, it also helps the body to expel toxic waste gases through the nostrils and mouth in the form of exhalation and cough. It is predominantly present in the hands, legs and the various joints of the body. (5) Vyan—this wind helps in maintaining equilibrium and pressure within the body as well as to ensure equal distribution of nutrients in the body by maintaining circulation. Hence, it works in close coordination with the Samaana wind. It also helps to control the functioning of the other winds. It is located in the ears, thighs, waist region, heels, shoulders and throat.

The Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 3, Brahmin 9, verse no. 26 clearly lays down the pyramidal structure of the five important vital winds. The Dhyandindu Upanishad, verse nos. 95-99, of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition not only describes the 'colours' of the five principle winds but also their 'Beej Mantras', while this same Upanishad in its verse nos. 99-100 emphasises the fact that the 'different names' given to these vital winds are artificial and actually there is no difference between them.

Besides these five main Prans, the other five winds are called as junior Prans or subsidiary Prans because their main function is to aid the functioning of the main Prans. They are located in the skin, muscles and the bones. Their main functions are the following—(6) Nag—this junior wind which helps in exhaling breath and belching. (7) Kurma— this subsidiary wind helps the eyelids to open and shut. (8) Krikar— this creates the sensation of hunger. (9) Devdutta— this creates sleep. (10)

Dhananjay—it prevents decay and deformation of the body immediately after death for some time.

²The *ten organs* of the gross body are the following—five organs of perception such as eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin, and five organs of action such as hand, leg, mouth, anus and genital.

³The *six Chakras* are the subtle energy centers of the body which act as power houses which supply energy for the various functions of the body. They are the following--(1) The 'Mooladhar Chakra' is located between genitals and anus in the area called the perineum; (2) The 'Swadhisthan Chakra' is located in the groins of males and the Bhug area of females. It has a 5-headed male phallus like a sprouting seed and its counterpart in the female is the clitoris. (3) The 'Manipur Chakra' is located in the navel area, is shaped like a gem and is surrounded by the network of Naadis (nerves) called solar plexus. It is also the site of the Sun energy; (4) The 'Anahat Chakra' is located in the chest between the heart and lung area and it is shaped like a swan looking downwards. It is also assumed to be like an 8-petal lotus facing down; (5) The 'Vishuddha Chakra/Kanth Chakra' is located in the throat. To the left of it passes the Eda nerve representing the moon, to its right goes the Pingla nerve representing the sun, and in the center is the Sushumna nerve through which the Kundalini energy rises up from the base of the spine to the skull. (6) The 'Agya Chakra or Bhru Chakra' is located between the eyebrows and root of the nose. It is also called the third eye of enlightenment and wisdom.

Refer Saubhagya Laxmi Upanishad, Canto 3 of Rig Veda tradition, Dhyanbindu Upanishad, verse nos. 44-49 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, as well as Yograjojanishad, Yogchudamani Upanishad, and Jabal Darshan Upanishad, Canto 4 of the Sam Veda tradition.

⁴The six objects of the body pertain to the five organs of perception and one mind = six. The five perceptions are sight (eye), smell (nose), sound (ear), taste (tongue) and feel or touch (skin) + all the things about which the mind thinks = six in total. The sense objects of the material world are categorized into six groups according to these six faculties of the body. For instance, all things that have a shape, fixed contour, colour and form are the subject matter of the eye and the faculty of sight. Similarly, things that emanate a smell are the subject matter of the organ of the nose and the faculty of smell; things that emanate sound are the subject matter of the ear and the faculty of hearing; things that have chemicals that induce taste are the subject matter of the tongue and the faculty of taste; things that can be felt and touched are the objective of the skin and the faculty that gives the sense of touch and feel; and finally those things that require thoughts, imagination, comprehension, rationality, analysis and application of intelligence are the subject matter of the mind.]

167. This body has four Peeths¹ or symbolic altars where the ascetic offers his symbolically prayers to the Supreme Being enshrined in his own self. [In other words, the body is treated like a pilgrim site where the Shakti principle of Divinity is worshipped according to Tantra philosophy. The word 'Peeth' is indicative of this—because the word refers to the pilgrim sites where the Divinity is worshipped in its female manifestation as a Shakti or Goddess instead of the male form as a God. When any fire sacrifice is done, a seat is designated for the deity to be worshipped, and it is also called a Peeth.]

The four Vedas² are like the lighted lamps that show illumination to it. [That is, the four Vedas illuminate the wise person's mind and show him the auspicious, correct and noble path through the dense dark forest of delusions and worldly pitfalls through which he has to traverse during his journey of life so as to enable him to reach his objective of obtaining emancipation and salvation for his soul and attain self-realisation and Brahm-realisation. When this happens, the wise person is said to

have reached his true spiritual destination, while if he remains trapped in the cycle of birth and death he has missed his spiritual target. Even as lampposts along the highway not only illuminate the path below but also act as a beacon for travelers who might otherwise be lost in the pitch darkness of the night, the Vedas and the Upanishads guide the spiritual aspirant onwards in his spiritual journey by showing him the correct path to be followed. They act as a beacon of hope and crutches for weary spiritual travelers who are in desperate need of help and guidance in the wilderness that the world is.]

For a wise, erudite and enlightened ascetic, the cosmic ethereal sound called the Naad³, represented by the ethereal word OM complete with its Bindu, is like the grand cosmic male phallus with the drop of semen dripping from it. It is a state of eclectic bliss and ecstasy, and it is a symbolic abode of Shiva and his divine cosmic energy called Shakti⁴ (167).

[Note—Refer Canto 5, verse no. 3 in this context as it is almost identical in tenor.

¹The word *Peeth* means a seat or pedestal for an idol of a deity. In practical life it refers to a center of temporal or religious authority or sect. In the context of the body the word refers to the four sheaths which form the body that harbours the Atma at its center. These four are the Annamaye Kosh or food sheath, the Pranmaye Kosh or the wind sheath, the Manomaye Kosh or the mind sheath, and Vigyanmaye Kosh or the intellect sheath. According to Tantra Shastra, the Peeths are said to be the places where the Shakti (cosmic dynamic energy of creation) is located. They are the following—The first seat or Peeth is called Kaam Roop Peeth, the second seat called Purna Giri Peeth, the third seat is called Jalandhar Peeth, and the fourth seat is called Uddiyan Peeth. These Peeths or seats and their locations have been described below in verse nos. 171-175 of this Canto 1. We can compare these four Peeths with the four corners of square or a rectangle. These corners decide the exact shape and size of the figure because the lines that form the outline simply join these corners. They are also like the four cardinal points of the celestial globe—viz. north, east, south and west.

²The four Vedas are the Rig, Sam, Yajur and Atharva.

³Refer verse no. 105 of this Canto 1. The Naad is the cosmic sound heard by an ascetic when he is in deep meditation mode. As any sound originates from a source and then radiates out in the form of waves much like ripples created on the surface of a calm lake when a stone is thrown in it, the Naad has its cosmic origin in the one-point source called Brahm. This is the symbolic Bindu which is represented as the dot put on the top of the geometrical symbol for Naad which is also used as a monosyllable Mantra known as OM. The Naad consists of such sound frequencies that are not normally audible to the human ear just like the case of the radio waves present all around us in ether that are not heard by us except for the use of special instrument called the 'radio'. The frequencies of the sound waves of Naad require specially trained neurons in the mind to be heard by an ascetic, and this fine-tuning is done by meditation and contemplation. Ancient sages and seers who did hear this Naad pondered over the matter and came to the conclusion that the monosyllable word OM was the nearest analogue to the sound produced by Naad, and hence they prescribed it as a synonym for Naad.

The symbol of OM and Naad is 'ॐ', and it resembles the sixth Sanskrit alphabet which is a long vowel sound resembling 'Ooo' as in 'boot, root or soot'. In the symbol of OM, the Bindu or the 'dot' is placed on the top of a crescent-shaped moon or a concave bowl placed on the top of this letter such that this dot is hanging at its focal point. In modern parlance we can imagine what it signifies. This dot is the focal point from which the cosmic Naad originated when the process of creation first started (what the modern science recognizes as the 'Big Bang'). This sound spread to all corners of the cosmos. The human skull is also concave from the inner side, and

the brain is located just below it—resembling the ‘Chandra and Bindu’ placed on the sign for OM. The implication is very obvious—this Bindu or ‘dot’ generated the cosmic Naad which is heard by the ascetic when he focuses his entire concentration in the head by diverting all his senses away from the external world and fixing their attention on one point in the head, called the Agya Chakra or still higher up in the Brahm Randhra Chakra. These are the points in the body where the cosmic sound waves are caught hold of by the sensory receptors in the brain which then transmit this data to the brain’s processing area which in turn translates this signal as Naad. The skull and the brain are the receptors in the human body that catch the signals emanating from the cosmos just like a modern day roof-top dish antenna catch signals from orbiting satellites to transmit audio and visual signals originating in some far away land to be seen and heard by us in our homes directly. Just like a simple short-circuit in this electronic device can blank-out the signals, the slightest digression and carelessness on the part of the spiritual aspirant would prevent him from hearing the Naad. But that does not mean that the Naad is not present in the surrounding ether.

The reverberation and vibrations caused by this cosmic Naad is very overwhelming for the ascetic and he literally drowns in its sound. The vibrations massage his nerves and relaxes them; he feels a sense of extreme ecstasy and bliss due to this, and that is comparable to the one obtained at the time of ejaculation of sperm during intercourse—hence the reference to the male phallus and the semen dripping from it. There is no vulgarity in this explanation. This analogy is cited to give a physically imaginable and verifiable idea of the extent of bliss and ecstasy obtained when the ascetic reaches the climax of Yoga so that he can hear the Naad. This apparatus is called the ‘Naad Lingam’ in Canto 2, verse no. 6 below in this Upanishad, and Canto 3, verse nos. 1-10 narrate how the audible word is created by this Naad.

In brief, the concept of Naad and Bindu have been employed by this Upanishad to describe how the wise ascetic realises that this cosmic dynamic energy has been utilized by the body to empower him with majestic powers that makes him as powerful as Brahm.

Refer verse no. 178 below also of this Canto 1.

⁴This is also why this condition is compared to the ‘cosmic union’ of Shiva representing Brahm and his own energy personified as Shakti which produced this sound energy called Naad in the ethereal space of the cosmos. It was Brahm’s ecstasy and bliss of self-realisation that produced a cosmic shiver and shook the ether to create vibrations which in turn set in motion the process of creation. In the terms of Vedanta, Shiva is known as Brahm, while this Shakti is known as Maya. According to the Sankhya philosophy, this Shakti (the dynamic cosmic energy and the female aspect of creation) is called Prakriti (Nature) in the context of Brahm who himself is called the Purush (the macrocosmic Male aspect of creation).

The philosophy propounded here in the context of Yoga pertains to the Tantra school of Indian philosophy which is a modification of the Vedanta and Sankhya philosophies. It recognizes that this creation came into being by the union (Yoga) between Shiva (the supreme transcendental and imperishable Brahm) principle and Shakti (the dynamic Shiva) principle. They are not separate from one another, but a unified principle called ‘Shiva-Shakti’. The relationship between Shiva and Shakti is like that of fire (Shiva) and its power to burn (Shakti). In the inactive state it is Shiva, while in its active state it is Shakti. They are inseparable from one another; they are non-dual two-in-one entity. The Shiva is ‘Nirguna Brahm’ wherein the divine attributes called the various Gunas (qualities and characteristics unique to every individual and which determine his temperament and nature) are inherent but lying in a dormant, latent and neutral state. When these Gunas become active and begin to unravel or manifest themselves in the process of creation and its evolution, the same Shiva (Brahm) becomes ‘Saguna’—i.e. with Gunas.

From this Shiva's cosmic Shakti or dynamism comes into existence the Naad, the cosmic vibrations in ether that translate into sound element. Since any sound must have a central point of origin, there developed the concept of the Bindu, the dot or the central point. The Bindu represented the Shiva principle which provided the first spark of life to set off the process of creation, drawing from the vision of a drop of the male semen which is a necessary spark to initiate the process of physical life in this world. The crescent-shaped bowl called the Chandra placed on the top of the geometrical sign for OM was the cosmic womb into which this cosmic sperm was dropped. Their union resulted in the first conception and the eventual evolution and devolvment of the vast creation. The two primary components of creation are therefore the 'Bindu' and the 'Chandra'—the former symbolising the cosmic sperm and the latter standing for the cosmic bowl or womb where this sperm was placed.

The primary cell of the sperm and the egg are both single, and they resemble a 'dot' because of their microscopic form. Therefore the word 'Bindu' would refer to both the cosmic sperm as well as the cosmic ovum—hardly distinguishable from one another in their primary form as consisting of a single generative cell. It is their union that creates the conducive environ for producing the spontaneous burst of energy called the 'Shakti'. It is just like two ingredients in physical science that remain harmless and neutral when separate but produce an explosive mixture when brought together.

By extension, just like a single-celled male sperm and a single-celled female egg bring about the creation of the complex structure of the living being consisting of his gross physical body that is visible and so powerful, the 'Beej Mantra' is the seed from which the external form of the main body of any given Mantra is generated. The word 'Beej' in the context of Mantras means a 'seed' from which the Mantra evolved, and it would be analogous to this 'Bindu'.

From the union of Shiva and Shakti evolved the twenty four Tattvas (elements) as follows—one Mahat + one Ahankar + the ten sense organs called the Indris (five organs of perception—ear, eye, nose, tongue and skin, and five organs of action—hand, leg, mouth, anus and genital) + one Mana (mind) + the five subtle elements called the Tanmatras (the senses of perception—sight, smell, sound, taste and touch) + the five gross elements called Bhuts (earth, water, fire, air and sky) = 23 total. To this is added the inherent 'Shakti' or energy that empowers them all to function according to their assigned duties, and the total comes to $23 + 1 = 24$ in all.

From the Shiva (the attributeless Brahm) principle at the macro level evolved the five Gods or deities—viz. Vishnu, Brahma, Ishan, Rudra and Sada-Shiva. The Shakti resides in the Kundalini, the coiled subtle energy center in the human body, located in the region of the Mooladhar Chakra situated at the base of the spine.

The Jiva or the living being is none but this Shiva (Brahm) himself, but covered by a veil of ignorance and mired by delusions. When Yoga and other methods spiritual awakening are employed to remove this veil, the aspirant is able to arouse the latent divinity in him and realise the Shiva principle inherent to him. In other words, he becomes self and Brahm realised. This is his Moksha or Mukti—emancipation and salvation, or liberation and deliverance. He becomes empowered to find liberation and deliverance from the dark dungeon of ignorance and delusions.]

168. [The different Chakras and Peeths narrated below in verse nos. 168-178 have also been described in Canto 5, verse nos. 6-12.]

In fact, this human body is the medium by which one can obtain all spiritual benefits and find emancipation and salvation for one's soul as well as liberation and deliverance from this world, i.e. one can get Moksha and Mukti respectively with the aid of this body. Since this body provides all these spiritual facilities to an aspirant, it is likened to a temple of Lord Shiva. [This is because a man goes to a temple to worship its deity to obtain the latter's blessings for one's wish fulfillment and seek

divine intervention for all his worldly problems. But a worldly temple does not provide the same spiritual experience that one gets if he treats his own body as the temple of Shiva. In the latter case, the experience becomes very personal and unforgettable, and therefore requires no further proof of its veracity and truthfulness. Which temple is better than one's own body where the supreme transcendental Brahm resides as one's own Atma, as one's own 'self'? Further, a lot of formalities and rituals are involved in formal temple worships none of which are needed when one worships the Supreme Being in one's own Atma. A temple cannot be carried wherever one goes, which is not the case with the body. What a wonderful idea it is—one has not to run around in various pilgrim sites or make endless rounds of temples in order to seek the divine blessings, for the Lord lives inside his own self.

The honourable and revered deity represented by the Shiva's lingam is established on a pedestal called the Mooladhar Chakra situated in the region between the anus and the genital. [Refer also to Canto 6, verse no. 33, and Canto 2, verse no. 6, 10. This Lingam refers to the Mool Kanda. Closure of the Mooladhar Chakra is an essential part of Hath Yoga, and it is called Mool Bandh. Naad is heard by this closure—refer Canto 2, verse nos. 5-6 and Canto 3, verse nos. 1-3 in this context.] (168).

[Note—The fact that the body is the holy site where Lord known as Ishwar is established in the form of the Lingam is endorsed also in Canto 2, verse nos. 6, 8-14, and as the Atma representing the supreme transcendental Brahm in Canto 1, verse no. 72 and Canto 5, verse nos. 2-5. Refer also to Skand Upanishad, verse nos. 10-11 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, and to Jabal Darshan Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 48-59 of the Sam Veda tradition.]

169. The Jiva (living being) is Shiva personified, and the Mooladhar is its foundation or base. It is here that the great source of cosmic energy is established in the coiled structure called the Kundalini (169).

170-171. The place which is the progenitor of all the vital winds and the basic air element, which is self-illuminated as it is the creator of the fire element and its inherent light and energy, which is the source of Naad (the cosmic ethereal vibrations) and its concentrated energy represented by its Bindu (literally the dot placed on the top of the symbol of Naad represented by the Mantra OM but more practically representing the point-source from which the cosmic Naad originated and then spread out in the vast bowl of the cosmos represented by the hemispheric bowl placed below the Bindu), which is the creator of the Jiva (the living being; the creature) in its purest and fundamental form known as the 'Hans' (a reference to the Atma of the creature residing in the subtle heart and which is pure consciousness and the true identity of the Jiva), which is also the progenitor of the subtle Mana (the thinking mind and its emotional aspect represented by the heart), and which is the place from where all desires and yearnings originate—this place is called 'Kaam Roop Peeth', or the seat from where all worldly desires and passions spring forth. [It is also called the Bhag Chakra.] (170-171).

[Note—Refer to the Dhyani Bindu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 44-45 describes the Kaamroop Peeth.

Canto 5, verse nos. 5-15 of the present Yogshikha Upanishad also describes these Chakras.]

172. The Swadisthan Chakra is situated at the base of the genital and has the shape of a lotus with thousand petals.

The Manipurak Chakra is located in the region of the navel and it is shaped like a lotus with ten petals (172).

173. Oh Kamal Sambhav (i.e. Brahma, the creator of the visible world)! The Anahat Chakra is situated in the region of the heart and it is shaped like a lotus having twelve petals.

The second seat called Purna Giri Peeth is located here (173).

174. The Vishudha Chakra is located in the pit of the throat and it is shaped like a lotus having sixteen petals.

The third Peeth called the Jalandhar Peeth is located here (174).

175. The Agya Chakra is located between the two eyebrows and is shaped like a lotus having two petals. [One can visualise this area of the body as follows—the two eyebrows are the two unfolded petals, while the thalamus and the stem is represented by the nose.]

The fourth Peeth called the Uddiyan Mahapeeth is located on it (175).

176. The Chatrastra Chakra is located at the site where the earth (representing the living creation and the visible world) has its beginning, and its patron deity is Lord Brahma, the creator¹.

After that is the Chakra shaped like a crescent moon, called the Ardha Chandrakar Chakra. Its patron deity is Lord Vishnu, the sustainer and protector of creation. This Chakra is situated on the water element² (176).

[Note--¹That is, this Chakra has four corners and it represents the earth which acts as the base for all living world as is known to us. The four corners are the four directions into which the earth is hypothetically divided for the purpose of study and helping the creature to decide his location. They are south, west, north and east.

²In other words, the water element is symbolically shaped like a shallow convex bowl or tray because the water assumes the shape of the vessel in which it is kept and it cannot be held in a completely flat surface. So the vessel that can hold water must be slightly curved like the crescent moon.

The Dhyani Bindu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 27-28 describe the subtle heart shaped like a divine Lotus as a Peeth where the supreme Lord known as Vishnu is honorably seated.]

177. The Agni Chakra representing the fire element is triangular in shape and its patron deity is Lord Rudra (Shiva), the concluder of creation¹.

The Vayu Chakra representing the wind or air element is shaped like a hexagon and its patron deity is Ishwar, the Supreme Being² (177).

[Note--¹The colour of fire is red or orange, and the sign depicting danger is a triangle. That is why road signs depicting danger are triangular in outline. Fire is the most dangerous of the natural elements, hence it is represented by the triangle.

²The severe cyclonic storms appearing during the rainy season are observed to move in rapid circular motions, changing directions unpredictably and frequently. The tornadoes or twisters and hot whirlwinds during summers also move in rapid circles that sweep across the land and change course unpredictably. This natural tendency of the wind to move in circles and change direction at will is represented by depiction of its basic shape as a hexagon—which is an-almost circular shape but having corners and straight lines to indicate that the wind has the inborn characteristic of moving in a particular direction for some time and then suddenly changing course and taking another direction. This is the reason why one feels the wind blowing

sharply against one's face if one stands in the 'corner' of a large hallway. The movement of the air is more marked at sharp bends as compared to smooth turns.]

178. The Akash Chakra representing the sky or space element is shaped like a circle and its patron deity is Sada-Shiva (the eternal truthful Brahm)¹.

The Bindu is in the form of Naad located in the middle of the eyebrows. This is the site of the Mana (mind and intellect)² (178).

[Note--¹The best shape that the forces of Nature allow in order to retain everything within the outer boundary of existence is a rounded ball, a sphere. Since the sky encloses everything in existence and prevents them from scattering about and getting lost in the wilderness of creation, it must have a spherical shape. This is the basic principle of physics that when any thing moves around any central attracting entity such as the planets moving around the sun, the path that they take is circular because of the natural gravitational pull of the sun. The circular shape is the ideal shape that allows everything to be under the control of one central controlling authority and preventing them from scattering around, dashing against each other chaotically, or running amok and getting lost in a tangential manner. The natural forces of centripetal and centrifugal begin to play simultaneously to ensure a circular outline.

In the present case of the creation, the sky represents the supreme Brahm around which the rest of the creation revolves. So in metaphysics this Brahm is like the physical sun in the sky, the rest of the planetary system that goes around the sun in circles is like the rest of the creation that revolves around this Brahm. This is the macrocosmic picture, while the microcosmic counterpart would be the Atma around which the rest of the being of the creature revolves. Even the microscopic atom is shaped like a sphere or ball because the electrons must take this shape if they have to remain in their place orbiting around the central nucleus. The sky appears to be like an inverted hemisphere, but considering the fact that what we see is only the half part of it, it follows that when we complete the hemisphere it would be a circle.

²Every circle has a central point, the focal point. The entire existence and the world of the creature revolve around his mind and intellect, because the Upanishads have repeatedly stressed that this world exists because the creature has wished it to be there. Should the mind decide to eliminate this existence, to terminate it, it can simply shut its attention and divert it away from it and the world would immediately cease to matter to the creature. The mind and its other aspect the intellect is like the sun in the sky because it illuminates the world for the creature in the sense that he becomes aware of its existence because the mind receives the sensory signals emanating from the world and perceived by the various sense organs of perception. It then decides that the world and its sense objects are there. If the mind is diverted elsewhere, the world would be plunged in darkness in spite of there being bright daylight. In other words, it is the Mana that 'illuminates' the world for the creature much like the celestial sun. Therefore, the area of the body where the mind and intellect reside is the central or focal point of the body much like the sun in the sky, and it is around it that the entire existential being of the creature revolves. A man without the mind and intellect is called 'mad' for this precise reason because his behaviour and deeds are unpredictable and chaotic. Since every aspect of this creation revolves around Brahm, and since it is the latter that illuminates the creation in the form of consciousness and life, it is a natural corollary that the Mana is the natural habitat of Brahm as symbolised by the latter's abode in the Vyom Chakra and the Agya Chakra—the former representing the higher state of Brahm's abode in the sky element, and the latter representing Brahm's ability to show light and illumination to the creature through his faculty of intellect. From the angle of anatomy, the former is represented by the cranium and the latter by the cerebrum.

The Mana is the 'focal point' of the decision making process for the creature. The positioning of the Bindu at the midpoint of the eyebrows is a symbolic indication of

the fact that the brain's stupendous powers to think and analyse are located in this region. It is like the headlight of a car which shows the driver the path ahead. That is why when we concentrate and deeply contemplate upon certain thing, our forehead is furrowed and it physically appears that the entire energy and powers of the brain are concentrated at the mid point of the eye. This is therefore also metaphorically called the location of the 'third eye of wisdom'. The ancient sages had visualised that the focal point of the two eyes would naturally be somewhere behind them at a point equidistant from them. This would be the spot where the images formed by what the two eyes see could be synchronised and produce a three dimensional image of the object seen. A three dimensional picture is more clear as compared to a two dimensional view of the same thing. This is indicated by saying that the 'third' eye of wisdom represented by the Bindu is located at the point where the two eyebrows meet. The word 'third' is indicative of the 'three-dimensional' effect that wisdom and enlightenment creates for a wise and erudite ascetic.

The Naad is the cosmic sound generated in the center of the cosmic hemisphere. This hemisphere has a concave inner surface (or convex outer surface) resembling the skull from the inside. The Bindu in this case would be the brain which receives signals from the outside world and makes the creature aware of the latter's existence.

This shape of the skull also helps to concentrate the energy and waves originating in the vast cosmos on to the Bindu which is located at the mid-point of the two eyebrows. The curvature of the skull facilitate this process by helping to concentrate the cosmic sound waves on this point which are then caught by the sensory receptors of the brain, which then interprets these waves as 'sound' called Naad. This is similar to our modern day satellite dishes that dot every other home to catch television signal from all corners of the world and bring them within reach of our eyes so that we are able to have knowledge of what is happening in distant corners of the world without actually going there. This is a metaphoric way of saying that we have the benefit of deep insight into things that we cannot see directly. In the realm of metaphysics and spiritualism it would be the knowledge of the esoteric and mystical Brahm that is omnipresent and ubiquitous but beyond the reach of ordinary creature's receptive capabilities.

The importance of repetition of the Mantra OM lies in the fact that it produces a booster effect and enhances the resonance of this cosmic Naad so much so that it reaches a crescendo and overwhelms the practitioner; he hears nothing, he feels nothing except the vibrations of the Naad.

Refer verse no. 167 of this Canto 1, as well as Canto 3, verse no. 11, Canto 5, verse nos. 27-28, 34 also in this context.]

Thus ends Canto 1

Canto 2

1. Brahma requested Shiva, 'Oh Lord! I wish to hear about that eclectic knowledge (of Yoga) which enables one to acquire the mystical powers of Khechari—literally referring to the mystical power that comes to an ascetic in the higher stages of Yoga when he can float in the sky like a bird, but here it means the powers that enables him to divert his vital winds and other vital factors of consciousness from a lower state of existence to an exalted state when he can experience the presence of the supreme transcendental Brahm in his own self (1).

2. Shiva replied, 'Oh Brahma, listen. What I shall tell you now is a secret and esoteric knowledge. Success in it is a long-haul process and can only be achieved by a disciple who has served his Guru (teacher) selflessly and diligently for a period of twelve years (2).

3. This knowledge should be imparted in its entirety and in a comprehensive manner to a disciple who possesses certain auspicious and noble virtues, such as being magnanimous and generous, a disciple who is disciplined and ready to observe self-restraint, and who strictly follows the tenets of Brahmacharya in full (i.e. who observes the strict laws of celibacy and self-control of the sense organs). [These qualities should be in addition to the one mentioned in verse no. 2—i.e. to do service to one's Guru for twelve years to indicate his earnest intentions and sincerity of purpose.]

This eclectic and esoteric knowledge cannot be taught to and accessed by one who is proud, greedy for material gains, or is lazy and indolent in any way (3).

4. A disciple who is wise and erudite enough to understand the essence and the hidden meaning of the divine Mantra given to him by his moral preceptor at the time of his initiation into the religious fold by the latter and has thereby become enlightened and realised, it is only such a disciple who is deemed to be competent enough to actually benefit from any knowledge and wisdom sought to be acquired by study of the scriptures or by any other means. It is only he who attains success in any spiritual and religious exercise (4).

[Note—It is not enough to become a disciple of a Guru and accept a Mantra from him as a panacea for all spiritual ills. Simple repetition and mechanical process are useless unless their deep metaphysical meaning is understood and the process is done with great faith and devotion as to its efficacy and potent in providing spiritual solace, succour, emancipation and salvation. A Mantra is like a formula of mathematics, and a student who understands intelligently how it is applied can solve all the complex problems that need the application of that particular formula, while a student who has learnt it by rote just with the aim of clearing his exams would fail to do so in practical life. A disciple who grasps the intricacies of a spiritual Mantra is deemed to be enlightened himself and competent to enlighten others about it, and since he is enlightened he cannot be haughty and boastful of his achievements or misuse the various mystical powers that come to him as a result of success in Yoga. He would be humble and pious in an exemplary manner.

Another thing is that if anything is done intelligently, with correct knowledge of how to go about it and done with full understanding of the results, one would be careful to avoid pitfalls and get deflected and perplexed by numerous alternatives and charms proffered by vested interests to divert his attention from his main goal; he would remain steady and unwavering in his pursuit. His efforts bear quicker and better results with less time and energy involved. The Mantras are mystical formulae to harness the cosmic divine energy in creation according to the individual spiritual needs of a particular person much like medicines taken by a patient to overcome his specific and individual ailments. The doctor prescribes a medicine to his patient on an individual basis much like a Guru who identifies the spiritual problems of the disciple and then prescribes a particular Mantra best suited for his individual spiritual needs. So if the patient is intelligent and wise, he would observe all the restrictions imposed by the doctor and take his medicine properly besides fine tuning his lifestyle which might have been contributing to his ailments. In other words, an intelligent disciple treats the Mantra as a holistic remedy for all his spiritual ailments and a device that can help him to obtain liberation and deliverance from this cycle of birth and death. He realises and has firm faith both on the Guru as well as on the Mantra much like a

patient who is expected to have firm faith in his doctor and the medicine prescribed by him. If the disciple does not understand or know the full meaning of the Mantra and what he is supposed to be doing, he would not reap the full benefit like a student who gets a first division in college by learning the text book by heart but not understanding the subject comprehensively and intelligently, complete with its practical applications. The result would be disastrous for his career after he leaves college—what good for example a degree in engineering is if a person does not know how to tackle a mechanical emergency in a factory where he is employed on the basis of his first division marks-sheet! At the most the Mantra would give him some initial benefit and some degree of respect amongst his peers, or it might even provide him with certain mystical powers that come bundled with this Mantra, but that would be limited to worldly gains such as acclaim, a famous name, a large crowd of disciples, pomp and pageantry as an accomplished ascetic and other material benefits that comes with acquisition of mystical powers, but without benefiting his spiritual aim which after all is the main purpose of accepting a Mantra from a Guru.]

5. The Mantra which possesses the stupendous cosmic force represented by the Shiva and Shakti principle, or which is a personification of Shiva-Shakti as a non-dual entity displaying two sides of the same Divinity that is the supreme transcendental almighty Brahm displaying his cosmic dynamic powers, arises from the Mooladhar (Chakra—see Canto 1, verse no. 168).

It is rare and difficult to find someone who is well-versed in this Mantra and competent enough to preach it. It is equally rare and difficult to find someone who would hear it attentively or who has had the privilege of hearing about it and its meaning explained; someone who would understand and accept the profundity of the Mantra's import and importance; someone who would have faith in its mystical powers and potentials as the vehicle that can take the aspirant to his spiritual destination (5).

[Note--The Mantra preached by other Gurus is 'Hans-Hans', but by Shiva it is 'So-a-Ham' (Canto 1, verse no. 131 of this Upanishad) which means 'that (Brahm) is me', and is therefore called a Mool Mantra, or the 'principle' of all the Mantras, or the 'principal Mantra', and it is therefore likened to a 'Linga', or a symbol and personification of Shiva principle itself.

Refer note to verse no. 10 below for a detailed analysis of the concept of Mantra in relation to the Linga of the Shiva principle.]

6. The place (Mooladhar) from where such an eclectic and esoteric divine Mantra originates is called Naad Lingam and it is consciousness personified¹. An aspirant who knows about it, who is aware of its spiritual significance and importance is said to have obtained Mukti (liberation and deliverance) even while he is alive, i.e. he obtains 'Jivan Mukti'² (6).

[Note—¹Earlier Canto 1, verse no. 168 has asserted that there is a symbolic Shiva Lingam situated on this Mooladhar Chakra. This Lingam is the symbol of the deity Shiva who represents the supreme transcendental Brahm in his greatest glory of being a personification of eternal truth, auspiciousness and cosmic consciousness. When an ascetic is in deep state of meditation and contemplation, he hears the cosmic sound called Naad. The shape of the Shiva Lingam is like a short cylinder with a dome at the top and accompanied by a ring encircling it from all the sides at the lower end, a structure that is acoustically designed to facilitate the hearing of this cosmic Naad. The circular ring under this Lingam, called the Arghaa, represents the crescent moon placed under the Bindu or dot on the top of the symbol of Naad which is the sixth Sanskrit alphabet, i.e. the long vowel 'Ooo' as in *root*. The composite structure represents the Shiva-Shakti principle of creation. Therefore, an ascetic who becomes

wise and enlightened enough to understand all the intricacies of Yoga and the profound effect of Mantra used during the process is indeed liberated from the bondage of his physical body and establishes himself in his pure conscious form of the Atma which is Shiva or Brahm personified. In this context, refer verse nos. 9-10, 13 of Canto 2.

²The Mantra used to enable the ascetic realise who truly he is, is 'So-a-ham', i.e. 'that (Brahm) is me'. He in other words realises that his true identity is not his gross and perishable body but the eternally truthful Atma personifying Shiva, the cosmic truth and consciousness. A person who realises his true identity as being his Atma and not the body is deemed to have broken free from the fetters of ignorance that had made him captive of the body under the impression that the latter was 'he'. Once enlightenment dawns upon him when he understands the true import of the Mantra 'So-a-ham', this wrong impression is immediately dispelled. This is why emphasis is laid in earlier verse no. 4 on understanding the real meaning and essence of the Mantra to derive actual benefit from it, besides the fact that only an intelligent aspirant can do so because it requires a higher level of intellect to make it possible.]

7. A spiritual aspirant (an ascetic who practices Yoga with wisdom and intelligent application of its principles) who deeply contemplates and intelligently analyses the various aspects of Yoga and its Mantra along with their profound spiritual effects, who does Pranayam and at the same time understands my (Shiva's) true form along with its metaphysical importance and significance—such a wise aspirant is able to soon acquire the various Siddhis (mystical powers) such as Anima etc. [These Siddhis have been described earlier in Canto 1, verse nos. 44 and 151-157 in detail.] (7).

8. Oh Brahma! The mystical formulae used during meditation and contemplation (to kindle self-realisation and provide Mukti and Moksha—liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation to the creature) is called a 'Mantra' because of the following facts—it has its genesis in my teaching, it has been devised by me and prescribed by me as an effective means of obtaining spiritual grace, it is being directly preached by me, Shiva, who not only personifies Brahm but is also the most revered, acclaimed, competent and enlightened preceptor for the entire creation as well as the patron God of ascetics, it has its origin in the Mooladhar Chakra (because this Mantra is heard by the ascetic as the Naad when he meditates upon me in the form of the symbolic Lingam located here as also the fact that success in Yogic exercises depend upon success in harnessing the energy of the Mooladhar Chakra and controlling it), and because it is the root and essence of all other Mantras (as it enlightens the spiritual aspirant of his real identity, which is the main aim of all spiritual endeavours) (8).

9. [There is a lot of symbolism and dual meaning in verse nos. 9-11. A great deal of play on the word 'Mool' is being done here.] Since this Mantra preached by me (i.e. 'Hans' or So-a-ham as narrated in Canto 1, verse no. 131) represents my (Shiva's) true and essential eclectic conscious form, or it is a personification of the cosmic Shiva principle and represented as a Lingam (a male phallus situated on the Mooladhar Chakra) which is shaped like a elongated root (such as a radish or a carrot), it is called a 'Mool Mantra'¹—i.e. the root for all Mantras.

This Mantra represents the subtle cause of creation, expansion and development, and the conclusion or dissolution of everything in existence (i.e. it represents Brahm) (9).

[Note—¹The word 'Mool' has a dual meaning—it means a 'root' as well as the 'essence or fundamental aspect of anything'. Therefore the Mantra Hans or So-a-Ham

preached by Shiva not only is the best of all the Mantras but also the foundation upon which self-realisation and Brahm-realisation rest. This Mantra enables the practitioner to realise the profundity of the spiritual truth that his 'true self' is not an ordinary mortal body but a divine entity that is ethereal and transcendental consciousness called the Atma. The Mantra 'So-a-Ham' is one of the great sayings of the scriptures because it enlightens one about his true self. The Mantra preached by Shiva represents both his gross symbol of the Lingam as well as his subtle form as cosmic energy and consciousness personified. In other words, the Mantra 'Hans' referring to the purity of the soul because it refers to the divine bird Swan which is universally employed to imply something that is holy, pure, incorruptible, immaculate, wise and enlightened has a great spiritual potential.]

10. This Mantra represents the supreme Ishwar (the Supreme Being, the Lord of all creation); hence it is his Linga or symbol. [In other words, this Mantra is the subtle body of Ishwar even as the physical Lingam represents his gross symbol.]

It is called Linga¹ also due to the fact that it always lives inside all the living beings as their integral part (known as the Atma, the pure conscious soul). [There is another interpretation of this sentence. The male genital organ is a phallus, called a Linga, and it is an integral part of the body of an ascetic. The location of the symbolic Shiva Lingam inside the body had been depicted as being on the Mooladhar Chakra which is the center of the sexual organs and consists of sensory nerves directly related to this organ. In the female it is represented by the clitoris. So, the symbolism is obvious. It is due to this reproductive organ that the creation has come into being, and with this symbolism it is easy to understand that the male is indeed a personification of Brahm, the eternal cause of everything that exists. When extended to include the female, it follows that she is the Shakti of that Shiva (male) representing Brahm; she is Prakriti and Maya personified as far as an ascetic is concerned.] (10).

[Note—¹Linga—The word *Linga* literally had a number of interpretations—such as the gender of any thing or living being, the genitals and especially the male phallus, a sign, a mark, a token, a symptom or symbol of anything. According to Shankya philosophy, it is the 'prime nature', and according to Yoga philosophy it is the Mooladhar Chakra and its phallus-like Kanda (the Nabhi Kand) which together represent the Shiva-Shakti principle. It also stands independently for Shiva, the principal creative force and the supreme divine power of creation, and is depicted as a male phallus in the form of a cylindrical structure with a dome at the top and an encircling ring at the lower end. This composite symbol is called a Shiva Lingam and it stands for the Shiva-Shakti principle of creation—i.e. for the supreme transcendental Divinity known as Brahm, the sublime pure consciousness, and its dynamic manifestation known as Shakti which is the energy of this consciousness at work. The erect vertical part resembling the phallus symbolises the Shiva principle, and the circular ring at the base represents the female Shakti principle. The ring also symbolises the cosmic bowl or crucible where this creation was first conceived, and as such represents the Shakti aspect of Shiva. It also can be visualised as a seed from which a shoot is coming out; the former represents the Prakriti and the latter represents the Purush. This combination is known as Brahm and Maya in Vedanta, as Purush and Prakriti in Shankhya philosophy, and as Shiva and Shakti in Tantra and Yoga philosophy.

This symbolism of 'Linga' to represent Shiva and Shakti principle of creation of the Tantra philosophy both at the subtle level as well at the gross level is employed adroitly in this Upanishad from verse no. 5 onwards to describe in detail its various connotations, especially in relation to the eclectic Mantra 'So-a-Ham' as a symbol of Shiva because it is preached by Shiva himself in this Upanishad, and the Mooladhar Chakra and its associated Mool Kand or Nabhi Kand as another symbol of Shiva-

Shakti principle revealed in the body of all persons. These two are the Lings or Lingams of Shiva at the sublime and subtle level, while the Lingam usually worshipped in the temples is the gross symbol of the same principle. In fact, Canto 1, verse no. 168, and Canto 5, verse no. 5 of this Yogshikha Upanishad assert that the Shiva Lingam inside the body is represented by the Mooladhar Chakra.

The Mantra preached by Shiva is 'Hans-Hans' (Canto 1, verse no. 131 of this Upanishad) which is actually a acronym for the full Mantra 'So-a-ham' meaning 'that (Brahm) is me', and is therefore called a Mool Mantra, or the 'principle aspect or essence of all the Mantras' or the 'principal amongst all the Mantras', and it is therefore likened to a 'Linga', or a symbol and personification of Shiva himself.

It must be noted here that the Mooladhar Chakra is shaped like the concave bowl representing the cosmic womb, and over it is placed the Mool Kanda or the Nabhi Kanda which is shaped like the male phallus. The entire structure represents the Shiva Lingam seen in temples. Verse no. 168 of Canto 1 also points a finger in this direction by saying that a Lingam is placed on the Mooladhar Chakra. This apparatus consisting of the Mooladhar Chakra and the Kanda is located inside the body, and its external symbol is the Shiva Lingam seen in temples. Comparatively, the one inside the body is subtler to the one present as an idol in a temple. Since Yoga is based primarily on both the Tantra philosophy as well as on the Vedanta philosophy, emphasis is laid on this symbol to represent Shiva as a personification of the eclectic and glorious virtues of the transcendental supreme entity known in Vedanta as Brahm.

Again, since the pure consciousness is a non-dual, uniform and universally present entity, whether at the level of the individual creature or at the cosmic level, it is this 'pure consciousness that is metaphorically represented by the symbolic Shiva's Lingam that is present inside the body which is taken as a representative of Shiva or Brahm. In other words, the Lingam present in the body is a symbol of the pure consciousness residing in all the living beings as their Atma, as their 'true self'. This pure consciousness or Atma is a manifestation of the supreme cosmic Brahm in a microcosmic form. And this Brahm is synonymous with Shiva.]

11. It is a symbol of all the forms and manifestations that is taken by the ethereal Divinity represented by the Shiva principle. [The word 'it' here refers to the divine Mantra preached by Shiva. As such, it not only encrypts the Shiva principle and embodies the pure consciousness at one level, but also includes the cosmic generative powers at the other level, and hence it is likened to Shiva's Lingam.]

Hence, it is also called a 'Sutra'. [The word 'Sutra' means a formulae or a secret code by knowing which one can solve great puzzles or questions. This is the main purpose of any Mantra—to unravel the great spiritual secrets to the person who is dedicatedly worshipping his deity with a particular Mantra devoted to this deity so as to unravel the profound mysteries of this cosmic entity. In the present case, this entity is Shiva and his Shakti.]

The Shaktis represented by it are 'Maha Maya' (the great delusion-creating powers of Brahm, here represented by Shiva and his divine consort Parvati), 'Maha Laxmi' (the divine consort of Vishnu who is the sustainer and protector of creation; the second of the Trinity Gods) and 'Maha Saraswati' (the divine consort of Brahma who is the creator of the physical world as well as the Vedas which are the repositories of knowledge that is needed to sustain this world in an orderly way; that is why Saraswati is regarded as the patron Goddess of knowledge and wisdom as well as speech and expertise in any particular field) (11).

[Note—The Gods of the Trinity, viz. Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, are simply visualised as the same Brahm performing different functions in its three distinct forms, a clear case of delegation of authority at the cosmic level. Since Brahm is a

neutral entity and its dynamism is revealed in the form of Shakti or cosmic energy, these three Goddesses are the three counterparts of the same universal Shakti that enables Brahm to carry out what it wishes. In Brahm's manifestation as the creator and settler of this creation in the form of Brahma, this Shakti assumes the role of Saraswati who empowers Brahma with the requisite knowledge so that he can actually set about his assigned task of creation which is a very technically complicated and intricate job. Likewise, Vishnu needs material wealth to sustain this creation, to feed it and look after its upkeep, so the Shakti is envisioned as Laxmi, the Goddess of wealth and prosperity. Shiva is responsible for conclusion, and this indirectly means that things really come to a head when its sustenance and perpetuation becomes impossible, there is intrigue, infighting and strife, and the creation eats itself out like a parasite. Thus, Parvati is the patron Goddess representing Maya because delusions and ignorance are the basic cause for tussle leading to destruction in this world.

See not to verse no. 12 below also.]

12. These three goddesses are invisible and represent the primary cosmic forces of creation that are sublime and subtle as well as dynamic and forceful. The entire world has come into being because of these dynamic forces of Nature; they have created the visible world from invisible entities (just like a mother creates the offspring in her womb, hidden from the external world, and lets the world see this creation of hers only when it is ready to stand up and face the turbulence and vagaries of this physical world)¹.

The subtle and sublime powers of a Mantra used in Tantra form of worship are revealed in the form of the Bindu and Peeth² (12).

[Note—¹These three Goddesses represent the three primary requirements for the visible creation to come into being. The first is Maya—this indicates that the world has come into existence because the Atma, the cosmic Consciousness, which is primarily very immaculate and enlightened, allowed itself to be overcome by delusions and surrounded by a veil of ignorance that hid its true form as an exalted entity. It thereby felt uncomfortable and unsatisfied with its own self and sought comfort and happiness elsewhere. So in its ignorance it decided to create an environment which would help it to gain happiness and comfort, forgetting in the process that it is allowing it's self to be trapped in a quagmire.

Then comes the role of Laxmi—signifying the need of material wealth and prosperity to sustain his utopian view of this world as an abode that never exhausts of its riches, comforts, pleasures and charms. Since the Atma is already covered in a veil of ignorance and delusions, it is never satisfied with what it has and yearns for more and more.

The role of Saraswati is interwoven in this complex fabric because success in any enterprise needs relevant knowledge and expertise. This Saraswati is a double-edged sword, for on the one hand knowledge is empowering and liberating, and if misused it can be horribly decapitating, destructive and ruinous.

Finally, extreme indulgence and extravaganzas lead to moral decay, degradation, turpitude and ultimate destruction—represented by Maya once again to complete the cycle.

²In Tantra worship, Bindu is regarded as Shakti, the dynamic aspect of Shiva, and the Peeth is the seat of this Shakti. There is another way at looking at these two words—Bindu represents the cosmic sperm which represents the dynamic energy, potentials and powers of Shiva, and the Peeth would then be the seat of this Shiva energy, i.e. the base of the Shakti, the seat from where Shiva derives his immense cosmic powers and authority.]

13. Oh Brahma! When the Bindu-Peeth is ruptured or conquered by the force of the Pran Vayu (i.e. by the Apaana wind located in the lower end of the body), the ascetic is able to have a subtle and sublime vision of, or experience the presence of the Naad Lingam. [That is, when the ascetic does Yoga exercises by adopting different postures, one of which is the Mool Bandh whereby the aperture of the anus and the genitals are pressed and closed shut in the lower part of the body, the Apaana wind is forced to be incarcerated and get heated and pressurized in the abdomen. This wind would then violently shake up and force its way into the Mooladhar Chakra, enter the Sushumna Naadi and move up to meet the Pran wind in the upper part of the body which is similarly trapped by the simultaneous doing of Pranayam (breath control exercises). The resultant collision and mixing of the two primary winds create a grave howl which resembles the distant sound of a storm which in metaphysical terms is called the reverberation of the Naad heard in the cosmic ether. The ascetic begins to shiver and shake as if possessed by some super-natural Spirit, but actually it's the cosmic vibration resonating in his entire frame that makes him shake like a leaf shivering during a severe storm. The entire process is metaphorically called the emergence of the Naad Lingam from the Bindu Peeth—i.e. it is the emergence of the cosmic Naad as a shoot emerging from the Mooladhar Chakra and spreading out like the branches of a huge tree. The body here is the 'huge tree', and the shaking that occurs in it is like the wind shaking the leaves on this tree's numerous branches. Actually, the vibrations of the Naad massage the nerves in the body, and the sense of extreme titillation that this produces is interpreted as ecstasy and exhilaration by the brain, which derives extreme bliss from hearing this Naad. All external senses are dulled into oblivion; the ascetic hears nothing, sees nothing, feels nothing, smells nothing and tastes nothing except the overbearing sound of Naad and its titillating exhilaration.]

This process of rising of the Pran winds is a metaphor for the rise of the spiritual aspirant from a lower state of existence to a higher and exalted state when he not only hears the Naad but becomes witness to the presence of the supreme fount of bliss associated with it. This exalted state of existence is called enlightenment and Brahm realisation. It brings the aspirant face to face with the supreme Brahm residing in his own self as the pure consciousness and the eclectic virtues of wisdom and enlightenment. This is called 'Brahm Shammukhi Karan'—or being in the presence of Brahm, or a process that brings the aspirant face to face with Brahm. [The seat of Brahm is said to be in the upper part of the head, in the region of the Vyom Chakra or the Agya Chakra which are located in the region of the cranium and the cerebrum respectively because intelligence, wisdom, knowledge, erudition, thinking and analyses etc. which are the functions of the brain are the characteristics of Brahm. Brahm is also manifested as the pure consciousness that pulsates throughout the being of the creature as his vital signs of life. As the Atma it resides in his subtle heart, the location of the Hridaya Chakra. So when the vital winds reach the head, the ascetic feels an extreme sense of bliss and peace which is tantamount to his attaining the exalted state that rises above the mundane existence ridden with mental worries and all sorts of emotional turmoil. This extreme sense of beatitude and felicity is associated with the state of Brahm-realisation—i.e. the practice of Yoga brings him face to face with Brahm. Hence, this process is called the 'Brahm Shanmukhi Karan' or the process that brings the spiritual aspirant closer to Brahm so that he can have a first hand experience of this divine entity.] (13).

14. This (symbolic Lingam representing the true self that leads to Brahm-realisation or Shiva awareness) is easily brought to light or made known to the aspirant by the blessing and grace of his Guru (moral preceptor and Yoga teacher).

The supreme transcendental Brahm is the ubiquitous conscious Divinity that is present in all the three levels of existence—the gross, the subtle and the sublime (14).

15. Brahm in the form of the five gross elements of creation (earth, water, fire, air and sky) is called ‘Panch Brahm’ as well as Vairaaj. This form of Brahm is comparatively grosser in nature when considered against its other subtler and more sublime forms which are invisible and without any attributes. These subtle and sublime forms of Brahm have three dimensions, one of which is Hiranyagarbha (the macrocosmic subtle body of Brahm, and the sum total of all the subtle bodies in creation). [The other two aspects of this Brahm are the Viraat Purush or the macrocosmic gross body of Brahm, and Ishwar or the macrocosmic causal body of Brahm.]

These entities are represented by the cosmic Naad. In other words, Naad is the all-incorporating and all-inclusive cosmic representative of Brahm in his gross, subtle and sublime forms. So when the ascetic hears Naad during Yoga, he is deemed to have witnessed Brahm first hand (15).

16. The supreme transcendental and sublime Brahm is the only and the final Truth in existence. It is an embodiment of truth, pure consciousness and supreme bliss that are eternal, infinite and imperishable. It is beyond the purview of proof and logics (i.e. Brahm does not need any proof to be established because its existence is too obvious to be denied, and it is so esoteric and super natural that physical logics fail when applied to this mystical entity). It cannot be indicated or implied or explained by any fixed formulas, instructions or directions. Neither the mind nor the speech have any access to it (i.e. the mind cannot imagine, learn about and then explain or describe Brahm using the faculty of speech; Brahm cannot be limited to words and phrases and it also cannot be understood by the application of intelligence and rational logics of the mind) (16).

17. The supreme transcendental and sublime Brahm is Shuddha (pure, uncorrupt, immaculate and taintless). It is Nirakar (has no forms and shapes and attributes). It is Nirvikar (without any faults, impurities, blemishes and shortcomings). It is Niranjan (innocent and without any worldly fault or taints that may cause any darkness to cling to it). It is Anant (endless, eternal and infinite). It is Aparichhedya (it cannot be pierced and conquered). It is Anupam (unprecedented, unparalleled, inimitable, unequalled, most excellent and peerless). It is Anamaye (it is healthy, without any ailments, imperfections and defects). It is Aparmaan (it cannot be measured and fathomed; it cannot be hemmed in) (17).

18. This supreme divine entity (Brahm) reveals its self to the spiritual aspirant by practicing of the Mantra dedicated to it (much like constant practice of anything makes one an expert in it). [Since the Mantra of a particular deity is like the key to unlock the divine secrets associated with that deity, when one uses this key he is able to unlock these cosmic secrets and access the spiritual treasure hidden inside it. In the present case, the treasure is the supreme transcendental Brahm symbolising the divine cosmic energy of creation as well as pure consciousness.]

Now listen from me (Shiva) the various signs of success and the process by which this mystical power (Siddhi) can be obtained. [The Siddhi referred to here is

the spiritual power that comes with Brahm realisation as well as by self realisation.] (18).

19. Those who are truly wise, enlightened and realised ascetics see that self-illuminated divine form of Brahm in the illumination or light emanating from a lighted lamp, the bright moon, the glow worm, the electric and the stars. That is, Brahm is 'illumination and light' personified. The words 'illumination' and 'light' are metaphors for divine virtues and eclectic glories marked by holiness, mystic and majesty that are so characteristic of the Supreme Being (19).

20. Such acclaimed ascetics who have successfully realised Brahm and have become self-realised are soon able to achieve success in acquiring the glorious mystical powers called the Siddhis such as Anima etc. that naturally come to him with this spiritual achievement.

There is no Mantra greater than Naad (represented by the monosyllable word OM)¹. And there is no greater God than the Atma. [This is because the Atma is pure consciousness and the supreme transcendental and sublime Brahm personified. The Atma is this Brahm residing in the body of the individual creature himself. This Atma is Shiva personified.] (20).

[Note--¹Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 63-64 in this context which prescribes OM as the divine Mantra for meditation. But the Mantra preached by Shiva in our present Yogshikha Upanishad is 'Hans-Hans' or 'So-a-ham' as expounded and elucidated in Canto 1, verse no. 131. Apparently this seems to be contradictory, but they mean the same thing—the first Mantra OM which encrypts Naad relates to the supreme Brahm or Pranav, while the second Mantra Hans relates to the state of self-realisation when the aspirant realises the eclectic fact that the Brahm to which OM refers is none but his own 'self' as his pure conscious Atma which is like a divine Swan floating in the subtle space of the heart of all living beings.]

21. There is no greater worship than researching about the Atma, (the pure self and pure consciousness). [This is because when one researches about anything, his whole concentration is focused on his project, which is the main aim of meditation and worship—viz. to focus on one's self on one's object of devotion. And since this Atma is none other than Brahm, it follows that by focusing on the Atma the worshipper is concentrating on Brahm. What better ways of worshipping of the Supreme Being can one find?]

There is no pleasure, joy and happiness greater than being perpetually contented and satisfied. [This is because when one has the eclectic virtue of contentedness, one would stop feeling the need to want more, to yearn for more, and then to strive to acquire more of it in an endless cycle of wants and desires and their attendant discontents, frustrations, discords, envy and jealousy.]

A person who is my sincere devotee would become fulfilled and contented by understanding what I am saying here. This would make him happy and blissful. [This is because now he has learnt the secret of his spiritual welfare directly from me, Shiva, whom he adores as his Lord. He would not have to waste precious time, energy and effort to find out the way for his spiritual well being and deliverance by consulting numerous sources, and then go about verifying their trustworthiness and effectiveness. He has learnt the great principles of spiritualism directly from me.]

A person desirous of acquiring the various mystical and spiritual powers called the Siddhis should make diligent efforts to learn the intricacies of this esoteric knowledge, and once having known it he should keep it secret with him.

[Advertisement and self boasting is prohibited in the scriptures. This is because ordinary people would be skeptical about this spiritual aspirant's efforts and achievements. They would treat him as a performer of black magic or someone who has gone out of his head by not conforming to the standard and routine way of life expected to be lead in this world which is accustomed to observing standards, routine practices and material yardsticks. People would regard a realised ascetic's spiritually exalted state of existence marked by dispassion and neutrality as being a sign of mental disease and odd behaviour, or worst that he is possessed by some evil Spirit! They would castigate him and ostracize him from society, ridicule and demean him, and generally cause great annoyance to him, thereby destroying his peace of mind. If that does not happen, the opposite is equally disturbing for him—people would flock to him for blessings and patronage, showering him with praise and material gifts, and seeking his intervention to solve their personal problems by using his mystical powers; if he refuses he would be called a selfish man. Therefore, it is enjoined for a truly exalted man who has become realised to shun all such things for his own betterment and good as they act as impediments and drags in his spiritual progress.] (21).

22. A spiritual aspirant who has great faith and devotion in his chosen God and a similar level of faith and devotion for his Guru (teacher) is deemed to be a great soul (for he would be benefiting by the auspicious blessings and grace showered upon him by both of them). All sublime knowledge, wisdom and erudition would gradually unravel themselves to him subtly and imperceptibly on their own in a gradual manner without his making any great or special effort for acquiring them (22).

Thus ends Canto 2

Canto 3

1-2. That which is worthy of bowing before and showing great honour and due reverence to, that which is said to be knowledge, enlightenment and consciousness personified, that which is the origin and cause of all mystical powers and authority, that whose knowledge and awareness provides a man with liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death [1]—it is that divine and eclectic entity which is known as 'Akchar' or the one who is imperishable and immune to decay and destruction, it is that eternal and all-pervading entity which is symbolised by the great cosmic reverberating sound known as Naad, and it is also known as 'Shabda Brahm' or the supreme Divinity revealed in the form of the ethereal 'sound' called Naad, which in turn is at the root of the divine Mantra OM and the entire spectrum of the spoken 'word'. [Refer verse nos. 5-11 of this Canto.]

The divine subtle cosmic energy that supports the entire creation is present inherently in the Mooladhar Chakra, and it also known as 'Bindu' or Shakti [2]. (1-2).

3. It is in this Bindu (the point-source of ethereal energy in the cosmos) that Naad (the all-pervading cosmic vibrations in ether that ultimately translate into sound) originates¹. This is just like the case of a sprout of a huge tree having its origin in a small seed². The subtle energy of sound present in the Naad is called 'Pashyanti', and

it is utilised by a wise and erudite ascetic to see and visualise the rest of the world around him³ (3).

[Note--¹Naad is a form of cosmic sound, and this sound is a manifestation of the energy created by vibrations in ether. In other words, during the process of Yoga, when the vital winds, especially the Apaana wind is made to activate the Mooladhar Chakra by literally vibrating or shaking it into action, the latent energy trapped inside it is activated to produce the sound much like striking of the tuning fork produces sound as demonstrated to science students in a school physics laboratory. Another example to show how sound has a pinpoint Bindu or dot as its origin is the ripple created on the surface of a calm lake when a stone is thrown in it. The ripples would originate in a single point where the stone had touched the surface of the water, and then the waves spread out in concentric circles, one after another, to far corners of the lake. Since sound also travels in the form of waves in cosmic ether which fills the entire space of the sky, this example would show why and how the origin of Naad was envisioned in the Bindu (dot; a single point) by the ancient sage who had first visualised it.

²This is another interesting analogy. The seed is round and small—almost like a Bindu or dot—when compared to the huge tree that it would produce. The sprout is like a Lingam or phallus coming out of it. One is left marveling at the wonderful imagery used in the Upanishads to explain concepts.

³The Naad or cosmic sound that is physically heard during Yoga is a manifestation of the activated dynamic forces of creation, or the ‘Shakti of Brahm’. The inherent energy that is present in this Naad is this dynamic force or Shakti itself. Taking a parallel from the physical world, the Naad is like the eye of the body, but the eye functions as an organ of sight only because it has the energy to do so and has been empowered by the faculty of sight located in the brain to see. The apparatus of the eye has an aperture or hole, called the pupil, located in the center of the iris, and it is this ‘hole’ through which the eye actually sees. In the present context, this ‘hole’ (pupil) would be the ‘Bindu’, while the eye itself would be the Naad in the center of which the Bindu is located because the structure of the eye derives its significance only due to this pupil. But when we look deeper we observe that the entire apparatus has importance for the creature only because it enables him to ‘see’. This ‘power to see’ and the ‘faculty of sight’ would be like Brahm in the context of the cosmos because though it is hidden from view but it is nevertheless the only component in the entire setup that drives it.

In other words, the ascetic sees this living world characterised by the presence of sound as a revelation of Brahm who is universally and uniformly present throughout it in an imperceptible and subtle form. The fact that sound characterizes this world as a ‘living’ entity as opposite to being a ‘dead’ one is proved by the fact that there is utter silence in a morgue or grave-yard whereas there is hustle and bustle of vibrant life in a busy city. For all practical purposes of Yoga as described in this Upanishad, this Naad and its subtle energy called Pashyanti are located in the Mooladhar Chakra. That is why it is called the site of the Naad Lingam as described in Canto 2, verse nos. 5-6. Refer also to Canto 1, verse nos. 105, 167.]

4. [The earlier verses had dealt with the Naad that was heard by the ascetic while the mind was fixed in the Mooladhar Chakra. Now the attention shifts to the heart region where the Hridaya Chakra or the Anahat Chakra is located.]

The roaring sound heard in the region of the heart is like the distant thundering and reverberating rumble of the clouds. Oh Brahma! The divine Shakti located here is called ‘Madhyama’ or the one that is located in the middle (because the heart is located in the central part of the body and mid way between the Mooladhar Chakra at the bottom and the Brahm Randhra Chakra or Sahasrar Chakra at the top of the head) (4).

5-6. [Verse nos. 5-10 describe how a man is enabled to speak.]

This Shakti derives its powers from the Pran Vayu (breath). [This is because the breath draws in fresh air and oxidises the blood. The breath also keeps the heart beating as is evident from the fact that the heart immediately stops beating if the breath is stopped as it happens during death by suffocation.]

This power of breath enables a person to speak and thereby enable this Shakti (the Madhyama Shakti of the heart or Anahat Chakra) to move out of the body by the way of the mouth (in the form of the spoken word) and spread its wings to reach another person in the form of the energy of the sound that translates into the word heard by him.

This Shakti which moves out from the mouth in the form of sound or the spoken words to be transferred to another person in the form of words heard by him, is called 'Vaikhari'.

While doing so, i.e. while spreading out to reach other places, it acts like the tree which gives out new shoots and spreads out its branches along with the leaves and flowers and fruits to reach a wider area much away from the location of its roots. When the dynamic energy of the cosmic Naad passes through the cavity of the mouth and rubs against its walls and fine-tuned by the muscles of the tongue when the vital forces of life called Pran (breath) are exhaled through the open mouth, its frequencies undergo certain changes so much so that now they come within audible range and can be heard as the spoken word. The tongue's flexible muscles help to make the jumble of meaningless sounds into meaningful words that are clearly articulate and understandable [5].

This produces various genres of sound from which arise all the alphabets of the language—from the first letter 'A' (as in *alloy*) of the Sanskrit alphabet to the last letter 'Ha' (as in *hung*).

Combination of letters produce words, and combination of words produce phrases, sentences and paragraphs, and their numerous spin-offs such as poetry and stanzas [6]. (5-6).

[Note—These two verses briefly describe the genesis of the spoken language. See verse nos. 7-9 also below.]

7. All the Mantras, all the Vedas and other scriptures, all the Purans and numerous other narratives and poetical compositions, all the uncountable dialects and languages in existence—they are all indeed a manifestation of the Vakya or the word which is a manifestation of the cosmic dynamic energy called Shakti in its second form known as 'Vaikhari'. The dynamo that powers this Shakti is the beating heart—or the activated Hridaya Chakra because as soon as the heart stops to beat no one can speak a word (7).

8. All the seven basic sounds of classical music, called the 'Swaras' (Sa, Re, Ga Ma, Pa, Dha, Ni) as well as all the various Gathas (narrative compositions that were transmitted orally by being rendered into poetry) are manifestation of Naad¹.

Goddess Saraswati, the patron goddess of speech, learning and wisdom, who resides in the mouth of all living beings (and enables them to speak in their own tongue or language), is indeed a manifestation of Naad. [That is why Saraswati is depicted in iconography as holding a Veena, the Indian lute, as a symbol of her singing prowess. Since singing needs a finer tuned voice, special vocal skills and expert command over the language and its finer nuances, and also because the verses

have to be memorized by heart to be sung without break as compared to the simple and routine exercise of daily talking or speaking, the most appropriate depiction of the eclectic nature of the cosmic Naad is not as simple words spoken in daily routine life but as the inherent music of classical and melodious singing. This is also why in the Upanishads that describe Naad, it is likened to the cosmic ‘music’ heard by the ascetic while he is submerged deep in meditation.] (8).

[Note--¹This is because Naad incorporates all known genres of sound. There is no sound that is not incorporated in Naad. Refer Naad Bindu and Aksha-maliko Upanishads of Rig Veda tradition as well as Jabal Darshan Upanishad, Canto 6, verse nos. 2-37 and Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 80 of the Sam Veda tradition in this context of the sound produced by Naad.

Now let us briefly analyse how the uniform sound of the Naad is broken up into letters and forms what is called speech. When the exhaled breath rubs against the muscles of the vocal cords, it produces a sound resembling the cosmic homogenous sound called the Naad. But as it happens, the angle at which the breath rubs against these vocal cords and the flexible muscles of the tongue help to break up the wavelength of this homogenous sound wave into many waves of differing wavelength and frequencies, thereby creating sound of different tones, notes and pitches. These sound waves are modulated and fine-tuned in such a way that they are interpreted by the brain of the hearer as letters, which in turn form intelligent words and sentences. The Swars are the basic or primary form in which the Naad is broken into.

It ought to be noted here that the basic Swars or tones and notes of music are ‘seven’ in number and the colours in the sunlight are also ‘seven’; there is a natural and obvious correlation between them which leads us to a very interesting analogy. Just like the sunlight is scattered into seven basic and primary colours—viz. violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange and red when it is scattered by the water molecules in the earth’s atmosphere during and after rainfall into seven wavelengths resulting in the formation of the rainbow, as well as when white light breaks up into seven colours when it passes through a transparent glass prism, the uniform sound of the Naad breaks up into waves of seven wavelengths or frequencies which are picked up by the brain as seven Swars—viz. Sa, Re, Ga, Ma, Pa, Dha, Ni. This is ‘music’, but when the same theory is extended further we can imagine how the sounds of the vowels, consonants and sibilant letters are formed. To understand how this comes about, we can draw on the example of light in physics and recall the physical phenomenon called the ‘Raman Effect’ in which the monochromatic light is further scattered to produce additional lines in the spectrum when a beam of light is further scattered by a transparent material medium. The ‘Raman Effect’ shows how the energy and hence the wavelength or the frequency of the light falling upon a suitable molecule is ‘modified and modulated according to the combined effect of the basic energy of the molecule as well as the energy of the incident light during the process of light transmission through this medium’; it is because there is an exchange of energy either way between the incident light and the molecules of the medium through which it is being transmitted. Therefore the modification or modulation is surely characteristic of the molecule of which the medium is made up of as much as it is on the energy of the incident light.

In the present context we can now easily visualise how the sound waves of different wavelengths or frequencies are created and why a single basic sound-form can be further broken up and fine-tuned to form the different letters of the same group of vowels and consonants of the Sanskrit language. The modulation and modification is done by the vocal cords in close concert with the tongue and the muscles of the mouth cavity which have been designed and constructed by Mother Nature with expert sense of acoustics in mind. Different subtle characteristics and temperaments of the speaker which are controlled by numerous elements which determine an individual’s uniqueness, such as his different Gunas (inherent virtues and qualities of

which there are three main ones—viz. Sata, Raja and Tama), the different Vrittis and Vasanas (mental tendencies, natural temperaments, passions, desires and habits), Ahankar (ego, self-pride), Mana (natural inclination and state of the mind and heart), and so many other incidental factors that determine his personality, outlook, emotions, sentiments, state of the mind and thought processes come into play to decide how the same wavelength or frequency of sound that creates a given letter, and hence the spoken language, is modulated and modified by different individuals to create different impressions of the meaning of the same word. It shows how the same word of the same language is spoken differently by different people, and how it is transformed to mean different things to different people.]

9. When the Pran Vayu (the vital winds of the body, especially the breath and the one which infuses life and vitality in the body) is heated and activated by the subtle energy present inside the body, especially the one known as Madhyama (see verse no. 4 above), it transforms or metamorphoses into sounds revealed in the form of words, sentences and paragraphs during its movement inside and outside the body (as narrated in verse nos. 5-6 above)¹ (9).

[Note--¹The sound is produced when the exhaled air vibrates the vocal cords in the throat. So a combination of factors come into play here—viz. the movement and speed of the air moving in the outwards direction through the mouth, the health and flexibility of the muscles of the throat and the vocal cords, the constriction that is created in order to make the air rub against the cords with the desired angle and force etc. The Pran wind is aided by the Apaana wind also as these sounds are produced in the mouth and not in the nose. It is to be noted here that the Madhyama Shakti has transformed itself as Vaikhari Shakti in the mouth. Earlier the Pran Vayu was inhaled and exhaled through the nose when the mouth was shut and the man was silent during Pranayam. To speak, this same Pran Vayu changes its path and now it moves through the mouth, thereby activating this Vaikhari Shakti latently present there but hitherto lying dormant. The Apaana wind is known to move down in the body, and hence it creates a sucking action of air in the mouth when it is opened to speak. This is like the filling on an iron-smith's bellows. The 'inhaled' breath is the Apaana wind which fires the oven present in the lower end of the body—i.e. the Mooladhar Chakra, to arouse its 'Pashyanti Shakti' (described in verse no. 3). The energy then leaps up and powers the dynamo of the heart—i.e. it activates the Hridaya Chakra, and through it the 'Vaikhari Shakti' (described in verse nos. 5-6). The latter produces 'sound'. The upward pressure exerted by the compressed winds in the body is the cause of the activation of this Shakti. Since air that is being expelled with force through the cavities of the mouth and the throat to produce a sound which is fine-tuned by the tongue into articulate words is located in the upper part of the body, this aspect of vital wind that is associated with speech is called Pran.

In short, that aspect of the Pran Vayu that is inhaled during the time the mouth is open while one speaks is called Apaana, and the Pran Vayu that is exhaled and which actually produces the sound is called Pran. The Apaana stokes the fire of life in the body from below like the fire present in the oven below the grate, while the Pran is the heated and activated wind that moves up in the oven and makes a hissing and rasping sound as it rushes up and out of the mouth of the oven. This is also why we cannot speak while drawing in air but only when it is expelled from the body—because the wind responsible for speech is Pran and not Apaana.

But it must be noted that both these two vital winds work in close cooperation with each other and do not oppose. No one can speak if there is no energy in the body to do so, and the Apaana wind is responsible for digestion of food in the intestines so that the body is properly nourished and energized. Besides this point, the Pran wind would depend upon the Apaana wind to be honoured as the producer of vocal sound because it is the Apaana wind which heats up the body from below and helps to build

up sufficient pressure on the lungs so that the air is expelled with enough force and pressure to produce sound when it ruffles or rubs against the vocal cords in the throat.

In a similar vein, the Pran wind keeps the body alive and active because no one can live for a second if the breathing stops, and the dead body would have no use for the Apaana wind located in the intestines and the lower part of the body. Thus we observe that body these two winds play hand-in-hand and are like the two wheels of the chariot to make life meaningful and livable for the man.]

10. When a self-realised ascetic understands that his speech (or whatever words are spoken by him) is nothing but a revelation of the stupendous powers of his own Atma (pure consciousness) in the form of the Shakti (the subtle energy) called Bhaikari that has revealed itself as the faculty of speech and the spoken word, he is blessed by Goddess Saraswati (the patron goddess of this energy and its revelation as speech) so much so that whatever he utters becomes a reality. None of his words go in vain; they are truthful and bear fruit (10).

11. Since Saraswati is the patron goddess of knowledge and wisdom besides being the goddess of speech, it follows that such an ascetic (as described in previous verses) is himself a creator of the Vedas, various scriptures and Purans (ancient histories)¹.

The Bindu and Naad² are like the Moon and the Sun³, or like the Agni (fire) and the Vayu (wind)⁴ respectively.

Hence, a spiritual aspirant who has the grand ability to bear both these two primary forces of creation can have the required prowess, aptitude and skills to become a symbolic creator of the Vedas, Purans and other scriptures⁵ (11).

[Note—¹In other words, an ascetic who has realised the true divine potential of his Atma is blessed with such mystical powers that he need not study the various scriptures separately to become learned and wise, for all the eclectic virtues that are purported and implied in the teaching of the scriptures in the form of their various tenets, maxims and axioms automatically come to him on their own. Another interpretation would be this—the Atma is Brahm manifested, and since all the scriptures are creations of Brahm in the form of divine ethereal words that are eternal and imperishable, and this Atma is the one which makes the ascetic speak these words by harnessing the Vaikhari Shakti, it follows that the words spoken by the ascetic are the words of wisdom spoken by none else but Brahm. That ‘Shakti’ aspect of Brahm which reveals itself in the form of words of wisdom is personified in the form of the Goddess Saraswati.

²The Bindu means a ‘point-source’, and Naad refers to the ‘un-manifest cosmic energy in the form of sound’ that radiated out in the cosmic ether from this point-source. Therefore, the Bindu would refer to the passive Brahm and the Naad would mean in this context the dynamic and active energy of this Brahm radiating out from this point-source to all the directions of creation much like the rays of the sun radiating out from its disc to illuminate the vast realm of this world. Refer note to verse no. 3 of the present Canto 3 also.

³The Moon is a passive source of light because it simply reflects the light of the Sun falling on it, and hence the active source of light is the Sun. Had there been no Sun, the Moon would not show its light. In the context of Brahm and creation this analogy applies most aptly. The stupendous and astounding powers that Brahm inherently possesses are highlighted in the context of the most fascinating, majestic and magnificently wondrous world it has created using its own energy called Shakti. Had this creation not been in existence, the powers of Brahm would have remained unknown and un-revealed; it would not have come to the fore. In other words, the active principle of Brahm is revealed in the form of the Shakti which resembles the grand Sun in the sky—brilliant, splendorous, potent and fiery in its form, whilst the

principal itself is passive and reflected in its own glory like the Moon shining in the glory of the Sun. That is why Brahm is said to be personified grand virtues of peace, tranquility, serenity and calmness represented by the Moon, while Shakti is a personification of energy, heat, vigour, vitality and dynamism symbolised by the Sun.

³The same analogy applies to the fire and wind elements in this context. Since the Bindu is regarded as the Shakti principle of Brahm in Tantra literature because it is this principal point from where the primary form of active and dynamic Brahm started to reveal its self in the form of Naad, it is likened to the 'fire element'. The Naad itself is sound and the latter needs the medium of ether to travel as waves and spread in all the directions. Therefore, Naad is likened to the 'wind element'.

⁵In other words, an ascetic who realises that he is Brahm personified as his subtle Atma or pure consciousness residing inside his inner self on the one hand, and as the various functions that this Brahm or Atma performs with the help of the gross body, one of which is the speech or the spoken word on the other hand, he is said to be an enlightened and wise ascetic. Since scriptures are synonymous with wisdom, erudition, eclectic knowledge and enlightenment, such an ascetic is deemed to be an expert in them, a fact metaphorically emphasised by saying that he can create these scriptures.]

12. When one becomes self realised and aware of the conscious Atma inherently present in his own self, the rest of the appendages of this Atma such as the gross body consisting of the various sense organs as well as the subtle body consisting of the vital winds and the mind-intellect complex become redundant, non-significant to the extent that they are as good as being non-existent (12).

13. There is no greater spiritual achievement or benefit than becoming aware of the Atma or pure consciousness known as the 'self'. Such a self-realised person is called 'Atma-Gyani'—i.e. a self-realised and enlightened person who has a true and holistic knowledge of his Atma, one who is aware that his Atma is his true self as opposed to the body. His mind and intellect are profoundly influenced by this awareness, and then the greatest of worldly grief, miseries and sorrows do not ruffle him in the least (13).

14. An 'Atma-Gyani' is able to control the wayward nature of his mind and its sub-conscious by doing Yoga (meditation and contemplation). This is because Yoga helps him to effectively exercise control over his organs as well as his mind; their energy which was hitherto directed at the world is now diverted to the Atma. When this happens, he is able to experience and subtly witness the consciousness himself because all external distractions which had prevented him from doing so earlier have now been eliminated with the control of the mind and the sense organs of the body (14).

15. The exhilaration and eclectic feeling of extreme bliss and happiness, the profound sense of ecstasy and elation obtained by the awareness of the conscious Atma as one's own self is eternal and perpetual as it never fades away. This is unlike the bliss, happiness, joy and ecstasy obtained by enjoying the sense objects of this world through the sense organs of the body because they are perishable and transient.

This extremely exhilarating feeling of Atma-realisation cannot be understood or grasped by mere application of intellect. This eclectic feeling is eternal and indescribable as much as it is beyond the purview and definition of pleasures and comforts which are associated with the enjoyment of this mundane material world,

because the latter itself is transient and perishable, and so how can it ever give happiness and joy that are eternal and imperishable? (15).

16. All living beings in this world are mortal whereas the Atma is immortal. Similarly, the supreme Brahm is also immortal, imperishable and indescribable. He is not attached to anything pertaining to the mortal world. [It is to be noted here that this visible world is created by Brahm's Maya—i.e. by his delusion creating power. Therefore, what is seen as this world is merely an illusion much like the water seen in a mirage in hot desert, and like this mirage it is as illusory, transitory and perishable. Brahm himself is synonymous with wisdom and enlightenment, and not with ignorance and delusions that this world represents. Further, the Atma is a personification of Brahm. So, when it is said that the Brahm is not attached with this world in the context of a self realised ascetic it is implied that this ascetic himself is not attached to this world and treats it as a mirage.] (16).

17. That supreme Brahm has no specific signs or attributes or epithets by which it can be recognised or known, and neither is it the object of any sign. It is beyond the purview of any logics. It is Anupam (unprecedented, unparalleled, inimitable, unequalled, most excellent and peerless). It is Apaara (that which cannot be crossed or of which no end can be found). It is Achadya (something which cannot be pierced and ruptured; one that is impregnable). It is Achintya (something that is beyond imagination and thoughts; something that is beyond comprehension, grasp and visualization). And it is Ati-Nirmal (something that is exceedingly pure, untainted and immaculate). (17).

[Note—Refer Canto 2, verse no. 15-19 also.]

18. It (Brahm) is the support, base and foundation of all living beings, providing them with solace and succour, but it has none for its own self and neither does it need one. It is free from all faults, imperfections, dearth and shortcomings. It is free from all proofs (i.e. it does not require any proof to establish its authenticity and establishment). It has no likeness of its kind or any similes that can be cited to give an idea of its divine nature and grand eclectic form. It has no parallels, and nothing with which it can be compared or matched. It has no organs, gross or subtle (18).

19. It (Brahm) is neither gross and physical nor atomic and subtle. It is neither small nor big. It is without any birth (as it is eternal and infinite) and therefore it is imperishable. It cannot be understood or grasped by any of the organs of perception such as the eye, ear etc. and their respective sense of perceptions, such as sight, sound etc. [In other words, Brahm is such an enigmatic, esoteric and mysterious entity that it cannot be understood or grasped by seeing it in some form in physical terms that can be perceived by any of the five organs of perception. For instance, Brahm does not have a gross form that can be seen by the eye; it does not emanate a smell or fragrance that can be picked up as smell by the nose; it does not speak so cannot be heard; it is so sublime that it cannot be felt or touched; and it is not a chemical that it can be tasted and defined as pungent, sweet, salty etc.] (19).

20. It (Brahm) is omniscient and all-knowing. It is all-pervading, all-encompassing and omnipresent. It is an embodiment of peace, tranquility and serenity. It is established in the heart of all the creatures.

Brahm's holistic knowledge is possible with the help of guidance provided by a Brahm-realised Guru. But those who lack this realisation can never hope to know anything about Brahm (20).

21. It (Brahm) is Nishkal (one that has no variations and fractions; one that has no Kalaas or separate forms and attributes; one that has no imperfections, faults, blemishes, taints and imperfections that can scar its immaculacy and purity). It is Nirguna (without any verifiable attributes, virtues and qualities). It is Shaanta (peaceful, serene, calm and tranquil). It is Nirvikaar (without any attributes and qualities that cause any blemishes or taints on its innocent and immaculate nature and form; it is without any faults, shortcomings, imperfections and the like). It is Niraasraye (it has no support for its own self or need any support, base, foundation and help for its own existence and to help establish its authority).

It is Nirlep (i.e. it is dispassionate towards, unattached with and uninvolved in everything). It is Niraapaye (fearless, secure, protected and safe from any attack or intrusion in its glorified stature). It is Kutastha (i.e. it occupies an exalted place or possesses a high stature in existence; it is divine, holy, subtle and sublime; it is hidden, esoteric, enigmatic and secret). It is Achal (unwavering, unmoving, uniform, unchanging, unalterable and immutable). And it is Dhruv (steady, constant, perpetual and immovable—like the legendary Polar Star which is also called 'Dhruv') (21).

22. That Brahm is beyond the reach of all forms of darkness; it has crossed darkness and is established gloriously in its own illumination (much like the sun in the sky or the glow-worm on earth). In fact, it is the source of light for illumination itself. Brahm is beyond the parameters and definitions of 'Bhaava'¹ or the lack of it. The only way to become aware of Brahm is by way of having firm faith and conviction in its divine and glorious existence and its magnificent overriding cosmic authority, and fortifying this belief by personal experience and personal witnessing (22).

[Note--¹The word *Bhaava* has a broad and varied meaning and covers such notions as emotions and sentiments; ideas, feelings and concepts; moods and tenors of existence; ways and methods; state or condition of being, the numerous and varied dispositions of existential life; the designs and intentions of the heart and mind. Therefore it means that Brahm is a neutral entity that remains unruffled by anything in this creation. It maintains stoic calm and poise by remaining equally distant from any and all of the various attributes and qualities that characterise this creation. But total neutrality and equanimity does not mean that Brahm is an impotent, insignificant, ineffective or inane entity because whatever that exists has its existence due to Brahm. Therefore, the virtues coming under the ambit of Bhaava are also created by Brahm though the latter prefers to remain neutral and distanced from everything as well as unaffected by their influences. Earlier it has already been emphasised that Brahm is a very mysterious entity that cannot be defined, cannot be comprehended, and that is beyond the reach of logic and intellect. This fact must be borne in mind while one reads this verse.]

23. Oh Padma Sambhav (Brahma)! This great and supreme Tattva (essence and principle of existence) can be known by devotion and faith only. When a spiritual aspirant withdraws his mind from the external world and focuses it on his inner conscious self, it is only then this Brahm can be realised and its knowledge gained or accessed. [This is because the truthful inner conscious 'self' is the Atma or pure consciousness, and it is Brahm revealed in this divine eclectic form. This Atma can be

known or realised by turning inwards rather than seeking it somewhere outside in the material world.] There is no other way (23).

24. The creature obtains a new body in its next birth depending upon the various factors that impinge upon its mind to mould its thoughts and notions. In other words, when a creature dies thinking about a particular thing, it is bound to take a new birth in such a way that would make the access to that thing easy in the next birth¹.

Similarly, the Mana (mind and heart complex) has a natural tendency to turn towards those objects of this material world which appeal to the creature² (24).

[Note—¹Suppose for instance a man wishes to acquire fame and renown as a scholar in this life but could not fully accomplish his goal, so when he dies he would be re-born in his next life in a learned household or provided with opportunities that would give him fame and honour as a learned scholar. If one wishes to earn money, he would be born as a rich trader or businessman, or in such a family.

²For instance, if a man wishes to be a scholar, his mind would concentrate on studies to the exclusion of all other pursuits, and his heart would have a natural longing for knowledge. Both his mind and heart would love to spend time with good books and in the company of scholars instead of wasting time in worldly pleasures and indulgences of the sense organs. If he is fond of sweets, the Mana would be obsessed with sweets and not salty eatables. The mind and the heart work together in concert to help the man to focus on the things dear and close to his heart. Otherwise the heart would be constantly nagging him and pulling his attention away from the place where the mind wishes to concentrate. Naturally, this internal tussle would create great anxiety and tension for the man who would be torn apart between the demands of the heart and the mind; he becomes restless, disoriented and fidgety. We then say that his Mana is not under control and focused on the task at hand.]

25. A spiritual aspirant who focuses his attention on me (the divine Shiva principle representing Brahm) is able to steady and fix his mind and his sub-conscious upon me; he constantly remembers me and nothing else. As a result, his individual 'self' dissolves in me and becomes one with me. He becomes synonymous with me, the supreme Ishwar (Lord of creation, the supreme Brahm). [That is, when the aspirant concentrates his attention on the supreme transcendental Brahm during his lifetime, his mind and heart would be constantly riveted on this eclectic principal of creation, and when he dies he would reach the objective of his attention—i.e. he would become one with Brahm. The fact that one gets the reward in consonance with the deity he worships and adores has also been elaborately explained in Canto 5, verse nos. 47-54.]

Such an exalted and self-realised spiritual aspirant who remembers me constantly is therefore blessed with all the glorious virtues symbolic of his being my personified form, i.e. he becomes all-knowing and omniscient like the supreme Lord, he possesses the majestic and mystical powers possessed by the supreme Lord, and he becomes almighty and infinitely empowered like the supreme Lord himself (25).

Thus ends Canto 3

Canto 4

1. The supreme transcendental and sublime Consciousness known as Brahm is one and non-dual. It is not proper to create false and imaginary duality in it which in turn gives rise to schism, dichotomy or illusion of distinction in its many and varied manifestations or revelations. It is this non-dual, indivisible, immutable, steady, uniform and universal Brahm that is erroneously imagined as a Jiva or an ordinary living being who forms an individual unit of a creation having countless species and classes of such Jivas with as many variations in characteristics, qualities and attributes just like the case when one falsely imagines that a snake is present in what actually is a harmless length of rope. [In other words, the numerous and uncountable varieties of creatures that are visible in this creation, each different from its neighbour and each unique in his own right, are all one and the same Brahm. It is merely a flight of a fertile imagination and a fallacy of conception to treat them differently from one another.] (1).

2. Even as a length of rope instantly appears to be a snake out of ignorance of its true form, the pure conscious and sublime Brahm too appears in the form of this imaginary world that is mortal and gross only due to the ignorance about its reality and truth (2).

3. The world as it appears to be is nothing but an illusionary and deceitful creation of imagination. When its true nature is researched it is found to be nothing but Brahm. This visible world is a manifestation of the illusion and deception creating powers of consciousness in the form of Brahm, and nothing else. That is, it is out of delusions originating in ignorance that one imagines this multifaceted world and its multifarious material charms to have an actual existence which is separate and distinct from the consciousness known as Brahm (3).

4. The notion that there is an entity that is uniformly all-pervading and universally omnipresent everywhere, and that there is a place or medium where this entity is present, or which is permeated by it or completely soaked, suffused and infused by it, is also imaginary. [In other words, since Brahm is non-dual and nothing that exists in not Brahm (or, everything that exists is Brahm manifested in that form), it follows that there are no two separate entities such as the one that is known as 'Brahm' and the other that is known as the 'creation where this Brahm is present ubiquitously, or in which this Brahm has manifested himself'. There is no distinction between one entity that would be the pervading one, and the other entity in which it would pervade. Or, there is no distinction between the all-pervading Brahm and the world in which it is said to pervade.]

When one becomes aware of this supreme eclectic Truth of creation, everything becomes one, single and non-dual Brahm for him. That is, both the supreme consciousness that lives in the creature as his Atma and the creature himself become synonymous with each other. Or, Brahm and the world lose their dual existence; they both become one, inseparable and an immutable whole (4).

5. Oh Brahma! All living beings have the same origin in the supreme Atma called the Parmatma. [The supreme Father of creation is called 'Parmatma' because his Atma or soul or pure consciousness is the one which creates the rest of the creation as its offspring just like an ordinary father creates his own son or daughter. Therefore, all the units of the entire creation are like siblings; they have a common ancestor and carry the same gene. This is a remarkable observation and if taken seriously can uproot the cause of all hatred and strife in this world. It is also like the case of the

same image of the sun seen in countless number of mirrors. One observes as many suns as there are mirrors, but does that mean that there are numerous suns in the sky? Certainly not.]

Hence, all the living beings are manifestations of the same supreme Atma or Parmatma because each one of them has the gene of the same supreme Father present inherently in him as his own pure conscious Atma (5).

6. It is this Brahm that bears all names and all forms in this world along with doing all deeds. In fact, the name, form and deed themselves are nothing but Brahm revealed in these forms (6).

7. Just like an ornament having its origin in gold is basically and essentially nothing but gold and would not have been in existence without this gold (and that is why it is identified as 'golden' and nothing else), this world having its origin in the supreme consciousness known as Brahm is nothing but Brahm revealed or personified in that form (and hence it is identified as 'Brahm' or 'consciousness' and nothing else) (7).

8. The Jiva Atma (the living being having an Atma or pure conscious soul) and the Parmatma (the supreme Atma which is the sum total of all souls in existence and which is no different from the individual Atma) are one and the same; they are synonymous with each other; there is no difference between them.

Those who are ignorant enough to perceive a difference between these two are the ones who have fear from this world. [This is because then they would distinguish between two people by treating one as a friend and the other as an enemy. This differential treatment would start off a chain reaction and snatch the peace and calmness of the mind. A person would begin to fear and hate his enemy on the one hand, and get jealous even of his friend's rise and influence on the other hand.] (8).

9. It is out of Agyan (lack of truthful knowledge) that there appears to be a difference between Brahm and Jiva, or between Brahm and this world. Therefore, those persons who are ignorant get deluded into believing that such a distinction exists, and consequentially they see a difference between any two given units of creation. [It is such an ignorant man who would find a particular thing pleasant and the other unpleasant. He would enjoy one circumstance and abhor the other. Instead of this, a wise and realised man would treat everything with the same level of dispassion, noninvolvement, equanimity and stoicism because he would see no difference between them.]

When a person understands and becomes enlightened about the fact that every living thing in existence is nothing but the pure consciousness called the Atma in that form, he stops distinguishing between them and treats all of them as being alike (9).

10. This eclectic truth can be understood by experience and also by practically witnessing it. This can be understood by the following example. When a man dreams, everything he sees appears to be real and true, but its falsehood and imaginary nature comes to knowledge only when one wakes up and sees the reality of the physical world. [In the same way, when one wakes up to the reality and truth of Brahm, the world that he was seeing earlier and which he believed to be the truth and real thing appears to be like a dream—false, imaginary and illusionary. The world that he sees now, i.e. the world seen after he has realised the fact that it is Brahm personified, undergoes a sea change; it appears different from the world seen earlier before

enlightenment. The same world assumes a different character, colour, form and connotation. Whereas earlier it was a world of so many myriad characters, colours and forms, each a separate unit and different from the other, after Brahm-realisation it appears to have one single non-dual essential form, and it is Brahm or Atma revealed in these forms.] (10).

11. The two states of consciousness, viz. the waking and dreaming states, cannot co-exist. One cannot be awake and dream at the same time, and one cannot dream and be awake simultaneously either. When true wisdom and enlightenment dawns on someone, the notion of duality and the existence of dichotomy in this world vanish for good. In other words, for an enlightened man, everything becomes uniformly one and non-dual in its basic form as Brahm or Atma personified (11).

12. The concept of there being a seer (the principal) who sees something (the object) through the process of seeing (the intermediary) are the three corners of the artificial triangle-like world created by the three Gunas (basic qualities) called Sata, Raja and Tama. All the three corners are falsehoods and deceptions created by ignorance of the reality¹. For in fact it is Brahm that is the seer of all and the one who is seen. [With the distinction of the seer and the seen out of the way, the third corner—viz. the process of seeing—automatically becomes redundant because with the merger of the aforesaid two points, the entire structure collapses into one single point.]

This Brahm is beyond the purview of the three Gunas; it is un-influenced and un-tainted by any of the three Gunas. It is omnipresent, uniform, infinite and eternal. It is pure consciousness personified (12).

[Note—¹The three Gunas are basically inherent qualities present in all the living beings in this world which exert their influence upon the mind of the creature and conditions its way of working. In this case, the predominance of one Guna over the other would make a man see something as being good and attractive and useful for him over other things. They influence his decision making process and relevant powers; they corrupt the way the person should actually be viewing the world had there been no interference from them. These Gunas act tinted glass through which one sees the world, and so obviously the colour of the glass would affect the view and the world would be coloured with the colour of the medium through which it is seen. Since the man sees a distorted version of the world, his responses would also be proportionately distorted.

For example, a man with a predominance of Raja Guna would be more inclined to get attracted towards material comforts proffered by the world but would try to obtain them by righteous means as far as possible as compared to a man with a greater ratio of Tama Guna who would even commit murder to acquire it even without batting an eyelid. On the contrary, the man with a dominant Sata Guna in him would first analyse the long term effect of that the particular thing would have on his spiritual well being and health and then decide to what extent he should allow himself to get involved in it.

The concept of the three corners of the world distorting the fact of everything being one can be easily understood in the context of the prism and how it treats white light. The ordinary sunlight when it passes through the glass prism breaks up into seven colours, and then each of these colours appears to have a distinct and independent existence. One person might begin to love the violet colour and the other would prefer the yellow colour. But a wise man would rather prefer the sunlight as he knows that these independent colours are all present in the sunlight in a well balanced ratio which have been decided by Nature for his all round benefit, while independent colours of these lights would naturally have a mismatched ratio of natural benefits

and any one given coloured light cannot have all the benefits of all the other six colours.

The Dhyān Bindu Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse nos. 93/1-93/15 uses the same idea to explain why the Atma sees the world differently and why it appears itself to be tainted by the imperfections of the world by saying that the Atma lives enclosed in a lotus present in the subtle heart from where it peeps into the world through the coloured petals of this lotus, thereby seeing the world coloured by the colour of the petal through which it is observed.

That is why when the sense of duality creates two distinct entities—viz. the one entity that is the viewer and the other entity that is being viewed, it is obvious that the three Gunas would influence the process of viewing. One man might see something with one perspective which would be completely different from the way the other man views the same thing. For example, the same woman is viewed as a mother by one man while the other sees her as his wife and still the third sees her as his sister. Another example would be a dish of sweets—one man would lunge for it and grab it at the first opportunity while the other man would abhor it because he knows that it is bad for his health. This distortion comes only when there are two independent entities, but such a situation vanishes when the state of non-duality prevails. For instance, a wise man would see the nutritional value in this dish rather than its taste or getting unnecessary overworked about its bad effect on his health. He would eat moderately and take a balanced diet.

Hence, the view of non-duality and equanimity is the enlightened view of one who is truly Brahm-realised.]

13. A pitcher made from clay is nothing but clay in its essential form, but this does not mean that clay is pitcher; it's a misconception and the height of delusion as well as ridiculous and incredulous to even imagine that clay is pitcher.

Similarly, it is wrong to see silver in the silvery white glare of the shining inner surface of the oyster shell.

Likewise, to see the Jiva (the living creature) in Brahm is equally delusory, erroneous and misleading. [This is because the basic defining characteristics of Brahm and Jiva are wide apart and at odds with each other. For instance, while Brahm is eternal, imperishable, infinite, all-pervading and immaculate, the Jiva is mortal, perishable, limited with a gross body, and subject to world influences and corruptions.

As soon as the notion of all the living beings or Jivas being images or manifestations of Brahm takes hold, the existence of an independent entity known as a Jiva which is distinct and separate from Brahm would immediately vanish (13).

[Note—In the present analogy, the Jiva is the clay pitcher while Brahm is clay. It is the presence of Brahm in the form of the Atma residing in each living creature that has made the latter show signs of consciousness, life and vitality, because as soon as this Atma is removed from the scene, this Jiva instantly becomes a non-existent and non-consequential entity much like the case when the clay-pitcher becomes meaningless if the 'clay' is removed from it. The 'clay' is the defining element that determines the basic value, nature, importance and worth of a vessel called a clay-pitcher just like the Atma is the defining element that determines the worth and importance of the body of the creature.

But Brahm is not the Jiva for the simple reason that there is not one but uncountable number and species of living beings in this creation, they being so varied and physically different from one another that the whole branch of science known as botany and zoology have still to find all the varieties of plants and living creatures that flourished and walked on the surface of the earth since its inception and would do so in the future to come. If Brahm is deemed to be one and a non-dual entity then it would be absurd to imagine that Brahm is only one of these myriad mind-boggling

varieties of Jivas to the exclusion of all others. The same sample of clay is moulded by a potter in numerous shapes and sizes of pitchers, but all of them are basically 'clay' in nature though each is assigned a distinct name and shape and used for different purpose. But the primary ingredient of all these pitchers and pots is only of one shape and colour—it is known as clod of earth or a lump of clay, and as nothing else. Likewise, though the creatures have so many forms, names and qualities, their basic nature as the Atma or Brahm is universally and unequivocally the same.]

14. Even as clay appears to be in the form of a pitcher, gold as a large ear-ring, or an oyster shell as silver, Brahm (the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness) is too called a Jiva (a living being) (14).

15. Just like the perception of the colour of blue in the otherwise colourless sky is erroneous, false and illusionary (because the sky is inherently colourless and the bluish colour that it seems to have is due to the scattering of sunlight from the molecules of various impurities present in it's atmosphere), the appearance of water on hot sand in a mirage formed in a desert is also due to an erroneous perception based on imagination which is false and illusionary (because it is also caused due to refraction of sunlight above the hot air in the desert), and to imagine that a stump of a tree would ever produce a flower is equally incredulous and too far-fetched, to imagine the existence of the mortal, gross and perishable world in the divine and eclectic entity known as Brahm that is basically pure consciousness, eternal, imperishable, truthful and sublime is equally laughable, incredulous and erroneous to the hilt (15).

16. One hears and tells stories of phantoms and ghosts, but they have no real existence; their existence is limited to imaginary folk stories and tales of fantasy.

Similarly, it is said that the Gandharvas have a city¹, but it has no real existence and is simply a figment of one's fertile imagination.

Just like imagining that there are two moons in the sky is height of stupidity and delusions, to imagine that the world has its existence in Brahm is equally hilarious and a stupid and absurd proposition (16).

[Note--¹*Gandharvas* are celestial dancers and singers created by ancient mythology. They are said to conjure up a fascinating world of majestic charm just like a magician does on stage. But it is all an imagination because there is no such thing as a heaven where dancing and singing occurs. The term is used as a metaphor for illusive charm and fascination with something which has no substance and credence.]

17-18. Just like the waves arising in an ocean are nothing but water, houses made of bricks and mud are nothing but earth, and the elements are all subtle and invisible in their basic atomic form [17], this world is also a manifestation of Brahm in its essential form. It is Brahm that is seen as this world. In fact, whatever is seen around is nothing but Brahm.

It is false to say that an impotent lady has a son, or the mirage in the desert has physical water that can actually be drunk [18]. (17-18).

19. Just like the existence of a tree in the sky is absolutely impossible, the world is equally false and imaginary. Indeed, all is nothing but Brahm.

For instance, when a mud or clay pitcher is lifted in hand and examined critically, one sees nothing in it but solidified earth element (as mud or clay). This pitcher is nothing but mud or clay. [That is, no other element can be imagined in it—

viz. it is not gold or silver, it is not fire or wind, it is not iron or wood. Likewise, this world is nothing but Brahm.] (19).

20. In the same fashion, when one observes this world closely and analyses it, one comes to the conclusion that it is nothing but Brahm in its essential and fundamental form.

Similarly, the eclectic notion that ‘I am nothing but the pure conscious Atma; I am not the gross body and its sense organs, and neither am I the subtle elements of this body such as the Pran (vital winds) or Mana (mind)’—this enlightened view is the truthful understanding of one’s own ‘self’, but the irony is that out of utter ignorance and misconceptions one sees ‘physical bodies’ all around him and recognise these bodies as different Jivas or living beings. It is out of sheer ignorance that one regards these bodies as the true identity of the Jiva concerned instead of recognizing the universal fact that the body is merely a habitat of the Jiva and his true ‘self’ is the pure consciousness residing in his bosom as his Atma. In fact, he sees himself also as an entity with a physical gross body and identified with it rather than having the aforementioned holistic, truthful and spiritually enlightened view of one’s ‘true self’ as being pure consciousness that is nothing but the supreme cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm personified (20).

21. Even a person who knows the truth about a length of rope and recognises it as such in the light of the day would be deluded and misled to imagine it as being a serpent in the dark. That is, even knowledge sometimes is overshadowed by the overriding veil of darkness representing ignorance. [In other words, it is very important to overcome the darkness of ignorance if one were to actually benefit from his knowledge.]

We observe in this instance that the knowledge that there is some elongated thing lying on the ground has created two independent impressions on the same individual—one of it being a length of rope, and the other of it being a serpent. In another instance, the same clod of mud or clay assumes two meanings when one sees its manifestation as a pitcher—one enlightened view is to recognise it in its essential form as clay or mud, and the other is to assign a name to the physical shape that the clay or mud has assumed, i.e. a ‘pitcher or pot’.

In a similar fashion, the essential spiritual entity that is ethereal and is known as the pure conscious Atma has been assigned a name when it assumes a gross body of a creature. In other words, the nameless, formless, attribute-less, invisible and ethereal Atma that is uniform and universal in this creation is assigned different names when it assumes a gross body with physical characteristics, each such body different from the other. [In other words, in spite of the fact that the same soul or Atma resides universally and uniformly in all the living beings, we treat them differently—we even go to the extent of assigning two names to identical ‘twin siblings’ so that they can be separately identified on the basis of their independent physical bodies. This is like identifying two mud pitchers on the basis of their exteriors such as for example a smaller pitcher and the one slightly bigger than it, the one that stores well water and the other that stores river water, one that is called a ‘pitcher’ and the other that is called the ‘pot’ etc. whereas all of them should actually be called ‘a vessel or container made of earth or clay’, or better still simply moulded forms of ‘earth or clay’ which has no other name but ‘earth or clay’.] (21).

22. Ignorance and delusion is defined as having the concept of duality in something that is primarily non-dual. For instance, to think that this is the Atma and this is not the Atma is out of ignorance of the reality. In fact, every living thing is the Atma (infinite, eternal, invisible, sublime, subtle and pure consciousness), and nothing but the Atma.

To treat the Atma as the gross and perishable body is as erroneous and incredulous as treating a harmless length of rope as snake, or imagining the presence of silver in the shiny inner surface of the oyster shell (22).

23. Only those who are ignorant and deluded regard the Atma as the body much like the stupid man who believes that the earth is the clay pitcher or the simmering rays on the hot desert (i.e. the mirage) is water on the surface of the desert sand (23).

24. Timber is collected and a log-cabin or a small wooden dwelling is made out of it. Once the structure is ready, the timber is no more simply called timber but is now recognised as a log-cabin or a house or a hut. Similarly, iron is used to make a sword, and then the same piece of iron is now called a 'sword' and not 'iron'.

In the same manner, the body of a living being is created by the Atma, which is the 'true self' of this living being, as its habitat and for carrying out its various wishes. But when this happens, the body henceforth comes to be known as the same living being's identity instead of being merely the Atma's external form or manifestation or dwelling. [In other words, once the Atma manifests itself as the creature with external physical features of a body with certain characteristic attributes and virtues, everyone would recognise and know about that particular individual with what is visibly seen and not with what is not seen. That is, though it is well established that the Atma is the true identity of an individual, it is too abstract a notion and too hypothetical a proposition to be easily understood and dealt with in this material world where everything is verified in material terms and is to be seen and felt to be believed in and to have any relevance, value and importance. It is much easy to deal with a physical gross body than an abstract concept of the 'consciousness' or the 'Atma'. So for all practical purposes, the world likes to deal with this individual in his physical and verifiable form as the body instead of his subtle and ethereal form as the soul or Atma which actually is his 'true identity'. Consequentially, the creature comes to be identified with his body rather than his Atma. This is the genesis of all problems associated with the world as well as with the concept of duality. It creates a deception which is so life-like and real that it appears to be the real thing and the truth.]

Therefore the truth in all the examples cited above is different from what the apparent exterior makes it out to be. For example, the truth is that the log-cabin is timber in its essential form, the sword is iron in that form, and the physical body of the living being is the Atma in that form. Any other thought is erroneous and deluding (24).

Thus ends Canto 4

Canto 5

[This Canto has an uncanny resemblance to Canto 1, verse nos. 162-178, Canto 2, verse nos. 12-22, and Canto 3, verse nos. 1-12. The fact that the same concepts are

repeated once again shows one of two probabilities—either Shiva had preached Brahma on two separate occasions or he had repeated the concepts to drive home their importance.]

1. Now I (Shiva) shall further elaborate upon the various concepts of Yoga and narrate the mysterious form of the enigmatic and esoteric Brahm. Oh Brahma, listen carefully (1).

2. The body is like a city (in which the Atma representing the supreme transcendental Brahm, who is the Lord of creation, lives). It has ten holes or apertures (openings) with ten doors (gates) guarding them¹. The chief ten Naadis (ducts)² of the body are this city's ten main avenues in which ten types of vital winds³ move about. This body is supported by five organs of perception and five organs of action⁴ (2).

[Note—Refer Canto 1, verse nos. 72, 165-166 which state a similar thing.

¹The *ten doors* of this city are the following—two ears, two eyes, two nostrils, one mouth, one anus, one urethra and one Brahm Randhra (the hair-like slit present on the top of the head).

²There are said to be *ten chief Naadis* in the body. According to Yogchudamani Upanishad of Sam Veda tradition, verse no. 15-17, they are the following—Ida, Pingla, Sushumna, Gandhari, Hasti-jivaha, Pusa, Yashaswani, Alambusa, Kuhu and Shankhani. They are the chief ducts present inside the body through which the Pran—vital life-consciousness represented by the vital winds and life impulses present in the body which keep the body alive and distinguishes a living body from a dead one—moves while the man sleeps (refer Paingal Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 12 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition. They are likened to broad avenues of a grand city in which the Atma lives.

³The ten vital winds are the following-- Pran, Apaana, Samaana, Udaana, Vyan, Nag, Kurma, Krikar, Devdutta and Dhananjay. Refer—Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 77-87 and Subalo Upanishad, canto 9, verse no. 14 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition.

⁴The five organs of perception are the following—ears, eyes, nose, tongue and skin. The five organs of action are the following—hands, legs, mouth, anus and genitals.]

3. There are six Chakras (whirling subtle energy centers)¹ in the body forming its pedestals. There are six dense forests in it represented by the five objects of the sense perceptions² and one Mana (mind).

This body has four Peeths (the holy seats where the divine Shakti principle of Tantra philosophy are established)³, and it is illuminated by the light (knowledge) emanating from the four Vedas⁴. [In other words, the body is treated like a pilgrim site where the Shakti principle of Divinity is worshipped according to Tantra philosophy. The word 'Peeth' is indicative of this—because the word refers to the sites where the Divinity is worshipped in its female manifestation instead of the male form.] (3).

[Note—Refer Canto 1, verse nos. 166-167, 170-178; Canto 2, verse nos. 6-14.

¹The *six Chakras* are the subtle energy centers of the body which act as power houses which supply energy for the various functions of the body. They are the following—The 'Mooladhar Chakra', the 'Swadhisthan Chakra', the 'Manipur Chakra', the 'Anahat Chakra', the 'Vishuddha Chakra/Kanth Chakra' and the 'Agya Chakra or Bhru Chakra'. ²The five perceptions of the body are sight (eye), smell (nose), sound (ear), taste (tongue) and feel or touch (skin). Therefore, the things that are the objects of these five perceptions are the following objects that have a form and

colour which can be seen, the things that emanate some smell or fragrance which can be smelt, things that emanate sound and the sound itself such as music and the words spoken by a wise teacher that can be heard, things that have a taste and can be tasted and then liked or disliked, and objects that can be touched and felt.

³The word *Peeth* means a seat or pedestal for an idol of a deity. In the context of the body the word refers to the four sheaths which form the body that harbours the Atma at its center. These four are the Annamaye Kosh or food sheath, the Pranmaye Kosh or the wind sheath, the Manomaye Kosh or the mind sheath, and Vigyanmaye Kosh or the intellect sheath.

According to Tantra Shastra, the Peeths are said to be the places where the Shakti (cosmic energy of creation) is located. They are the following—The first seat or Peeth is called Kaam Roop Peeth, the second seat called Purna Giri Peeth, the third seat is called Jalandhar Peeth, and the fourth seat is called Uddiyan Peeth. These Peeths or seats and their locations have been described below in verse nos. 171-175 of Canto 1.

⁴The four Vedas are the Rig, Sam, Yajur and Atharva.]

4. The holy and eclectic nature of this (human) body is indicative by the fact that its sign consists of Naad and Bindu¹. It is like the heaven where Lord Vishnu and his divine consort Laxmi reside². It is this (human) body by which one can hope to attain all Siddhis, i.e. one can accomplish everything with this body, and ‘everything’ implies both worldly fame and material prosperity, majesty, pomp and pageantry, as well as spiritual liberation, deliverance, salvation and emancipation. [In other words, the options are open for the man to choose whether he wishes to remain trapped slogging in this cycle of birth and death or find final liberation and deliverance from it.] (4).

[Note—¹This body is the holy abode of the supreme transcendental Brahm as the Atma (pure consciousness). At the same time this body is the visible manifestation of the stupendous powers of Brahm on display in the form of the Pran (the vital winds and life forces) and Shakti (inherent strength, energy, vitality, vigour and stamina possessed by the body to perform stupendous and astounding tasks). Hence the body is a metaphoric abode of both Brahm and its dynamic power called the Shakti in their various manifestations. Refer Canto 1, verse nos. 72, 167-168; Canto 2, verse nos. 6, 10, 20; Canto 3, verse nos. 1-15; Canto 5, verse no. 2-5, 13-15; Canto 6, verse nos. 32-33, 47.

This is metaphorically said when Naad and Bindu are called its signs or symbols or insignias. The Naad is representative of Brahm’s sublime existence which is most subtle and ethereal because Naad means ‘sound’ and it has no attributes and forms besides being very subtle and ethereal in nature. On the other hand, Bindu represents Brahm’s active and dynamic form as the concentrated beam of energy because the word ‘Bindu’ means a point source.

These twin concepts of Naad and Bindu have been explained elaborately elsewhere in this Upanishad earlier also, especially in Canto 1, verse no. 167, 178, Canto 3, verse no. 3 and 11, Canto 6, verse nos. 71-73.

²*Lord Vishnu* is the macrocosmic all encompassing manifestation of Brahm known as the Viraat Purush of Vedanta and Vishnu of the Purans. Vishnu’s divine consort is *Laxmi* representing the Maya or delusion-creating powers of Brahm or the Shakti or the dynamic and energetic aspect of Brahm. This Maya keeps the creature trapped in its shackles and a make-believe world of astounding charms so that the wheel of creation and destruction goes on endlessly and Brahm would not need to have to create it afresh. This ability of Brahm is revealed in the Shakti which enables all this to become effective and be brought into practice.]

5. [The following verse nos. 5-15 describe the various Chakras and Peeths in the body. Reference should be made to Yograj Upanishad which describes them in similar terms.]

The area between the anus and the genital has the triangular Mooladhar. This is said to be the symbolic abode of Lord Shiva (i.e. the Shiva Lingam is said to be established here).

In fact, the Jiva (the living being) is Shiva personified (5).

[Note—Refer Canto 1, verse no. 168-177, Canto 2, verse nos. 5-14, Canto 3, verse nos. 1-11.]

6. [Verse nos. 6-12 describe the various Chakras and Peeths in the body and are similar to verse nos. 168-178 of Canto 1. Refer also to verse no. 74 of Canto 6 which mentions seven Chakras.]

The great center of transcendental cosmic energy subtly present in the body is located here (in the region of the Mooladhar Chakra) as the Kundalini. It is here that the vital winds of life as well as the fire element inherently present in the body get their subtle energy to keep themselves active (6).

7. It is here that the Bindu (the subtler dynamic forces that reveal themselves as 'conscious life'), Naad (the sound symbolising the revelation of this dynamic force in the form of energy represented by sound waves), Hans (the conscious Atma residing in the subtle heart and which breathes air that produces the sound 'Hans Hans' as it goes in and out of the body through the nostrils and throat; the rustling, hissing, rasping or bristling sound heard when one puts one's ears on the chest close to the heart) and Mana (mind, the subtle body of this Atma) have their origin (7).

[Note—This is because the Kundalini energy keeps the vital forces of life in the body alive and activated by lending them warmth and vitality so necessary for survival. It is like the fire burning at the bottom of the grate in the oven, the crackling sound of the firewood and the hissing sound of the rising air are like the Naad and the rustling sound made by the Pran as it passes in and out of the body when the creature breathes. If the Kundalini is cooled down, the entire body has a cooling effect and this is tantamount to death or a comatose state of existence symbolising that life is fast ebbing from the body.]

8. The Peeth (holy pilgrim site) that blesses the worshipper by fulfilling all his desires and wishes is called the 'Kaam Roop Peeth' and is symbolically located on the Swadhisthan Chakra. It has a hexagonal shape and situated at the base of the genitals (8).

9. The Manipurak Chakra is located in the Nabhi (navel) area. It has ten corners or petals.

The heart region has the Maha Chakra having twelve corners or petals. This Chakra cannot be harmed or suppressed or subdued in a living being (obviously because as long as the creature lives the heart continues to beat uninterruptedly) [In other words, it is not possible to kill anyone by pressing the heart so as to force it to stop beating; the heart would not stop beating as long as the man is alive. This fact can easily be verified and understood in the context of the Kantha Chakra or the Vishudha Chakra located in the throat. If this Throat Chakra is pressed too hard the man suffocates to death, while on the contrary pressing of the Heart Chakra would only revive the sinking heart instead of shutting it down as usually done in

emergencies when attempts are made to revive a patient suffering from a severe heart-stroke by thumping and pressing the heart.] (9).

10. Oh Kamalsambhav (Brhma)! This (Maha Chakra) is also called the Purna Giri Peeth.

The Visudha Chakra is situated in the bore or hollow of the throat. It has sixteen corners or petals (10).

11. The Jalandhar Peeth is located here (in the throat where the Vidudha Chakra is situated).

The Agya Chakra is situated between the two eyebrows. It is an excellent one with two corners or petals (11).

12. On the top of it (i.e. on the Agya Chakra) is located the Udiyan Peeth.

All these sites in the body are symbolic abodes of the divine Shakti (the dynamic aspect of Brahm revealed as subtle energy centers) (12).

13. [Verse no. 13-15 describe the shape of the five elements from the Tantra philosophical point of view and similar to Canto 1, verse nos. 176-178. Refer also to Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 72 of Sam Veda tradition, Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, verse no. 8 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, and Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 83-102 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

The realm of the earth has a symbolic four-cornered outline (shape). Its patron God is Brahma. The realm of the water has the symbolic shape of a crescent moon and its patron God is Lord Vishnu (13).

14. The realm of the fire element is triangular in shape, and its patron God is Lord Rudra (the angry form of Shiva).

The realm of the air or wind element has a hexagonal shape and its patron deity is Sankarshan¹ (14).

[Note—¹*Sankarshan* is the older brother of Lord Krishna, i.e. Balaram, according to the Purans. The word literally means 'well drawn'. In his earlier incarnation, he was Laxman, the younger brother of Lord Ram. Laxman was an incarnation of Seshnath, the legendary hooded serpent on whom Lord Vishnu reclines on the surface of the cosmic ocean of milk known as Kshir Sagar. Hence, Sankarshan is Lord Seshnath who is supposed to support the earth on its hoods.]

15. The realm of the sky is rounded (and that is why we see the sky like a inverted hemisphere). Its patron deity is Sriman Narayan (Vishnu).

The realm of the Mana (mind) is in the area around the central point of the two eyebrows, and its symbolic form is the cosmic sound called Naad¹ (15).

[Note--¹The brain and its focal point where the virtues of wisdom and intelligence are located, is externally marked by the tri-junction of the root of the nose and the two eyebrows. This is the area of the cerebrum of the brain. When we have to pay special attention on anything or concentrate deeply on any subject or when we are in a contemplative or pensive mood, the eyebrows create a furrow at this point. It is a metaphoric way of saying that the body is attempting to focus its mind and intellect on the subject under consideration or is concentrating on something which requires special focusing of all the available powers of the brain. This point is also metaphorically said to be the location of the third eye of wisdom for the same reason. During the practice of Yoga, it is hear that the Yogi (the practitioner of Yoga) tries to

fix his attention. According to ancient iconography, Lord Shiva who is the greatest Yogi is said to radiate a beam of light from this point, the beam which is so powerful that it can reduce to ashes all worldly delusions and passions much like the powerful beam of laser. This is symbolically depicted in the ancient Puranic story which says that once when Kaamdeo, the God of passions and lust, had tried to break Shiva's meditation on the behest of other Gods, Shiva had opened this third eye, and the rays of light beamed out from it reduced to ashes Kaamdeo in an instant.

The ancient sages visualised that this point would be the focal point where the sight collected by the two eyes would be focused behind them in the mind (brain) in order to enable the man to see things with a sharply formed image having three-dimensions and in a cohesive and clear format. Otherwise, they thought, the images formed by the eye would be blurred and distorted.

The Mana takes the form of the Naad because one has to concentrate one's mind during meditation to hear it.]

16. Oh Padmasambhav (Brahma)! All the places I (Shiva) have narrated to you are symbolic abodes of Lord Shiva. [This is because Shiva is Brahm personified in the form of supreme consciousness, and anything that matters in the body is consciousness. Without the consciousness being present in any spot of the body, it would be dead and worthless.]

Now I shall narrate the web of Naadis (tubular ducts of the body) to you (16).

17. Situated above the Mooladhar triangle is the Sushumna Naadi (literally a tubular duct, but here referring to the main nerve passing through the center of the spinal cord) measuring about twelve fingers in length. It is also called 'Brahm Naadi'. [This is because it links the Kundalini directly to the Brahm Randhra at the top of the head and it is through it that the Pran Vayu, the vital winds, rises from the base of the body to ascend and finally escape through the Brahm Randhra to provide liberation and deliverance to the ascetic who practices Yoga. The cosmic Naad representing the presence of Brahm is also heard when the vital Pran wind moves up in it. In other words, this Sushumna Naadi helps an ascetic to become Brahm-realised, and hence the name. The immense significance of this Brahm or Sushumna Naadi has been highlighted in Canto 6, verse nos. 4-19, 22, 35-47 of this Upanishad.]

It is believed that it is like a bamboo which has been split into two at its base (17).

[Note—There are many Yoga Upanishads that describe the Naadis, e.g. (i) Sam Veda's Jabal Darshan Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 5-22 ½, 35-42, 46-47, Canto 5; and Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse nos. 15-21. (ii) Shukla Yajur Veda's Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 67-76, 88-89, 99. (iii) Krishna Yajur Veda's Kshuriko, verse nos. 8-20; Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 5, verse nos. 23-30; Yog Tattva Upanishad; Dhyana Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 50-60.]

18. On both the side of it are the two Naadis called Ida and Pingla which go up to the nostrils (18).

19. The Naadi on the left of Sushumna is Ida, and the vital wind that moves in it has a golden (Hem) hue or shade (i.e. it is of a yellowish tinge)¹.

To the right of Sushumna is the Pingla Naadi which represents the Sun God. [That is, the vital wind that blows through it has the vitality and energy that is equivalent to that of the sun.]² (19).

[Note--¹According to Dhyana Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 95 of the Krishna Yajur Veda, the vital wind which has this colour is the Apaana wind. To quote—"The Beej

or seed letter of the Apan wind (the primary air which moves downwards in the body and helps in food intake and its movement through the intestines, its digestion and elimination from the body) is the Sanskrit alphabet 'Ra'. It has the hue of *golden yellow* resembling the brilliant sun, and represents the fire element."

²By saying that the vital wind passing through the Pingla represents the sun and the fact that the sun is like a hot piece of gold and yellow in colour, it is implied that both the Naadis are equally important and carry the vital life forces in them. This is a very obvious observation because one breathes through both the nostrils and both are equally important for the normal health of the man. Even if one of the nostrils is clogged as during severe colds, notwithstanding which, the body feels suffocated. Further, during the process of Pranayam or breath control exercise, the inhalation and exhalation of air, called Purak and Rechak respectively, are done alternately through the left nostril and right nostril, i.e. through the Ida and Pingla Naadis respectively.

The great importance of these three primary Naadis have been elaborately described in the context of Pranayam in Canto 1, verse nos. 90-102 and 116-120.]

20. In the navel region there is a Naadi called Vilambini. It is from here (navel) that all the Naadis originate—both the ones that go upwards and the ones that go downwards in the body (20).

21. This clutch of Naadis in the region of the navel is called the Naadi Chakra, and it is like the egg of a hen.

The two Naadis called Gandhari and Hast-Jivaha originate from it and go up to the two eyes (thereby controlling the function of seeing) (21).

22. The two Naadis called Pusha and Alambusa originate from there and go up to the two ears (thereby controlling the function of hearing).

The great Naadi called Shura rises from here and goes up to the center of the two eyebrows. [Hence, this Naadi helps in concentration of attention and focusing of the mind, especially during meditation. It also helps the ascetic in self realisation when it is said that the third eye of wisdom located in this spot is opened.] (22).

23. The Vishwodara Naadi is also located there, and it helps to take in all the four types of foods¹ (by creating a taste for them and helping in their digestion). [That is, this Naadi controls the entire function of digestion and taste.]

The Naadi called Saraswati rises from here and goes up to the tongue (thereby controlling the function of speaking) (23).

24. The Naadi called Raka also has its seat here (Nabhi Chakra). It creates the strength and the ability to drink. [Hence, it controls the function of thirst and the ability to drink and hold this drink inside the body without immediately vomiting it out.]

Besides this function, it creates hunger and clears mucous from the nostrils. [Therefore, it has a direct role to play in colds and catarrhs on the one hand, and the general ability to eat and digest food on the other hand.] (24).

25. The Naadi called Shankhini originates here (Nabhi Chakra) and goes up to the throat and faces downwards there, pointing to the place of its origin (navel). It helps to take the nutrients of the food eaten to the mind (brain). [Hence, it provides nourishment to the brain and controls its proper health and functioning.] (25).

26. There are three Naadis that go downwards from the navel. Out of them, the Naadi named Kuhu, helps in elimination of stool, and the one named Vaaruni helps in passage of urine (26).

27. The Naadi named Chitra goes up to the Siwani (the suture between the male genital and the anus) and controls the discharge of sperms (semen). [Therefore, it controls sexual behaviour, male potency and virility.]

I have described the Naadi Chakra (the network of Naadis) to you. Now listen to what constitutes Bindu (27).

28. Brahm, in its dynamic form and active principle is represented by the word Bindu (a dot or point source of energy or Shakti). This Brahm has three types of bodies—viz. the gross, the subtle, and the sublime and transcendental.

The gross body of this Brahm is the 'Bindu' (drop) of semen. [This is because the sperm in this drop or 'Bindu' of semen has all the vital life-infusing capacity and ability that is the hallmark of Brahm. The semen is the gross body of the sperm just like the gross body of the creature which harbours the vital spark of life-consciousness in the form of the Atma.]

The subtle body of this Brahm is the 'Bindu' manifested as the Shakti or stupendous energy and life giving vitality present in the form of the five legendary Fires of creation called 'Panch-Agni'¹ (28).

[Note—¹The five cosmic holy fires that reveal the astounding active dynamism of Brahm are called Pancha-Agni. They have been elaborately described in *Chandogya Upanishad*, canto 4, section 10 to 13. There are the following—(a) 'Garhyapatya' (गार्हपत्य—the fire of the household hearth; the main fire of the formal fire sacrifice), (b) 'Dakshinagni' (दक्षिणाग्नि—the fire used as a witness to making charities or any other religious festivity; the fire lit at the site of a sacrificial fire ritual, near its south end), (c) 'Ahawaniya' (आहवनीय—the fire to invoke the Gods during a ritualistic sacrifice), (d) 'Sabhya' (सभ्य—the fire of the Vedic period which was continuously lit) and (e) 'Awasathya' (आवसथ्य—the fire of the later Smriti period).

However, the present Upanishad enumerates a set of different five Fires as follows in verse nos. 29-32.]

29. The sublime form of Brahm transcends all these forms and definitions. It is like the divine elixir of life called 'Som' (the sanctified liquid drunk during holy fire sacrifices and offered to Gods as an offering, the one which provides the Gods with immortality, and the one which is stored in the moon as the heavenly Amrit, the ambrosia that is the eternal drink of life and bliss).

This Brahm is supreme and transcendental. It is ubiquitous and quintessential in creation. It is the universal witness of everything. It is steady and unequivocally sublime in its divine form, and is eternally exalted.

The 'Kalagni' (one of the forms of Fire, especially the one which is said to be burning in hell and which burns everything at the time of doomsday) is located below in the nether worlds called the Patal (29).

30. The Fire present (burning) inside the body is called 'Samulaagni'¹. This creates the Naad. [That is, the roar of this fire burning inside the body is heard in the form of a sound compared to the cosmic sound called Naad. It is like the distant roar of an ocean or the one heard when wild fires rage in the forest. It is caused when the air is heated and a strong breeze is kicked up due to the fire.]

The Fire called 'Vadvaagni' (also called 'Badvaanal') is present in the bones of the body² (30).

[Note--¹According to Garbho-panishad, paragraph 5 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, the body of the living organism is called 'Deha' or body because it harbours the Fire element in it. It is called 'Samul' because it originates in the Moolkand located in the lower part of the body in close association of the Mooladhar Chakra and Kundalini. Refer Canto 1, verse nos. 168, 177, Canto 2, verse nos. 6, 10-13, and Canto 5, verse nos. 5-6 in this context. This fire supports life and vitality in the body, and in its absence the body would freeze to death just like the absence of the Vadvaagani would freeze the earth into a lifeless barren stretch of wilderness.

²On the earth, it is the fire present in the bottom of the ocean and all freshwater lakes, keeping them warm and supporting an entire aquatic eco-system. The Vadvaagni is responsible for keeping the bowls of the earth hot so much so that the core of the earth is molten lava. The rocks found inside the earth's crusts have been hardened over millions of years due to pressure and the heat of this Vadvaagni because the initial soft crusts of clay, mud and dust were baked and solidified as rocks. Since this fire is stronger near the center of the earth and gradually cools down as one moves up, the core of earth is molten while the upper most layers are soft earth of varying softness, and the intermediary layers are hard and black in varying degrees giving rise to a wide array of minerals such as coal, iron, gold etc. No wonder then that the hardest element in existence, viz. diamond, is also found underground, much below the upper cooler strata of earth, where heat and pressure had compacted the rock into most dense and hardened textures. The presence of fire underground in the deep belly of the earth is evident when we draw water from bore-wells in winter; while the atmosphere is freezing cold, this water would be comfortably warm and rejuvenating.]

31. That Fire which is latently present in the rocks (e.g. coal) and wood (e.g. hard-wood) is the one that is present in the bones. This Fire which is present in the earth is the one which is present also in the bones (31).

[Note—Here, the bones are likened to the rocks and hard-wood that support the earth and prevent its collapse. The implication is obvious because the bones support the gross structure of the body just like rocks and hard-wood found in earth support the softer upper layers and prevent the earth from being squeezed and distorted out of shape under various natural pressures and other factors such as meteor strikes and cosmic winds that continue to shower upon earth unpredictably. The rocks have managed to keep the earth maintain its shape even after 4.5-5 billion years of its existence, and after its core is being constantly made hollow by mineral extraction and all kinds of wanton exploitation done by men for his vested selfish interests without bothering for the consequences on a long-term basis. Had there been no bones, the body of the man would be no different from, say, that of an amoeba or sponge. All the internal organs are held in place because the bones maintain the exterior shape and act like a safe cage for them.]

32. The powerful Fire in the form of the potent energy of the 'Electric' lives in the sky in the form of lightening. This fire is the one that lives and charges the inner self of all living beings¹.

The form that the Fire takes in the sky as the 'Sun' (the cosmic cauldron of fire) is the one that lives and charges the navel² (32).

[Note—¹The inner self is the Atma which is the pure consciousness residing in the bosom of all living beings, and without which no man can live. The abode of the Atma has been said to be the subtle heart where there is a subtle Lotus in which this Atma actually resides. The heart is known to beat continuously, and it is a medical fact that this beating of the heart is due to a subtle electrical current passing through

its muscles. When the heart becomes weak, doctors implant heart pacers or other forms of mechanical devices running on batteries that supply the necessary electric stimuli to the muscles of the heart. The presence of electric current in the heart enables its beating to be monitored by the ECG machines. Similarly, the functioning of the brain also runs on subtle supply of electric currents, and the flow of impulses in the wide network of nerves is also like the flow of electric in an electronic gadget having circuits and wires.

In brief, the ‘consciousness’ present inside the body is like the ‘electric’ present in the sky as the lightening. The presence of ‘fire’ in its most potent form in lightening is very evident when a lightening strike during severe storms can reduce to ashes anything in spite of the fact that it is heavily drenched and soaked in water and should normally escape being burnt by ordinary fires on earth.

²That is why the navel is said to be the symbolic subtle abode of the Sun God in the body in the form of the Nabhi Chakra or the Manipur Chakra, the whirling energy center located in the region of the navel. It is to be noted here that all the Naadis also have their center of origin in the region of the navel, in the Nabhi Kand—refer Yogchudamni Upanishad of Sam Veda tradition, verse nos. 13-17. These Naadis would then resemble the rays of the sun which have their origin in the latter and radiate out to all parts of the world. The sun as a metaphor of life and Brahm is depicted in the form of the solar system where all the planets revolve around the central hub called the sun, and their existence and place in the solar system is determined by the continued presence of the sun. This is the picture at the macro level, while the navel representing the sun and the cluster of Naadis supporting life in the body of an individual symbolising the sun’s rays would be the picture at the micro level. Just like the rays of the sun not only illuminate the world but also infuses life, energy and warmth in it, the Naadis carry consciousness to all corners of the body and makes the latter alive and active.]

33. The Sun appears to rain down the ‘fire of hell’ causing death and destruction (because of its scorching heat that reduces everything to cinders during hot summers and even causes wild forest fires). On the contrary, the moon rains down the soothing elixir of life in the form of its moonlight. This moon symbolically lives in the base (pit) of the throat and faces downwards to pour the nectar of life to soothe the creature. [When a man is very thirsty, he gulps down plain mucous to calm down his parched throat a bit. The Moon is the patron God of passions and love, and its manifestation is the semen which is cool and mucous-like. Sentiments and emotions are also controlled by the Moon God, and that is why when one becomes emotional and sentimental, mucous seems to well-up and choke the throat.] (33).

34. The Bindu, the symbolic center of divine wisdom and spiritual enlightenment situated in the center of the two eyebrows, is like pure crystal. It is said to be the subtle form of Lord Vishnu (34).

35. Those wise ones who remember the essential meaning of these symbolic five forms of the Fire called Panch-Agni are deemed to be contented as having eaten and drunk to their heart’s content and wanting nothing more. They are deemed to be happy and fulfilled as one feels when he has successfully done a great fire sacrifice. There is no doubt about it (35).

[Note—This is because these five fires represent the energy of Brahm in its entirety—the gross form as the fire of the earth and bones, the subtle form as the fire of the Atma and Electric, and the sublime form as the fire of enlightenment and wisdom represented by the Bindu in the center of the eyebrows. Besides this, they have also understood that sins create the fire of hell represented by the fire of the netherworld

and sun, while goodness creates bliss and peace represented by the elixir pouring out of the moon.]

36. The spiritual aspirant should prepare himself by resting and purifying (detoxifying) his body by first sleeping comfortably (i.e. having adequate sleep so that he feels refreshed and does not dose off or feel lethargic during practice of Yoga) and then eating moderately and easily digestible food (so that he does not either feel hungry or bloated and drowsy). Then he should sit in a comfortable Aasan (sitting posture of Yoga) (36).

37. He should clean his vital wind called the Pran Vayu (inhaled and exhaled winds) by diligently doing Pranayam involving the three steps of Purak (inhalation), Kumbhak (holding of breath inside the body) and Rechak (exhalation). [The entire process has been described in Canto 1.]

Then he should worship the hidden Shakti (subtle energy) present in the Mool (i.e. the Mooladhar Chakra) by pressing and constricting the anus, i.e. by practicing the Mool Bandh¹ (37).

[Note—¹This Mool Bandh is described in detail in the following Upanishads—Yogchudamani, verse nos. 46-47; Dhyan Bindu, verse nos. 73-76 (Chapter 15 of this volume); and this present Yogshikha, Canto 1, verse nos. 104-105.]

38. Next, he should practice the Uddiyan Bandh¹ in the region of the body between the navel and the genital. This helps the aspirant to lift his inner-self, i.e. his vital winds present inside the body from the lower half to the upper part where the Uddiyan Peeth is located (between the eyebrows) (38).

[Note—¹This Uddiyan Bandh is described in detail in the following Upanishads—Yogchudamani, verse nos. 48-49; Dhyan Bindu, verse nos. 73-76 (Chapter 15 of this volume); and this present Yogshikha, Canto 1, verse nos. 106-107.]

39. To constrict the throat is called Jalandhar Bandh¹. Next, one should practice the Khechari Mudra² with full concentration (39).

[Note—¹This Jalandhar Bandh is described in detail in the following Upanishads—Yogchudamani, verse nos. 50-51; Dhyan Bindu, verse nos. 77-78½; and this present Yogshikha, Canto 1, verse nos. 109-111.

²The Khechari Mudra has also been described in Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 117-122 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, and is Chapter no. 17 of this volume.]

40. In the Khechari Mudra, the tongue is inverted and pushed up the back of the upper palate into the base of the skull. The eyesight is fixed in the center of the eyebrows (40).

41. The practitioner of Khechari Mudra sits with his head bowed. Because of the stupendous powers and strengths obtained by doing this Yoga exercise, his Amrit Tattva (referring to the semen) becomes so strong and powerful that even if it is put in the fire it cannot be destroyed. The wind force¹ is also not able to sway him (41).

[Note—¹The wind is considered as one of the strongest forces in Nature as evidenced by the bevy of destruction caused by severe storms in their wake. In the case of the body, the wind force is represented by the ten vital winds present inside the creature's body. These winds together are responsible for functioning of the body in totality. The meaning of this verse is that the practitioner of Yoga who does the Khechari Mudra is able to control his own body to such an extent that no Natural forces or natural urges can overcome him.]

42. He does not have to suffer from excessive hunger, thirst, sleep and laziness. The practitioner of Khechari Mudra of Yoga has not to fear from death (because he would have had gained full control of his vital winds or Prans, and therefore can decide when the Pran would leave the body or whether they should leave it or not, thus effectively overcoming death because death occurs when the life giving vital wind called Pran leaves the body) (42).

43. Then the ascetic rises to establish himself in the Uddiyan Peeth (the center of the eyebrows—refer verse no. 11-12 above) and reaches the exalted and sublime state of existence which resembles the vastness of the open heaven-like sky. This state has no support and needs not one either. It is pure and corruption free. It is like having reached the divine abode of Lord Vishnu (i.e. it is the state of utmost enlightenment and wisdom because Vishnu is said to reside in the Bindu or a specific spot located in the center of the eyebrows—refer verse no. 34 above). And this state of existence is free of all faults, imperfections, shortcomings and blemishes associated with worldly existence (43).

44. Then one should meditate upon Lord Narayan who sits atop a divine lotus in the glorious realm of the moon, called the Chandra Mandal. From there the Lord showers his benevolence in the form of Amrit or the elixir of bliss and eternity (in the form of the moonlight) (44).

[Note—The moon's light is very soothing and has the opposite effect to that of the sun's light which is scorching—refer verse no. 33 above.]

45. The experience of the supreme transcendental Lord (Narayan, Vishnu) is sufficient to break up all the hardened knots of the mind and heart of the ascetic. [That is, he becomes malleable and softened to the core. This implies that he would abandon all his earlier arrogance and stubbornness, and become humble, pious and kind to the core.]

It can eliminate all dilemmas and confusions that mire his spirit. [This is because he has become wise, enlightened and self-realised.]

And it can destroy all the hoarded consequences of his past deeds and overcome their demoting effects that he would have been forced to suffer otherwise, and at the same time it prevents the accumulation of fresh deeds and their consequences. [This is because self-realisation and enlightenment entails that the ascetic must have become wise enough to realise that his true 'self' is the conscious sublime Atma which does not do any deeds, rather it yearns to break free from the fetters created by the gross body, and the only way to do this is to distance itself from whatever the body does. This way the Atma would be free from the deeds and the consequences of these deeds done by the body.] (45).

46. Oh Sureshwar (the chief amongst Gods, i.e. Brahma)! Now I (Shiva) shall describe the various Siddhis¹ (special spiritual powers) to you. These help the aspirant to obtain true comfort, happiness and joy. By having complete control over the sense organs, by remaining absolutely calm and serene under all circumstances and provocations, the spiritual aspirant is able to virtually conquer his Prans (i.e. he is able to exercise full control over all the functions of his own body, including the external and internal ones) (46).

[Note—¹The Siddhis mentioned here have been enumerated below in verse nos. 47-54 of this Canto 5. Refer to Yogtattva Upanishad, Chapter 17 of this volume, verse nos. 56-60, 73-75 in this context.]

47. [Verse nos. 47-57 revolve around the idea that one's rewards in life depend upon the ideals that he holds dear and close to his heart and which he adores and pursues as his goal in life. A man should be careful in selecting the deity to be worshipped because not only different deities give different rewards but they also reflect his ideals and goals of life. These deities are personifications of the different virtues and aspects of the supreme Divinity known as the Supreme Being or Brahm, but each has his limitations and field of influence unlike the principal power known as Brahm from whom they derive their authorities. When one worships a particular deity or God, his entire being is concentrated on the virtues that this deity stands for, and this has a profound psychological impact on the worshipper. These virtues leave an indelible mark on him, and he cannot escape their influence upon him. Refer Canto 3, verse no. 25 also in this context. For instance, a man working in a perfume factory would emanate the sweet aroma even long after he has left the premises and gone home much like a chain smoker whose body smells of tobacco even though he might not have smoked a stick of cigarette for a long time. This smell gets into his blood and corrupts his system.]

When an accomplished practitioner is able to focus his mind during Yoga and become completely engrossed in hearing the Naad (the cosmic sound heard during deep meditation and contemplation, the sound that reverberates through his entire being and vibrates through his nerves and veins), he is said to acquire the mystical powers to hear distant sounds not normally heard by the ears. [That is, he develops the power to hear about things that had occurred in the distant past, are happening in some distant place out of earshot in the present time, and would happen in the future. His brain is so trained because he would not have heard the Naad in the first place if it had not been sufficiently fine-tuned. He develops transcendental powers of perception and deep insight so much so that he can foresee things and happenings in advance, or can have the hindsight long enough to see them occurring long back in time. It also means he can hear voices of the Spirits in heaven, the words of Gods and the Mantras that remain eternally etched in the cosmic ether in the form of sound waves.]

Similarly, when he has focused his mind and concentrated his attention on the Bindu (the dot size spot on the forehead between the two eyebrows where the source of wisdom and enlightenment is said to be located), he is able to have a deep insight into everything. [That is, he develops a high degree of practical wisdom and intelligence that pertains to this material world along with the mystical powers and astounding ability to have an insight into the paranormal. These help him to acquire a sight that is beyond the normal sight of the eye, and have a transcendental, super-human power of vision.] (47).

48. When the Mana (mind) is submerged in the thoughts of the Kalatma (i.e. when he has developed the enlightened view-point that the same pure conscious Atma transcends all the three periods of time such as the past, the present and the future), a wise and enlightened spiritual aspirant is able to become 'Trikalagya'—i.e. he knows and sees everything in the three phases of time, the past, the present and the future. [That is, he transcends the borders of time and place, and becomes omniscient and all-knowing.]

Besides this, he acquires the astounding mystical ability of being able to enter the body and mind of others. [That is, he can know what others think by being able to read their minds, he can influence their temperament, thoughts and behaviours by controlling their mind along with controlling all their actions and deeds by controlling both their mind as well as their bodies. In other words, he can do things through the medium of the other person; whatever the other person does is actually being done by this specially empowered Yogi.] (48).

49. When his mind meditates about and experiences the presence of Amrit (the elixir of eternity and bliss) in the head, i.e. when the enlightened ascetic is able to experience the presence of the supreme transcendental source of eternal bliss and peace known as Brahm in the region of the Vyom Chakra and the Brahm Randhra Chakra by focusing the attention of his mind and the energy of his vital winds called Pran there, he is able to vanquish thirst and hunger (for worldly things, sensual pleasures and material comforts) along with overcoming the bad effects of all (spiritual) poisons¹. [That is, by becoming Brahm-realised and experiencing its attendant spiritual ecstasy and bliss, the ascetic has nothing more to desire and wants nothing in this material world. The enjoyments and comforts of this material world are transient, artificial and inconsequential as compared to this spiritual high of ecstasy and bliss experienced by Brahm-realisation. He is deemed to have overcome all spiritual hurdles by way of overcoming the numerous faults and imperfections that create uncountable obstacles in his spiritual progress and reaching of the ultimate goal of emancipation and salvation.]

When his mind is engrossed and focused in meditating upon the earth element² and contemplating about it, he acquires the mystical powers that allow him to take his mind to any corner of the earth, even in beyond it to the nether world called Patal. [That is, this mystical power empowers him to transcend all physical and geographical barriers that usually impede the reach of an ordinary man, and his mind can go anywhere without any hindrance. He can think of everything that exists on this earth, and his mind can even visualise what is hidden inside the bowls of the earth and beyond it. While living on one part of the earth, he can know what is happening on its other side. This also would imply that nothing in this world would ever influence his mind and captivate it by trapping it in its charm and preventing it from breaking free from its shackles and proceeding ahead.] (49).

[Note—¹Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 57-60, 62-64.

²Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 85-87.]

50. When his mind is engrossed and focused in meditating upon the water element¹ and contemplating about it, he has nothing to fear from this element. [That is, he need not fear from any harm being caused to him from water in any form, such as drowning in it or suffering from any water borne disease or some internal medical problems arising out of water such as oedema of lungs, dropsy of tissues and other diseases due to misbalance in the water content of the body.]

Similarly, when his mind is engrossed and focused in meditating upon the fire element² and contemplating about it, he has nothing to fear from this element. [That is, he cannot be burnt by fire; his body never has to suffer from lack of vital heat and energy; he never suffers from fever and other diseases due to misbalance in the fire element in Nature. Besides this, his speech acquires all the potent of this element because fire is said to be an integral part of the faculty of speech. He has proper eyesight because again the fire and its light are responsible for the faculty of sight to

function properly. He has not to suffer from lack of hunger or digestive problems because the fire is responsible for the proper functioning of both.] (50).

[Note—¹Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 88-90 ½ .

²Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos.90-94.]

51. When his mind is engrossed and focused in meditating upon the air or wind element¹ and contemplating about it, he is deemed to have acquired the ability to move in the sky like birds. [That is, he becomes so light that he can float in the air.]

By fixing his mind in the exalted sky element², which is a metaphoric way of saying that by becoming as exalted and sublime as the supreme Brahm himself who has an exalted abode as high as the sky, such a realised and acclaimed ascetic can acquire such mystical and eclectic powers as Anima etc.³ (51).

[Note—¹Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 95-97.

²Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 98-102.

³Anima is one of the eight mystical powers that are collectively called Siddhis.

They have been listed as a note to verse no. 44 of Canto 1 of this Upanishad.]

52. When a realised and enlightened ascetic's mind is engrossed and submerged in meditating upon the Viraat (i.e. the Viraat Purush) and contemplating about his stupendous divinity (i.e. when he is submerged in the thoughts of the Supreme Being in his vast, attributeless and invisible but all-pervading, all-encompassing and all-incorporating macrocosmic form as the Viraat Purush from whom the rest of the creation has come into being), the ascetic is able to acquire such great glories and divine virtues called 'Mahima' as the ones possessed by the Viraat himself¹.

Similarly, when his mind is engrossed and submerged in meditating upon the four-headed Brahma (i.e. the creator of the visible creation as well as the four Vedas) and contemplating about his great glories, he acquires the mystical powers to create the world if he so wishes² (52).

[Note--¹That is, he now transcends all the limitations of the physical world and even the paranormal world of the Spirits to reach the supreme exalted stature where he acquires such mystical powers as those possessed by Brahm when the latter revealed himself as the Viraat Purush. This Viraat Purush is much senior and more powerful than even the individual gods of the Trinity, i.e. Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva the concluder of creation, for the simple reason that all of them have been created by this Viraat to carry out specific jobs on his behalf. The powers of these three Gods are tailor-made to enable them to carry out their respective functions, but the Viraat has all the powers of these three Gods vested in him, because the Viraat is the supreme Authority who delegates these powers to these Gods in the first place, and anyone who does not possess any power cannot delegate it to someone else. According to the Vedantic view of creation, the Viraat is the macrocosmic gross body of Brahm in the subtlest and the most sublime form. Brahm first metamorphosed itself into the Hiranyagarbha, the subtle body of creation, and the latter evolved into the Viraat. The entire creation has come into being from the body of this Viraat. So the latter incorporates the entire creation in its form. In other words, the Viraat is the sum total of all the gross bodies of all the individual creatures in creation. By extension, the ascetic who has acquired the stature which makes him one like the Viraat becomes very near to Brahm and acquires the enviable exalted stature of being superior to even the Gods because this Viraat is superior to all the Gods put together. This fact is indirectly asserted in Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 105, 107-111.

²That is why Puranic lore has numerous tales of great sages who had the power to revive even the dead and create entire worlds if they so wished. An example is sage Vishwamitra who created a heaven for his patron king Trishanku. And another

instance is that of sage Bharadwaj who created an entire mini city complete with all royal comforts to entertain and test the sincerity of Bharat, the younger brother of Lord Ram, while he was on his way to bring back his older brother from exile in the forest. This episode appears in the epic Ramayana in its 2nd Canto called 'Ayodhya Kand'.]

53. When the ascetic fixes the attention of his Atma (his conscious self) on Indra, the king of Gods and a metaphor for sense gratification and indulgence in worldly material comforts and pleasures derived from the sense objects in this world, he obtains the greatest material comforts and pleasures that the world of sense objects can ever hope to provide anyone¹.

Similarly, if he fixes the attention of his Atma on Vishnu, the sustainer, care taker and protector of the world, he would acquire mystical powers to sustain, take care and protect the world. [That is, with this mystical power he can well look after his dependants and his subjects. He becomes a kingly figure because this is the basic function of any good king—to sustain, protect and look after the general welfare of his subjects.] (53).

[Note--¹This is because *Indra* is a metaphor for all things sensual and the natural tendency of the mind to remain engrossed in enjoying the material comforts and pleasures of the world with the sense organs. The word 'Indra' is derived from the word 'Indris' meaning the sense organs of the body. These sense organs have an inherent and natural inclination to be attracted towards the world and its material objects, and then derive comfort and pleasure from them. They would naturally swerve towards them and find a natural habitat in them. It is a Herculean task to pull them away from their natural habitat just like it is almost impossible to pull a man out of his own house and forcing him to disown it. So, if the ascetic remains engrossed in thinking about the material comforts of the world, he would strive whole-heartedly get them. This verse has a double meaning—on the one hand it is a sarcastic comment on those stupid ascetics who suffer great difficulties in first acquiring mystical powers and then frittering them away by using them to pursue and obtain such low-value and despicable objects as the material comforts of the world and personal glorification in spite of knowing that they are transient and perishable and would be demeaning for their soul, and on the other hand warning those who are newcomers in the spiritual field and are yet unaware of how to use the mystical powers once they are accessed by being successful in Yoga. The fruits of Yoga are emancipation and salvation for the soul, and not indulgences in the world and being captive of the sense organs need for constant and infinite gratification.]

54. When the ascetic thinks of Rudra (the angry form of Lord Shiva) while meditating and fixes his mind and attention on his virtues (which are fiery in nature and consume the world in the fire of anger), he is able to acquire such great fiery powers that would enable him to annihilate the world if he so wishes just like Lord Rudra himself.

Likewise, if he meditates upon Lord Narayan (Vishnu), he becomes one like him and acquires mystical powers possessed by the Lord. And if he meditates upon Lord Vasudeo (another name of Vishnu who is regarded as the Lord of the eight Vasus¹, the important entities created by the creator for the welfare of the creation when it came into existence in the beginning, such as material wealth without which life in this world would be difficult to sustain), he is able to acquire all the eight Siddhis² (i.e. he is able to acquire lordship over all these eight Vasus, and therefore over all the vital components of creation that help to sustain the creatures in this material world).

[In other words, an ascetic would acquire the virtues of the entity upon which he meditates. If his idol of adoration is something as horrible as anger, if his mind is always restless and agitated, if he is always full of jealousy and ill will towards others, if he is always thinking of violence, cruelty and spite, then he would acquire these lowly virtues because one becomes what one constantly thinks about. This is indicated by the word 'Rudra'. On the contrary, if he thinks and contemplates about nobler things and higher virtues of life such as the emancipation and salvation of the spirit, he would acquire those eclectic virtues as the ones personified by Lord Narayan. And if he is more concerned with the care, upkeep and general welfare of his dependants and subjects, he would be always thinking in the term of providing enough for their comfort and wellbeing so that they do not have to face dearth of any material necessities of life, and this is metaphorically depicted by saying that he would acquire the virtues of Vasudeo or would become as exalted and empowered as Vasudeo.] (54).

[Note—¹These *Vasus* are the various patron Gods who preside over the essentials of life; they are eight in number—Vishnu is the sustainer, Shiva who is the annihilator, Kuber who is the treasurer of the wealth of the Gods, the Sun, Water, Fire, Wealth represented by gems and gold, and 'Ray' representing glory and fame. The element 'Fire' is the most potent, prominent and essential force in creation, because without fire the world would freeze to death. Hence, the Fire-God is said to be the chief amongst the Vasus. The 'fire' element is the active force in creation and is primarily responsible for kindling the cosmic cauldron that set in motion the process, and once having set it in motion it then sustained it and would finally annihilate it by burning it to cinders. On the other hand, Lord Vishnu is the passive force of creation represented by his other form of Viraat Purush which is the primary male aspect of creation. Lord Vishnu, who is the sustainer of the creation, is the Lord of Laxmi who is the Goddess of wealth, and is the supreme creator because Brahma, the old patriarch of creation who created the visible world and its creatures, was himself born atop the divine lotus that emerged from the navel of Lord Vishnu. Lord Vishnu utilizes the services of Laxmi who is the personification of the active forces of creation to create, sustain and annihilate the world. The Vasus are symbolic Gods who represent those essentials aspects of creation without which life would be difficult to conceive and sustain and finally conclude.

The eight Vasus are the patron Gods who provide succour and a dwelling place for the whole creation. They symbolise those primary necessities of life without which existence is not possible. They are— (i) Kuber (the God of wealth and prosperity), (ii) the Sun God (who provides energy and food) and his rays and radiance (i.e. sunlight and the energy that it provides), (iii) Shiva (the concluder or annihilator of the creation), (iv) Vishnu (the sustainer), (v) the Water God (called Varun), (vi) the Fire God (called Agni), (vii) any body of water such as a pond, a river etc., and (viii) holy and pious people (who give advice and guidance to the creatures of the creation). According to Brihad Aranyak Upanishad 3/9/3, the Vasus are the following—Fire, Earth, Air, Antariksha (the space of the solar system), Aditya (Sun), Duloka (heavens), the Moon, and the Nakshatras (the stars and the planets).

According to Purans, the eight Vasus are the following-- Dhruv (ध्रुव), Dhar (धर), Som (सोम—the sap of an elixir-providing plant called Som which is used during religious ceremonies as sanctified liquid offered to the Gods), Aapha (आप—water), Anil (अनिल—wind), Anal (अनल—fire), Pratush (प्रत्यूष) and Prabhas (प्रभास).

These eight Vasus are the semi-Gods who symbolise the various types of assets needed to sustain this world. They therefore represent such assets as jewels, precious stones and gems, gold and other forms of wealth and property. Vasus also refers to the fire and water elements as well as their grosser forms as the terrestrial fire and water bodies such as ponds and lakes; to the virtue of radiance, splendour and glory;

to the ray of light; to Kuber (the treasurer of Gods), Shiva, Sun, Vishnu, and a simple and pious gentleman.

Lord Vishnu has one of his names as *Vasudeo* because he is the sustainer and protector of creation, signifying his undisputed lordship over all the essential elements in Nature, called the Vasus of which there are eight in number, created at the beginning of creation to help sustain the upcoming creation.

²The various Siddhis are enumerated in note of verse no. 44 of Canto 1, and in verse nos. 47-54 of the present Canto 5.]

55. An ascetic who is not only well-versed with the real meaning and intent of the various tenets of Yoga in their literal sense but is also an expert exponent of them in practice, being a personification of Yoga itself, who is self restraint and practices the various principles of Yoga in their entirety, is able to achieve fulfillment of all his wishes. Success in any endeavour depends upon one's sincerity of purpose, commitment and diligence, and this applies to Yoga as well (55).

56. The Guru (moral preceptor, teacher and guide who helps the spiritual aspirant to achieve his spiritual goal by showing him the correct path best suited for him and lending him a helping hand all the way through till the goal is achieved) is like Lords Brahma, Vishnu and Sada Shiva personified for the ascetic (and therefore is to be honoured and shown the same reverence). There is no one more exalted and important in the three worlds than one's Guru (56).

57. When the disciple worships and reveres his Guru, who is selfless and unconcerned with any material gains and who has the necessary erudition himself so that he can show light to others, as the one who gives him the divine gift of eclectic knowledge and who lights up the spiritual path for him, when he has devotion for such a Guru and treats him with the same reverence that he shows for the Parmeshwar (the supreme Lord God), he is blessed by the Guru who rewards him with the fruit of knowledge and wisdom. As a result, the disciple acquires the eclectic knowledge that the Guru possesses in a comprehensive and holistic way. [The Guru would be pleased by his devotion and sincerity and would not hide anything from him like a father who would not conceal anything from the son who serves him with great devotion and love. The Guru might even tell him certain secrets that he may not tell his other disciples out of love and affection for this particularly devoted and committed disciple. The result being that this sincere disciple gets his special attention which translates into his chances of learning the great secrets that largely remain unknown to his fellow students.] (57).

58. There is no difference between the Guru and the supreme Lord (Shiva); both are alike. In other words, while the Guru is as exalted and worthy of the same honour and reverence as one shows to the supreme Lord, the Lord himself is to be honoured like an exalted and honourable Guru because he shows the devotee the correct and proper path for his spiritual well being.

One should therefore honour, worship and serve one's Guru with full commitment, devotion and sincerity (58).

59. One should never treat the Guru at par with one's own self¹. On the contrary, one should certainly treat the Guru at par with the Supreme Being (59).

[Note—¹This is a very important observation especially in the context of the teaching of Upanishads that the same Atma lives in all living beings. The reason is that though

this is a fact, the other truth that the knowledge of the Guru is far superior to what one knows oneself is also equally important and should be kept in mind. The teachings of the scriptures are universal but they have to be understood in the proper context and correctly interpreted. For example, if the Atma is the same in all living beings, then would any man in his senses go and embrace a lion? The idea behind the universality of the Atma or soul is not as preposterous and ridiculous as embracing a lion because the animal also has an Atma—for if one pretends to be so enlightened as to treat a lion as one's dear and argue that one ought to go and embrace it to establish the truth of the tenets of the Upanishad that the same Atma lives in all the creatures, then why does he not think twice before killing innocent animals for fire sacrifices or to satisfy his hunger for meat, why does he treat someone as his friend and the other has his enemy, why is there so much strife and blood-letting in this world?

The idea of the universality and uniformity of the Atma, its quintessential and ubiquitous nature, is more subtle and sublime. The idea is to remove so much dichotomy, schism, discord and disharmony between men and communities in this world where strife and warfare, where blood spilling and hatred, where animosity, jealousy and ill-will are so rampant. Say, why should one treat one man as his brother while the other as his arch enemy if the Atma is the same in both? Instead of this, there ought to be universal brotherhood, compassion, love and grace all around.

The Guru has certain knowledge that the disciple does not have. And therefore he must be shown great respect for this simple reason that he is superior in knowledge than one's own self. Since knowledge is the greatest asset that one can ever hope to possess, the Guru is richer than one's own self, for money and other worldly riches can perish and be stolen by thieves but knowledge is an eternal and imperishable asset that would come in handy wherever one goes and would entitle him to respect and honour even in unknown countries. In fact it is this knowledge and wisdom that makes the Guru so revered and honourable. It is this knowledge and wisdom of the Guru that is worshipped and not his physical body or his Atma for the simple reason that the body is loathsome, perishable and gross, and the Atma is the same in all the creatures, including the disciple. But the degree of knowledge, erudition, wisdom and skills that the Guru possesses are unique to him and much superior to others.]

60. A person who has acquired the knowledge of this Yogshikha Upanishad is indeed very wise and enlightened. He has deemed to have acquired the best of knowledge worthy of acquisition in all the three worlds (i.e. in the terrestrial world, the nether world and the celestial world of heavens) (60).

61. An acclaimed Yogi (i.e. a self-realised, wise and practicing ascetic) remains immune to the good or bad effects of deeds and actions; he is not concerned with either the auspicious consequences or the inauspicious ones of what is happening around him.

He becomes free from the fear of being affected by such negative notions as sorrows and grief, of being rendered handicapped by physical or spiritual ailments and shortcomings, of being defeated and subdued by others, and of getting trapped in the endless cycle of taking a birth in this world and then dying (61).

62. But a true ascetic should not allow his mind to remain trapped in the enticing charms proffered by the various Siddhis which are the various mystical powers that come automatically as one progresses in Yoga and are a part of the whole exercise of Yoga but are not its aim and final spiritual objective¹.

The Mana (the thinking mind and the emotional heart combine) is naturally restless and inclined towards the material world and its sense objects which have a natural affinity for the sense organs of the body because they gratify the latter's desire

for pleasure and comfort. Therefore, the ascetic should not rely upon and expect that the Mana which is uncontrolled would ever help him in acquiring spiritual powers called the Siddhis².

But at the same time this Mana is a powerful tool in the hands of the ascetic if he is able to control it and focus its attention to nobler objectives such as to obtain access to the knowledge of the supreme transcendental Brahman and the eclectic essence of Divinity. This would pave the way for his Mukti—i.e. it would liberate him from the cycle of birth and death by enlightening him about his true 'self' which is pure consciousness and distinct from the body and the world in which he lives. This would deliver him from all worldly miseries and torments from which he had been suffering from time immemorial.

Besides this, enlightenment about the supreme power of the almighty and eternal Atma gives freedom from being bonded to inferiority complexes in this mortal world. This is tantamount to Mukti for the ascetic. There is no doubt about it (62).

[Note—¹The Yogtattva Upanishad is very explicit on this subject. In its verse nos. 21-22 and 76-79 it clearly prohibits the ascetic to avoid getting deluded by the charms of the mystical powers that come with success in Yoga and showing off his prowess because they might give him worldly glory but would be demoting for him vis-à-vis his spiritual progress. These Siddhis are like a double-edged knife—they can be a potent and powerful instrument for breaking free from the fetters that shackle the ascetic to this body and the world, thereby paving the way for his liberation and deliverance, or they can be like a knife that chops off the wings of a bird and grounding it for eternity if he allows them to sweep him off his feat by the worldly glory and fame and their attendant material benefits that these Siddhis bring in their wake.

These Siddhis are the special ability that the ascetic acquires due to Yoga, such as the ability to become small and huge, to go wherever he wants, to fly in the air, to hold his breath for prolonged times and remain alive even when buried underground, and so on and so forth. But all such skills would naturally give him worldly fame as people are naturally attracted by those who have super-human or super-natural powers. The reason is that all men are suffering from one cause or another and seek some ready-made divine intervention that would help them overcome their worldly miseries. This is one prime reason why they flock to pilgrim sites—to seek divine intercession of Gods to alleviate their sufferings. Rare are those who go to holy sites seeking Mukti or Moksha, meaning liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death, and salvation and emancipation of the soul respectively. Likewise rare are such people who read the scriptures for the purpose of acquiring true knowledge, for the majority do so for acquiring fame and wealth as renowned scholars who are much in demand and go around lecturing others while they themselves are neck-deep in the swamp from which they teach others to escape.

Similarly, Yoga is not to be used for worldly gains of acquiring fame and a big fellowship of disciples by being able to perform some magical feats based on the various Siddhis that come naturally with success in Yoga. It would be misuse of Yoga and a highly condemnable, deplorable, demeaning and despicable act much like one selling one's mother for some pecuniary gains, for Yoga is no less than a mother for the ascetic because it nourishes his soul and leads him by the hand towards his Moksha (spiritual liberation and deliverance) much like a mother who would always think for the betterment and a noble future for her child. Yoga is the ultimate potent and effective medicine for all spiritual ailments like surgery in medical science which ought to be used with prudence and wisdom as in the case of emergencies and life-threatening cases such as to remove a malignant cancerous tumour from the body or amputating a gangrenous limb, but surely not for artificial beautification of the gross body as is done in modern times when one undertakes cosmetic surgery to beautify

the body which is however perishable and certain to decay during old age and die one day.

²This is because if the Mana is left to its own devices, it would pull the ascetic towards this world instead of pulling him away from it. The use of the word 'Siddhi' here is in the context of success in spiritual progress towards obtaining Mukti, or liberation and deliverance for the soul from the cycle of birth and death, as has been made clear below. The real aim of Yoga is to establish a union between the individual creature and the supreme Lord, to harness all the scattered energy points in his own body and utilise their joint efforts not only for the spiritual upliftment of the practitioner but also to bring about an overall betterment of his physical health and life. This would give him a chance to lead a peaceful, healthy, constructive, productive and happy life as compared to a life which is led as a burden on the soul as well as the society. Contentment and satisfaction along with enhancement of energy and strength, not only at the physical plane of the body but also at the spiritual plane as well, are some of the natural benefits of Yoga. A life of contentment, happiness, peace and bliss is like obtaining liberation from the fetters of miseries and grief that seems to submerge everyone except a few realised souls in this world.]

Thus ends Canto 5

Canto 6

1. Brahma requested Shiva once again—'Oh Lord! Please enlighten me on the concept of Upaasana¹, for the knowledge of this eclectic path of spiritualism provides one with Mukti (liberation and deliverance; emancipation and salvation) from the entrapping world of delusions and artificiality' (1).

[Note--¹*Upaasana* and its Obstacles—(a) The word *Upaasana* covers the entire gamut of virtues that form the foundation of the process of worship of the Lord by the devotee. Upaasana therefore is defined as worship, adoration and paying homage to one's revered deity; to be devoted and fully committed to any ideal, especially in the field of spiritualism so much that the ideal is personified as a deity. It includes, inter alia, devotion, supplication, dedication, adoration, meditation upon the chosen deity, Yoga, recitation of holy Mantras, religious rituals, remembrance of the Lord, service to him as well as his devotees, selfless sacrifices, unadulterated love and sincere affection for the Lord et al—all these are the various forms of Upaasana of the Lord.

Besides this, philosophically speaking, the worship or adoration of the 'Truth' is also called Upaasana. This worship can be of a chosen deity or of the pure self. This worship embraces both meditation and contemplation because the worshipper physically and consciously focuses his attention unwaveringly on his object of worship, hence it is meditation, and thinks deeply about the ways to attain his object of worship, hence contemplation. The evolution of human psychology from the humdrum and mundane to higher plane of thought and discrimination is the aim of spirituality and the reward is divinity and self realisation. Therefore, spirituality is centered and established around the theme of Atma/soul which is the pure conscious Spirit residing in the creature.

Thus we see that the discriminating intellect has a major role to play in contemplation because it helps to guide the mind to wade through a sea of knowledge, select what it needs and separate the essence from the clutter, to discriminate between what is 'the real truth' and what is only 'the apparent truth'. It eggs the mind on to reach the final conclusion. Thus, whereas meditation is an important tool for a contemplative life, the latter is more intuition based; it relies heavily on the laboratory of the intellect more than the mind to achieve its purpose.

(b) Obstacles—There are certain postulations for success in doing Upaasana and they can be better understood if we know the things that created an obstacle in its success because then the practitioner would strive to avoid them and be on the guard from falling prey to them. So, let us have a brief glance at the obstacles in Upaasana. There are four chief types— (i) physiological obstacles such as hunger, thirst, sleep etc. They can be controlled by practice and self-restraint. (ii) The inherent tendency of the mind and the body to go towards pleasing objects and to resist control. This is called the Vasanas and Vrittis of the creature. Perseverance and persistence is needed here. Gentle prodding and cajoling of the mind and disciplining of the body are needed also. (iii) Our own mistakes such as carelessness, disorganised life, overdoing or indulgences in routine matters. The best way to overcome these is moderation. A gradual disciplining is needed here. (iv) Uncertainty and lack of proper guidance. Here the scriptures help.

The obstacles have been described by Patanjali in his ‘Yog Sutra’ as follows—(i) disease, mental laziness and lethargy, doubt, delusions and erroneous perceptions, lack of enthusiasm, attraction and attachment towards gratification of sense organs and their worldly objects, dithering and falling when the goal is almost at hand, grief, distresses of the body, irregular breathing and non-retention of concentration (Patanjali Yog Sutra, 2/31).

The four obstacles described by Acharya Gaupada in his celebrated Vedanta treatise called ‘Mandukya Karika’ are the following—(i) Laya (state of mental dullness, lack of concentration and even sleep). (ii) Vikshepa (restlessness of mind, agitations, doubts, confusions, uncertainties, perplexities, fickleness, restlessness and other negative traits that dog a creature and snatches away his peace of mind and demeanours). (iii) Kashaaya (entering of the mind into a stupefied state). (iv) Rasavada (the joy of meditation). The 1st obstacle ‘Laya’ can be removed by keeping the mind active and agile by proper and regulated life. The 2nd obstacle ‘Vikshepa’ can be dealt with by forcibly driving away the agitation-causing thoughts from the mind. The 3rd obstacle ‘Kashaaya’ is caused by intense attachment to the materialistic world and its objects. The remedy here is to draw the mind away from the world and consciously cultivate noble thoughts. The 4th obstacle ‘Rasavaada’ is a temporary feeling of joy by the seeker. He must stick to his path and not let this temporary joy to overcome his aim of permanence in joy.

According to Yoga doctrines, there are five hindrances—(i) Avidya (ignorance), (ii) Asmita (ego, pride and haughtiness), (iii) Raag (attachment, infatuation), (iv) Dwesha (aversion, malice, ill-will, jealousy envy) and (v) Abhinivesh (clinging to life).]

2. Lord Shiva replied—‘I shall narrate to you the elementary principles of the concept of Upaasana as expounded and enunciated in the Vedas. Learn about them in a holistic manner, and then you must conform to their essential tenets while you do Upaasana in order to be comprehensively successful in your spiritual endeavours (2).

3. First I bow and pay my respects to the glorious ‘Maha Shakti’, the great divine cosmic and spiritual powers possessed by the Consciousness and revealed in the stupendous powers and authority as depicted by the Mana (the mind which is the controller of all the activities of the body along with the perception of the world), the astounding potentials of the Sushumna Naadi (the chief duct through which the vital winds are diverted during meditation in order to make the ascetic experience the eclectic and dynamic presence of Brahm inside his own self, the duct where the Naad is heard, and the Naadi which acts as a pathway to Brahm-realisation), the Kundalini (the subtle coiled energy center located at the base of the spine which is activated

during meditation, thereby releasing its energy which helps the vital winds to gain sufficient momentum, power and force to rise up the Sushumna Naadi and reach the top of the head from where they can make exit from the body and provide liberation to the ascetic from the bondage of the body), and the Amrit (the ambrosia of eternal beatitude and felicity) symbolically stored in the Moon¹ which the ascetic drinks when he has become successful in his Upaasana (worship). [This refers to the sense of extreme ecstasy and bliss experienced when Yoga is successful.] (3).

[Note--¹The *moon* is said to be the celestial pitcher of Amrit, the elixir of eternity and bliss that is drunk by the Gods. In the human body, it is represented by the Eda Naadi passing through the left nostrils and which is used during Pranayam. (Refer Canto 1, verse 166.) It is also present as the crescent moon, the Ardha Chandrakar Chakra, which is said to be the shape of the water element of which the patron deity is Vishnu, the sustainer of creation, and located from the knee to the hip region. (Refer Canto 1, verse 176 and Canto 5, verse no. 13.).

In the context of Yoga, the moon is compared to the Bindu, literally the 'drop' signifying the sense of extreme bliss obtained at the culmination of Yoga much like the immense sense of contentedness felt at the culmination of the intercourse. This analogy is apt because the Moon God is also said to be the patron God of passions and love as is proved by the commonly observed fact that one becomes sentimental and emotional under moonlight as compared to the sunlight. In the context of the present Upanishad, the Bindu would be the point-source from where the ascetic hears the Naad reverberating in his inner self and providing him with an extreme sense of bliss by massaging his nerves.

4. [The concept of Naadi as the nerves that carry impulses of life and consciousness in the body have been elaborately described in Canto 5, verse nos. 17-27 of this Upanishad.]

There are one hundred one Naadis¹ in the region of the heart and radiate from here to various parts of the body. Amongst them, one goes up to the head. Since this Naadi is facing upwards, it helps one to obtain Amrit, the elixir of bliss and eternal life that automatically comes with attainment of wisdom and enlightenment as symbolised by the upwardly facing Naadi².

The rest of the Naadis spread out to the rest of the body (4).

[Note—¹The heart has basically two types of ducts—arteries and veins, the former taking blood away from the heart and the latter bringing blood from other parts of the body to the heart. Though the term 'Naadi' usually refers to the nerves, it can also mean these ducts that carry blood because the latter is also a metaphor for life and consciousness that pulsates in the body of a man. The nerves however keep the heart alive and beating by their electrical impulses; it is the nerve that makes one feel the pain in the heart during its seizure or when it is under severe strain. Thus, broadly speaking, the Naadis in relation to the heart would be the arteries and veins as well as the nerves that keep the heart beating and charged with its electric power to beat continuously, but in the present context of Yoga, the word Naadi would be the nerves that are clustered around the heart and radiate out in various directions giving the impression that they are originating from the heart.

²The mind and intellect is located in the head, while the Atma which is the pure consciousness of the creature is said to have its abode in the subtle space of the heart. So by saying that when this Naadi looks upwards one obtains access to Amrit, the eternal ambrosia of bliss and happiness, it is meant that one is able to finally taste the nectar of Brahm-realisation which drips from the honeycomb-like mind and intellect located high up in the head by setting a noble target of reaching for something as high and exalted as the acquisition of truthful eclectic knowledge about Brahm who himself has his symbolic abode in the top of the head in the mind-intellect complex,

by meditating and contemplating deeply upon this divine and eclectic entity (Brahm). The heart is dominated by emotions and sentiments; it is more impulse-driven than being rational and thoughtful in its approach to things. On the contrary, the mind-intellect is an intelligent and sober aide which is able to guide the man towards his real goal in life and correct path to be followed to reach it. This fact is metaphorically indicated in this verse by the Naadi which has its origin in the heart but looks up instead of down, for the latter would indicate that the man is more inclined to be attracted towards the lowly charms of this materialistic world and enjoy the pleasures and comforts proffered by them than to look upward and strive for higher goals of life such as acquisition of truthful knowledge of the reality marked by high degree of wisdom, erudition and enlightenment as well as the need for exemplary self-control over the body and its sense organs.]

5. [It would be noted that the major part of this Canto is dedicated to the spiritual significance and importance of the main Naadi called Sushumna which is also known as the Brahm Naadi, the Virjaa Naadi, and the Brahm Rupini.]

Out of the one hundred one Naadis, the best one is said to be Sushumna. This Naadi has a special quality that it can lead to Brahm-realisation and self-realisation; hence it is called by the name of Virjaa Naadi¹. Since it leads one to submerge ones self in the bliss and ecstasy of Brahm-realisation, it is symbolically called 'Brahm-Rupini'—the one who has the form and face of Brahm (5).

[Note—¹The word *Virjaa* literally means the one which is unpolluted and pure, an epithet for the exalted Lord Vishnu, the eternal sustainer, nourisher and protector of creation and the form of Brahm also known as Viraat Purush who is eternally free from all worldly taints, impurities and blemishes. This Naadi is like a holy river that has a unpolluted origin in some high mountain and miraculously remains free from pollution inspite of all the pollutants being poured into its waters as it meanders its way down the plains before merging and losing its identity in the ocean which is ultimately the source of all water on this earth. The one example which can be aptly cited here is the holy river Ganges that originates in the lofty and pollution-free Himalayan mountains, flows through the land and then merges into the ocean in the Bay of Bengal, remaining pure and holy and a provider of Moksha, or spiritual salvation to those who take a bath in its holy waters inspite of the fact that all sorts of city and factory pollutants are being constantly poured into its waters during its long and meandering journey through the broad plains of India. The water of this river is so mystically pure and considered holy that it can be preserved for long periods of time without it getting ruined or becoming unpalatable.

In the present case, the Sushumna Naadi is the duct through which the vital winds called Pran are made to travel up during meditation by expert ascetics which gives them the thrill and ecstasy of self and Brahm realisation, and it is also the path taken by the Pran when the ascetic finally decides to shed his mortal coil and obtain his Moksha or final liberation and deliverance. This Naadi leads straight to the top of the head where the ascetic experiences the bliss and ecstasy of Brahm-realisation. When the Pran finally decides to make its exit, it does so through the Brahm Randhra at the top of the head. Since the flow of Pran through this Sushumna Naadi leads to one's spiritual salvation and emancipation it is called the most exalted of the numerous Naadis and the one that leads the spiritual aspirant directly to Brahm-realisation.]

6. The Ida Naadi goes along its left and the Pingla Naadi is to the right. They kind of escort the Sushumna Naadi by moving along its flanks. The one at the center, i.e. the one who is being escorted is obviously senior to the one who escorts. That is why this Sushumna is considered senior to these two other Naadis (6).

7. Practice should be made to control the movement of the Pran Vayu in the region of the navel where it flows continuously. [That is, one should practice to control the flow of breath by restricting the regular movement of the muscles in the abdomen around the navel. These muscles contract and expand incessantly and in a rhythmic manner to enable the body to inhale and exhale breath by their regular pumping action. When their movement is controlled voluntarily by Yoga exercises, the Pran Vayu is deemed to be controlled because its flow inside the body can be proportionately controlled.] (7).

8. Arising from the rear of the anus is the vertebral column called the 'Veena Danda' (because it literally resembles the long arm of the Indian lute). It supports the body and bears its weight. The Brahm Naadi¹, i.e. the Sushumna Naadi, passes through this bone structure (8).

[Note—¹The Sushumna Naadi is called *Brahm Naadi* for the simple and logical reason that it is responsible for all consciousness or the dynamic living forces of Brahm pulsating inside the creature's body to move through it, as well as the fact that it is conducive to one attaining the exalted state of Brahm-realisation. Each single stimulus originating from the remotest corner of the body travel through the network of nerves and ganglions to the brain through this grand highway of the spinal cord, and all instructions of the brain are passed on to all parts of the body back through this channel. If the spinal cord is damaged or cut at any place, the body is paralysed. Since 'consciousness and life' are synonyms of Brahm, this duct is called 'Brahm Naadi'. According to human anatomy, the spinal cord gives rise to a cluster of 31 pairs of nerves called the 'spinal nerves' which branch out to all parts of the body. The Sushumna Naadi refers to the main nerve in this cluster, and it is the central core of the spinal cord around which all other nerves are grouped. It connects the brain to all parts of the body. The vertebral column protects these Naadis which collectively form the 'central nervous system'.

Yoga Upanishads are focused on different means of activating this Sushumna Naadi and describe in detail how the various Prans or life factors are controlled and diverted by an expert ascetic to enable him to achieve success in this endeavour. This single Naadi is regarded as the most important amongst hundred of such nerves and veins in the body as it is the one which leads straight up to the brain from the base of the body. It is the grand highway through which all senses and impulses flow in the body, and it is the single most important nerve the malfunction of which can disrupt life of any individual. If any other nerve or vein malfunctions, the damage would be localized, but the malfunctioning of the Sushumna Naadi can derail the entire train.

Since the Sushumna Naadi is responsible for helping one to obtain the spiritually exalted state of self-realisation as preached by Yoga, which is another way of saying that the person has understood his true nature and form as the pure conscious Atma which in turn is nothing but a microcosmic form of the supreme cosmic Consciousness called Brahm, it is said that it is the only avenue leading to Brahm, or the Naadi on which one can travel to find the abode of Brahm, just like we say that a certain Mr. A resides on a particular road and his house can be reached only by traveling up or down it, and not by traveling on any other road. All other roads can help him reach that particular road, and there may be umpteen numbers of such avenues, but the ultimate destination where Mr. A is to be found is on this specific road where his dwelling is located. We often find that roads are named after some great personality living along it or who is closely associated with the neighbourhood. In this case this 'great personality' is Brahm, and hence the Naadi which leads one to this exalted Being is named after him as the 'Brahm Naadi'.

Usually an emperor or king lives at the end of a road which is named after him, and equally usually an emperor's palace is built on a high artificially elevated ground

or a ground that is naturally high such as large mound, hill-top or hillock—which is like a high citadel or a capitol hill because it is the seat of power and authority. In the present case, this high ground is the ‘head’ of the creature’s body and it is here that the Brahm lives. This region of the body governs the rest of it, and it is here that the mind and intellect with their stupendous abilities and astonishing controlling authority and powers is located. Hence, it is the seat of Brahm; it is the site of all wisdom, erudition, sagacity, enlightenment, skills and knowledge. All other parts of the body are like the various districts of the vast realm of the empire, and each patron God who controls a particular part of the body is like a junior king who has to dependent upon the will, mercy and grace of the emperor to remain in power and exercise his authority under his jurisdiction.

Verse no. 10 describes this Sushumna Naadi as the abode of the Parmeshwar, the supreme Lord who is none but Brahm, also giving credence to the reasoning given above of why this Naadi is called ‘Brahm Naadi’.]

9. Passing through the center of the vertebral column, this Brahm Naadi is thin and filament like. Through the hole of this vertebral column passes the Ida and Pingla Naadis, and in their center is the Sushumna Naadi which is radiant like the sun (9).

[Note—Like the celestial sun that shines in the sky surrounded by the moon and other planets and stars, the Sushumna Naadi is surrounded by other Naadis and is central to their existence. All other Naadis owe their life and importance to this central Sushumna Naadi because it connects directly to the brain and therefore is central to all impulses and consciousness that pulsates in the different nerves and other tissues of the body; should this all-important Naadi fail to function, the body would be generally paralyzed and become as good as being dead. Its importance is emphasised by comparing it with the sun because the latter is central to the existence of the entire solar system. In terms of Yoga and metaphysics, the Sushumna Naadi is the one which helps the aspirant to attain the eclectic state of self and Brahm realisation; it is through it that the Pran winds are directed in the upward direction which is a metaphoric way of saying that the Spirit is lifted from a low level of existence to a high level.]

10. This Sushumna Naadi represents the entire living world. It is metaphorically all-pervading and ubiquitous (for the simple reason that it is the channel through which all consciousness flows in the body, and without conscious life flowing through the nerves in the body of the man, the world would be meaningless and burden-like for him; a man living a paralysed life would prefer to die than to live like a vegetable and be a tiresome and irksome burden on his kith and kin).

This fact is symbolically stressed by saying that the supreme transcendental Lord called Parmeshwar, who is surrounded by all the glorious elements of creation such as the brilliant and dazzling sun, the luminous moon and the splendorous fire, is established in this Naadi, or he has his abode in this Naadi (10).

11. It is in this Sushumna Naadi that the entire conscious world consisting of all the living beings, all the directions of the earth, all the oceans, the mountains, the hills and the boulders, the islands, the continents and the rivers, all forms of knowledge encrypted in letters and words formed by them and revealed in the form of the Vedas and other scriptures of all denominations, all the qualities and virtues that are exhibited by conscious life (living creatures), and all that is mortal or immortal in existence are established. [This is because only as long as one has consciousness and life in the body that anything in this world would matter to him. For a dead body which has no consciousness and life flowing in its Sushumna Naadi, nothing matters.

Life and consciousness are synonymous with Brahm, and as long as Brahm is present inside the body the latter is able to have any interest in the world. Since the Sushumna Naadi controls the central nervous system linking the brain to all other parts of the body and through it to the outside world, a slightest disturbance in its operations is catastrophic for the creature's existential life; the world would become dark and lifeless for all practical purposes then. A paralyzed man has no interest in the colour of the flower or how jovial or gloomy the world is; his own world has ceased to exist and the rest does not bother him in the least. This fact is metaphorically emphasised once Brahm leaves the body, nothing would matter for the body or the creature. The word 'Jiva' or a creature itself is indicative of this fact—for it literally means 'one who is alive'. A creature who is not Brahm realised is, for all practical purposes, not a 'true Jiva', i.e. he is as good as dead. Though all other Naadis might work normally in such a Jiva, he is deemed to be 'spiritually dead', and as such he is as good as tree or an animal who are living in the technical meaning of the term but have no scope of spiritual salvation and emancipation.] (11).

12. All the forms of sound and speech, all the Mantras (mystical formulas based on letters and words chanted or hummed as prayer in religious exercises), all the Purans (ancient mythological histories), all the Gunas (the Sata—the auspicious qualities, the Raja—the mediocre qualities, and Tama—the lowly and mean qualities), all the seeds (causes), the Atma (the individual creature's consciousness) and the Pran Vayu (vital winds that keep the creature alive)—verily they are established in this Sushumna Naadi. [As explained in above verses, everything in existence has any real relevance for the creature only as long as there is consciousness flowing through the spinal cord. A dead body would not need either the Vedas or the Atma! They are of any importance and relevance only to a living man, and become inconsequential and redundant if the central nervous system collapses.] (12).

13. In fact, the entire world is centered on the Sushumna Naadi. The inner being and core factors of life revolve around this Naadi. It is the essential factor that keeps a creature alive and conscious. [If this Naadi becomes dysfunctional for any reason, the living being would stop being called a 'living being' for it would be nothing but a walking corpse as it were.] Many other Naadis have their origin in it¹ (13).

[Note--¹That is, all other functional nerves that relate to various activities of the body, right from the basic functions of life which are carried out by the external gross organs of perception of the body such as seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, feeling etc. to those functions that are carried on by the inner organs such as digestion, assimilation, excretion, circulation, reproduction etc. and extending up to the subtlest functions as thinking, understanding, analyzing and deciding on any matter, carry on their respective functions in a coordinated way and help to operate the complex structure of the body because of the proper functioning of this single Sushumna Naadi. Otherwise their functioning or not functioning would be irrelevant for the man who has lost consciousness in his Sushumna Naadi as he would be unconscious of everything and anything around him; he would not be interested in anything whatsoever. For example, a paralysed man whose brain has stopped functioning is not able to have any attraction for the delicious sweets of he was so fond a few days back, and neither would he be attracted by the soothing sound of his favourite song. This fact is symbolically stressed by saying that all other Naadis have their origin in the Sushumna Naadi. This fact is established in the human anatomy which says that the spinal cord has 31 pairs of nerve—called the spinal nerves—branching out from it to different parts of the body, and that it connect the brain to the remotest corners of the body through a network of nerves centered around the central nervous system.

Therefore, this Sushumna Naadi plays a pivotal role in the 'conscious life' of a man.
Refer verse no. 22 also.]

14. The point in the body from where all the Naadis derive their powers is at a level higher in the body, and all their branches spread out from there to the lower parts of the body to control them. [This is a clear reference to the *brain* located in the head and which controls all the functions of the body by sending relevant instructions to the concerned organs and tissues through the path or medium of the Naadis by way of electrical impulses much like modern day data cables or optical fibers that carry messages and data across the globe. Just like all commands and control systems have a central unit or 'server' which monitors and controls the entire setup, all the nerves are said to originate in the brain in the sense that it is their control and command centre and it is from here that their fork out to distant corners of the realm of the body of the creature to carry the message of the brain to them, thereby forming a dense network throughout the body much like the network of arteries, veins and capillaries that help in circulation of blood but are deemed to have their origin in the heart because, as far as they are concerned, the heart is their control and command centre; it is the heart that pumps blood in them. Likewise, it is the brain that sends electrical signals in the form of consciousness and life to all corners of the body, and also receives the sensory perceptions pertaining to the external world through the same network in the form of electric signals. It is the brain that controls all the vital functions of life in the body, and makes the body relevant to the world and vice versa.]

There are said to be seventy two thousand Naadis in the body, and they spread out in the subtle space filled by the subtle wind in the body. [The difference between the Naadis that carry life impulses to and from the brain and the ones that carry blood to and from the heart is that the former carry stimuli in the form of subtle electric currents flowing through them unlike the ones going to the heart which carry more gross forms of life in the form of physical blood. This fact is depicted here by saying that the Naadis having their origin in the center which is at a higher level of the body move through the subtle space and air.] (14).

[Note—It is important to note that earlier it has been said that all the Naadis have their origin in the knot of nerves located in the region of the navel and the groins, in the region of the Mooladhar Chakra and the Nabhi or Mool Kand, and then branch out from here to various parts of the body—refer verse nos. 16-27 of Canto 5. On the face of it there appears to be contradiction between what is said in this present verse no. 14 and these verses, but on close examination we see what they mean. These Naadis get their electrical charge or battery-recharging in the lower region of the body in the abdominal area where the Kundalini and the Mooladhar Chakra as well as the Manipur Chakra are located. The rhythmic movement of the muscles of the abdomen can be likened to the continuous pumping of air into the furnace of the ironsmith by a similar movement of his bellows which keeps the furnace 'charged'. If this pumping stops, the fire in the furnace would gradually die out; it would be 'discharged'. But the area of the body from where the Naadis get their command and to where they report is high up in the brain. The term 'origin' is not to be taken too literally and the hidden meaning is to be deciphered to understand the proper implication of these verses. The brain is the 'origin' of all commands that the Naadis carry to different parts of the body and keep the latter functioning normally, and if the brain is dead then no matter whether the Naadis are kept alive or energized by the Mooladhar Chakra from where they have had their physical origin, the Manipur Chakra from where they get electrically charged by the abdominal pulsations, and the

Kundalini which keeps the fire alive and burning robustly so as to provide the necessary impetus for success in Yoga, they would be of no use for the living being.]

15. All the accesses to the Kundalini (the coiled energy center at the base of the spinal cord) are blocked by these Naadis lying at all possible odd angles to give effect to this blockade (15).

16. If one acquires the knowledge and necessary skills to straighten out the Sushumna Naadi by untangling and jerking it into activity with the help of the Pran Vayu (the vital wind in the body), he can obtain Moksha (or get liberation and deliverance from remaining trapped in this body).

This is achieved by restricting the vital wind (i.e. the Apaana wind) by constricting and pressing the anus¹. This helps one to separate this Sushumna Naadi from the clutch of other Naadis (because this heated wind would then sneak into its bore and wiggle it subtly to soften it up, lose its rigidity and make become more flexible; this helps the Sushumna Naadi to get disentangled from the clutch of other Naadis clinging to it; it also helps to rejuvenate it and literally wake it up from its hibernating state of dormancy) (16).

[Note—¹This process is called the 'Mool Bandh' and it is described in detail in Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse nos. 46-47 of Sam Veda tradition, in Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 42, Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 117-122, and Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 103-105 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

17. The breath should be held inside the body (when the anus is being pressed to activate the Apaana wind) by first inhaling it through the nostril that is said to be the passage of the 'Chandra Swar', i.e. the left nostril through which the Ida Naadi passes. [This helps to build up sufficient pressure inside the abdomen, help in concentration and diverting all available energy of the body to give effect to the attempt of diverting the lower wind, the Apaana wind, to activate the Sushumna by entering it.]

The seventy two thousand Naadis form a cage around the Sushumna Naadi (17).

18. The Sushumna Naadi personifies the divine glorious dynamic energy of Shiva, called 'Shakti'. All other Naadis are mere its attendants; they are inconsequential as compared to this Naadi.

The exhilaration-providing nerve, or the nerve which helps to produce the feeling of extreme ecstasy and when it is massaged by the vibrations of Naad resonating in it, is located in the real of the mouth where the tongue has its base¹. [The area of the body where this happens is the 'Kantha Chakra' or the throat Chakra.] (18).

[Note—¹This is why when one has a sense of titillation and extreme sudden cause of excitement such as when there is great merriment, or when some extremely exciting or good news is heard, or something suddenly tickles one's sides or the sole of his foot, a peculiar exclamatory shill cry or a giggling or chuckling sound involuntarily emanates from the throat. In the present context the implication is that at the instant when the Sushumna Naadi is activated, a peculiar sense of titillation and ecstasy follows which results in an involuntary exclamation of exhilaration blurring out from the practitioner's throat which would resemble the merry bleating of a sheep, or the chuckling of a joyous monkey, or the giggle of excited children heard when they are extremely overjoyed and happy.]

19. In order to activate and control the Naadis (nerves) situated above this place (the throat as described in verse 18), one should subtly hum the relevant Mantra and invoke the supreme Shakti (Brahm) that is located in the region called the Brahm Randhra (which is located on the top of the head around the cranium). [That is, once the practitioner has successfully eased the Pran Vayu in the Sushumna Naadi and then has witnessed the extreme titillation produced by it, resulting in his involuntarily chuckling and sighing in ecstasy, he should then hum the Mantra dedicated to Brahm, and it is the divine Mantra 'OM'. Repeating this OM very softly and in a prolonged manner produces a sound in the head which resembles the buzzing or humming of the bumble bee. This sound acts as a massage for the nerves of the brain and titillates them further.]

As soon the sensation of a bumble bee flying around, humming and buzzing around the head is felt, the practitioner should focus his attention on it and abandon the idea or thoughts of getting back to the humdrum life in this mundane world. In other words, he should prefer to remain lost in the state of Samadhi (which is a trance-like state) attained by this eclectic and divine feeling of ecstasy obtained by doing meditation (19).

20. He should contemplate thus—'I bow reverentially to the supreme transcendental Soul which resides in the bosom of all the living creatures, who continuously arrive and depart from this mortal world in an endless cycle of birth and death, in the form of a 'Hans'¹, literally a divine Swan but used as a metaphor for the pure consciousness that forms the Atma or the true self of all living beings. This Atma which is as pure as the Swan is distinct from the creature because it remains steady and constant, without arriving or departing from anywhere.

This Hans does not get involved in worldly activities and it is the illuminator of the mind-intellect complex, thereby being the destroyer of the darkness caused by ignorance and its attendant delusions. [That is, the pure consciousness provides the mind-intellect complex with the necessary wherewithal to gain enlightenment, erudition and wisdom. If the creature allows the mind-intellect complex to work under the overall guidance and control of its consciousness, it would be self-illuminated in the sense that it would be driven by conscience and be enlightened and wise, but if it allows the mind-intellect to be influenced by the enchanting inputs gathered by the sense organs from the external world of sense objects which are notorious for their deluding effects and the alluring bait of sensual pleasures and material comforts that they throw to trap the creature in their snare, the creature would be engulfed in a horrifying veil of darkness symbolising ignorance and delusions.]' (20).

[Note—¹The *Swan* is used in the Upanishads as a metaphor for the pure self of the creature. In Yoga Upanishads it is said that the heart is shaped like a swan to indicate its inherent purity. The Hanso-panishad which is the fourth Upanishad of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition describes the metaphysical importance and spiritual significance of this metaphoric Swan. The great Mantra 'So-a-ham' ('that is me') also has its origin in the word Hans. Refer Canto 1, verse nos. 131-132, Canto 2, verse nos. 9-11 of the present Yogshikha Upanishad.

The enlightened and realised person thinks of himself as a Swan and feels exhilarated that he is not an ordinary man bogged down by worldly fetters, but an exalted soul that is like a Swan.

The bird Swan or Hans is considered the most pure, clean, wise, erudite and clever among the birds. It is said to eat pearls, which means it picks up and accepts only the best amid the variety of things available to it in the form of an assortment of

various gems and jewels representing the dazzling charms of this world. It is also reputed to drink milk leaving aside the water content in it symbolising its ability to imbibe the essence and the best, and leave the rest aside. It is also the vehicle of Goddess Saraswati, the patron Goddess of knowledge, wisdom, intelligence, speech and learning, indicating that it bears these glorious virtues. Hence, the reference to a swan while describing a creature conscious of the vital wind or Pran passing through him means the basic, inherent and intrinsic tendency of that wisened and intelligent creature is to be the best, most pure and divine, wise, awakened and enlightened, adroit, clever and sagacious like the swan, and pick all the goodness and forsake all that is bad in this world. Saraswati rides on a swan, symbolising the creature's inborn enlightenment and excellence of his mental caliber. Symbolically, Saraswati resides in his Pran because it rides on the swan, i.e. in his heart, throat and mind—that is, his heart has purity of emotions, he speaks well of all, and his wise words are sought after by all as priceless gems of wisdom, and his mind is intelligent, discerning and noble. A wise man is expected to pick the truth from amongst the basket of assorted charms present in this creation, and leave aside the non-truths.

The alphabet 'Ha' of the word 'Hans' is sounded by the vibration of the exhaled wind passing through the vocal cords present in the throat or the wind pipe which connects to the nose, while the alphabet 'Sa' is sounded by the root of the tongue which opens into the mouth when the breath is inhaled. Both the nose and the mouth open in the same cavity called the throat. Hence, the inter relationship between 'Ha' and 'Sa' is evident. The main objective of this Upanishad is to make the Yogi (a person who follows its tenets of meditation) aware that he is like the divine swan, but he was unaware of his own divinity and sublimity, his exalted and noble stature, till that was pointed out to him. So he must become one like a 'swan', remind himself constantly that he is like a swan, and he must not do anything or act in anyway which is not befitting his exalted and superior status which is equivalent to a wise swan. During the twenty-four hour period covering a single day and night, a person inhales and exhales, or breathes, roughly twenty-one thousand times, because each cycle of inhalation and exhalation is equivalent to saying one Mantra 'Hans' consisting of the two syllables 'Ha and Sa' (refer Dhyānbindu Upanishad, verse no. 63).

The Dhyān Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 24 and 62-63, of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition which primarily deals with meditation and contemplation on Brahm in order to obtain emancipation and salvation of the soul of the creature says that the supreme transcendental Brahm, known also as Pranav, resides in the heart of all the living beings in the form of a Hansa. The main objective of this Upanishad is to make the Yogi (a person who follows its tenets of meditation) aware that he is like the divine swan, but he was unaware of his divinity and sublimity, his exalted stature, till that was pointed out to him in this verse. So he must become one like a 'swan', remind himself constantly that he is like a swan, and he must do not do anything or act in anyway which is not befitting his exalted and superior status which is equivalent to a wise swan.

The Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 82-83 of Sam Veda tradition describes this Swan in the context of Yoga. Let us see what it has to say in this context—

“Verse 82--The 'Hansa' resides gloriously and majestically in the center of the two eyes of a creature during the waking state of consciousness. The letter 'Sa' of the Hindi/Sanskrit alphabet represents the 'Khechari Mudra' of the Yogi which is certainly the personification or the image of the word 'Twam' (82).

Verse 83--The letter 'Ha' represents the supreme Lord of creation, called 'Parmeshwar' which is certainly symbolised or represented by the word 'Tat'. [That is, the two syllables of the word 'Hansa', meaning the divine swan, are 'Han' and 'Sa' which stand for the two words of metaphysics which have profound impact—the 2nd word is 'Twam' and the 1st is 'Tat' corresponding to these two syllables respectively.] Any person who concentrates his mind and attention, and contemplates

and meditates upon the letter 'Sa' shall surely become akin to, or equivalent to the form or the image represented by the letter 'Ha'. This is called contemplating upon and practicing of the twin tenets of 'So-a-ham' and 'Tattwa-masi' (83) [82-83].

The Upanishadic sage establishes uniformity and oneness with the two great philosophies and metaphysical concepts of the scriptures — 'So-a-ham' which means 'that is me', and 'Tattwa-masi' which means 'the essence is pure consciousness and it is me'. The word 'that' refers to Brahma which is the universal and absolute Truth and Reality about the existence, and has the qualities, inter alia, of enlightenment, of being eternal, omnipotent, universal, omnipresent, immanent, omniscient etc. When the seeker/aspirant focuses his attention on the self represented by the letter 'Sa' (self) and the 'Khechari Mudra' (when he is unconscious of the external world and focuses his attention on the glorious supreme entity present in the center of his eyebrows), he realises the truth of the maxim 'So-a-ham'. When he opens his eyes of wisdom, the truth of the 2nd tenet 'Tattwa-masi' dawns on him. Put simply, it means that the creature realises that 'he is the same as the supreme Brahma who resides in his Atma/soul present in his bosom/heart'. At the same time, 'the external world seen through this eye of wisdom symbolised by the presence of the divine swan in his eyes is the same Brahma who has revealed himself in this multifarious, diverse and myriad world'. This is the essential truth, or 'Tattwa'.]

21. The cosmic sound called Naad which is heard in the head during the practice of Yoga (which resembles the humming of the bumble bee as described in verse no. 19 above) is distinct from all other worldly sounds. This is because the Naad is heard even without speaking or uttering any word and it is also not the sound heard when one sings or a musical instrument is being played. That is why it is called 'Anahat', or the sound produced without any friction or one entity being rubbed against another or hitting another to produce it. In other words, it is 'self produced'. [Obviously there is no beating of anything or friction between anything in the cosmic bowl where the primary sound of Naad was produced. It is simply 'self produced'.]

In the core or the central point of this cosmic Naad is the entity that is self-illuminated, and hence called 'Joyti' which means 'light'. This subtly visible Joyti has an invisible subtle component called its Mana (mind-intellect complex). When this Mana is dissolved (eliminated or decimated) into nothingness, it is said to be transformed into the supreme abode of Lord Vishnu (21).

[Note—The cosmic Naad is the invisible and attributeless body of Brahm. The situation can be compared to an oil lantern which burns with a soft hissing sound. When one come in the vicinity of this lantern, one would hear this hiss which makes him aware that something is burning nearby. Then one sees the light and realises that the sound is emanating from it. The light is the visible aspect and the hissing sound is the invisible sign indicating the presence of the lamp. The wick of the lantern is the Mana which makes it possible for both the light and the sound to come into being, because had there been no wick in the lantern the very existence of both would not have been possible in the first place. And finally the oil in the lantern is the central cause by which the lantern gets its light or the ability to light the world around it, and therefore it is like the hidden and subtle Lord Vishnu who is at the core but behind the curtain in the whole game plan of this creation. When the lantern's wick is cut off from the tip, the light and sound would automatically be cut out, but as long as there is oil in it, it can always be lighted again by raising the wick.

In the context of this manifested world, the Pran, the vital wind force of life which is a metaphor for life itself, is the Naad because any sound requires the

medium of air to travel in waves. All forms of life are characterised by being constantly on the motion like the waves of sound, and sound itself is also a symbol of life inasmuch that where there is no sound at all we say that there is the 'silence of death'. The visible world is the 'revealed' or 'lighted' aspect of Brahm; the world is actually a manifestation of the invisible and attributeless Brahm in its gross and visible form having attributes. The world is the 'lighted' aspect of Brahm because it is the light emanating from the self-illuminated Brahm or consciousness that lights up the world for the creature, for had there been no consciousness everything would be submerged in pitch darkness just like the period that immediately follows after doomsday. This light and consciousness not only illuminates the world but also indirectly illuminates Brahm just like the light of the sun which lights up the world, gives it its life, energy and vitality and also tells us about the presence of the sun in the sky. Another example is the glow-worm which also is self-illuminated and its presence is known by its own light. Therefore, the enlightened view of the world is one in which the latter is seen in the glory and majesty of the Brahm.

The world can also be compared to the moon because the world is visible as a reflection of the majestic glory of Brahm just like the case of the moon which shines by the reflected light of the sun. Further, since the world is the creation of the Mana (mind of the creature) and the Moon God is the patron God of the Mana, this analogy seems apt. The world exists because of the Mana, i.e. it is the mind that enlightens the Atma which is the creature's true 'self' that such and such world exists. If the Mana is shut off as is done during meditation, the world would cease to exist. When this happens, what remains? It is the pure 'self' or the pure consciousness that remains after the entire external drama is shut off from view. This Atma is Brahm personified, and Brahm and Vishnu are synonyms because the latter is another name for the Viraat Purush which is the macrocosmic gross body of Brahm that is invisible, attributeless and subtle as compared to the visible aspect of Brahm in the form of the gross world. It is from this invisible Viraat, an entity that is characterised by its vastness and infinite dimensions, that the rest of the visible creation, that is similarly vast and infinite, has manifested.]

22. Some wise ascetics assert that the Sushumna Naadi is the foundation for spiritual elevation and the base from which one can achieve success in Brahm realisation. They call it a manifestation of Goddess Saraswati, the goddess of wisdom and enlightenment. [In other words, this is the Naadi which can lead one to the supreme state of spiritual realisation and enlightenment.]

It is this Naadi that creates this world and it is in it that the world dissolves¹ (22).

[Note--¹This is because the Naadi is the main carrier of all senses and consciousness in the body. If the Naadi is paralysed, the world ceases to exist and matter. It has been said that the world exists because the Mana or the mind thinks that it does, and this mind gets its inputs of the external world, it becomes aware that the world exists at all because it is fed with information obtained about it by the external sense organs of the body which collect information and transmit them to the mind through the means of the network of nerves (Naadis). Even the internal organs of the body get their instructions from the brain through this network. Hence, the Naadi is symbolically responsible for the creation and destruction of the world. In this context, refer to verse nos. 8-13 and the notes accompanying them.

Again, the Upanishads say that when the man sleeps, i.e. when the external world has ceased to exist for him, even then the vital winds called Pran keep on moving through the Naadis, keeping the man alive. If this does not happen, he would be paralyzed and even die. Refer Dhyani Bindu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 58-60, and Paingalo-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 2, verse no. 12

which says that when the man is asleep, his Prans move along the various Naadis present in the body.].

23. One should take the shelter of a Guru (a wise and erudite teacher who knows the esoteric secrets of Yoga). [This is to ensure that there is a constant presence of someone who would remove doubts and confusions that occur in one's spiritual endeavour and who would show the correct path to be followed and also give expert advice and guidance when needed. The scriptures are very abstract and often appear to be speaking in contradictory terms. It is here that the role of the true Guru comes into play, but for this to happen he himself must be an expert on the subject. Otherwise it would be very dangerous and have horrendous consequences for the disciple. Refer verse no. 79 of this Canto 6 also.]

When the basic energy center called the 'Adhar Shakti' goes to sleep, the world would also go to sleep. [In other words, when the central nervous system represented by the Sushumna Naadi comes to a standstill, the creature would either be completely paralysed or even die. Thus the world would have no relevance for him. When one sleeps, the sense organs cease to function because the nerve points located on the surface of the body become inactive and do not carry the incoming signals from the sense organs to the brain and its response or instructions back to these sense organs to act accordingly. This is a metaphoric way of saying that when the Naadis sleep the world would also sleep, or cease to exist.] (23).

[Note—Refer verse nos. 8-14 of this present Canto 6 in this context. The word *Adhar* or *Aadhaar* literally means support, basis, base, rest, stay, backbone, substratum, principle, foot, pillar, prop, shoulder, shore, dike, and a means of subsistence. It refers to the base or foundation of anything, any structure or any event. For example when any unfortunate event happens, we try to ascertain the cause or the basic reason why it happened. Once it is determined, the rest is easy to follow. The word *Shakti* however means energy, vitality, stamina and strength. It is the energy trapped in the triad of the Sushumna Naadi, the Mooladhar Chakra and the Kundalini that is sought to be harnessed by the ascetic for his spiritual endeavour of Brahm-realisation leading to his attaining an eternal state of blessedness marked by extreme ecstasy and bliss as well as in aiding him in his liberation and deliverance from the fetters of this body and the world.

In the present case, the triad consisting of the Sushumna Naadi along with the Mooladhar Chakra and the Kundalini plays an all important role in not only keeping the nervous system of the body functioning normally but also is used in the process of Yoga to achieve a spiritual high. The subtle dynamic cosmic energy present in the body is located here and the ascetic strives to arouse it and harness its astounding potentials for his own spiritual well being and upliftment. Since the man's entire life and all his activities revolve around the consciousness present in the body, as the body without consciousness would be a dead body which is good for no one, this apparatus consisting of the Sushumna Naadi, the Mooladhar Chakra and the Kundalini is considered as the pillar, the foundation and the basis of obtaining enlightenment and liberation according to the philosophy of Yoga. Therefore this apparatus is called the Adhar Shakti for the ascetic, the one which empowers the ascetic to progress steadily in his spiritual endeavours and provides him with sufficient energy and vitality to obtain success in it.]

24. When this Adhar Shakti (the nerve system which is symbolised by the Sushumna Naadi in the case of this Yoga Upanishad) is sufficiently activated and energised, the world too becomes alive and active (as explained in previous verses). The eclectic knowledge of this Adhar Shakti paves the way for one to cross the realm of Tama

(darkness) and reach the realm of exaltedness and supremacy (i.e. obtain spiritual light and enlightenment) [Darkness is like ‘sleep’ because it makes a man ignorant and oblivious of what is happening around him, while being ‘awake’ is synonymous for being enlightened and wise.] (24).

25. The knowledge of this fact destroys all ‘Paaps’—i.e. all forms of misdeeds, misdemeanors, evils and other demeaning aspects of life and their attending inauspicious consequences having their genesis in darkness and delusions created by ignorance are dispelled, paving for a man’s auspiciousness and all round spiritual elevation (25).

26. The Adhar Chakra (i.e. the Mooladhar Chakra located between the groins and the anus and from which the Nabhi Kanda rises—refer Canto 5, verse no. 5) is radiant and splendorous with the brilliance of electric. This illumination is its natural quality and inherent to it. When the aspirant is able to have its ‘Darshan’, i.e. when he is able to experience its presence along with its brilliance by the process of Yoga and the grace of his enlightened Guru, he is able to obtain Mukti, i.e. he is deemed to have found the path of liberation and deliverance for himself and his soul. [This is because it is not so easy to experience this Chakra. It is a very subtle and mystical phenomenon that requires a great deal of hard practice, steadfastness of purpose and due diligence. But once its presence is ascertained, the rest is easy to follow because it is like finding the correct gateway to Mukti. It is the ‘entrance’ by which one becomes eligible to enter the Brahm Naadi that leads him ultimately to his goal of Brahm-realisation and self-realisation that culminates in bliss and ecstasy of infinite dimensions. Refer also to verse nos. 8-14, 22 of this Canto 6.] (26).

27. All the inauspicious as well as the auspicious effects of deeds done by the spiritual aspirant (called the Paap and Punya respectively) are burnt and reduced to ashes (i.e. made ineffective and neutralised) by the intense divine energy and dynamic spiritual potentials (called the Tej) of the Adhar Chakra¹.

The practitioner can stop the Adhar Vayu (i.e. the Apaana wind that is present in the lower part of the body and which is stopped from escaping through the anus by constricting the latter) and dissolve himself in the fathomless depth of the sky² (27).

[Note--¹The *Adhar* (pronounced as *Aadhaar*) *Chakra* is, as the name itself implies, is the swirling subtle energy center in the body that forms the basis of all spiritual achievements made by the practitioner of Yoga according to the philosophy pertaining to this school of thought. When the aspirant has activated this center it is but natural that it would thoroughly clean him before he can step ahead in his spiritual path by virtually putting him through the rigours of the ‘fire test’. Spiritual enlightenment entails complete neutrality and equanimity towards everything pertaining to the gross world and the gross body. Deeds, whether good or bad, whether auspicious or inauspicious, are done by the gross body in the physical gross world, for neither the subtle part of the body, i.e. the mind and intellect, nor the sublime part, i.e. the pure consciousness (Atma), do any deed. The Atma is absolutely neutral just like an Emperor should be, while the mind-intellect plays an intermediary role—on the one hand it receives inputs from the external world through the organs of perception of the gross body, and on the other hand it reports to the Atma, is subservient to it and is the ear and eye for the latter. So when the Atma decides to shut off the external world, the mind-intellect obeys its instructions and distances itself from the latter. This is the state of total equanimity and neutrality. In such a state no deeds are deemed to be done by the creature because the Atma, which is the

true identity of the creature, is uninvolved in the deeds done by the body. The actual physical exercise of doing anything is carried out by the gross body only.

When an aspirant steps on the path of Yoga and he has reached a certain stage past the preliminaries so much so that he is able to focus his attention on kindling the energy of the Mooladhar Chakra or the Adhar Chakra, it is natural to assume that he has transcended the mundane and reached a higher state of existence. For an enlightened man it is expected that he must have risen above the concept of doing deeds and then desiring to enjoy the fruits of these deeds or fearing the evil effects of them. This is a metaphoric way of saying that all his deeds, auspicious or inauspicious, have been burnt and reduced to ashes, or made inconsequential or ineffective as far as his 'true self' or the Atma is concerned.

²This awareness of the stupendous power of the Mooladhar Chakra is the first step towards obtaining spiritual Mukti or liberation for the ascetic. His final goal is to detach himself from the entanglement of the body and become free like the sky and the wind which are eternally unhindered and unfettered. This is a gradual process, and the first step in this direction is the kindling of the energy of the Mooladhar Chakra so that the Apaana wind can arouse the Kundalini and enter the Brahm Naadi which would ultimately lead to attainment of a 'spiritual high'.

As one progresses in the spiritual path of Yoga, one reaches a stage called Samadhi, which is a state of consciousness when there is perpetual total loss of awareness of the gross body and the gross world even though the aspirant remains active in this world and does his duties normally. This is made possible because internally he is totally submerged in meditation and contemplation while remaining completely detached from the activities of the body which is the entity that actually does the deed. This state of existence is tantamount to complete 'dissolution' of one's sense of self which one usually associates with the physical gross body. Once the boundary of the gross body is removed, the vital winds present inside the body would automatically merge with the cosmic wind or air element present outside the body in the universe. In other words, the state of 'non-existence' and 'dissolution' is obtained. This is 'Jivan Mukti' because the ascetic is still alive. It is also the 'Videha Mukti' in the sense that the body loses its effectiveness and relevance in his life who is absolutely unconcerned about it and its constant nagging demands or sufferings.]

28. Restrictions of the Adhar Vayu (the Apaana wind) results in the body shivering and shaking. The ascetic begins to dance (i.e. his body shakes and shivers to such an extent that for all practical purposes it appears that he is dancing in a trance-like state) (28)

29. This state enables the ascetic to visualise the entire world in the Sushumna Naadi. This Naadi is the basis of existence of the entire creation along with all the Gods (the immortal and divine beings) and the Vedas (all forms of knowledge). Therefore a wise practitioner should strive to activate this Naadi and both experience and witness this holistic and divine view of existence from the perspective of Yoga (29).

[Note—Refer verse nos. 10-13 of this Canto 6 above.]

30. Behind the Adhar Chakra is the symbolic 'Triveni Sangam' (literally the confluence of the three holy rivers, viz. the Ganges, the Yamuna and the Saraswati). [It has been said earlier that the Mooladhar Chakra is triangular in shape. Refer Canto 5, verse no. 5. This is the significance here—this 'triangular shape' stands for the 'three holy rivers'.]

By symbolically taking a bath there and drinking or sipping the holy water of the place, the creature finds liberation and deliverance from this world (30).

31. It is here at Paschim Lingam that the door to enlightenment is situated, but it remains closed. When this door is opened, one is able to break all the fetters pertaining to the mundane and artificial world of delusions and obtain freedom from its shackling effects (31).

[Note—The ‘closed door to enlightenment’ refers to the closed Mooladhar Chakra, the Kundalini and the Sushumna Naadi. The ‘opening of the door’ implies that the ascetic has been able to unleash their astounding reserve of subtle energy that is now harnessed by him to obtain spiritual ecstasy and liberation from the shackling effects of the gross body on his Spirit.]

32. This is the symbolic location of the moon and the sun. [This has reference to the Ida and Pingla Naadis which originate at the base of the spinal cord along with the Sushumna Naadi and keep the mouth of the Kundalini closed. Further, the Manipur Chakra located in the region of the navel is the whirling energy center symbolically representing the sun and its stupendous cosmic energy. During Yoga, the practitioner opens the closed mouth of the Kundalini so that its energy can move up these Naadis making the creature spiritually aware of the true subtle world of his sublime consciousness as opposed to the gross world of which he was aware prior to this opening.]

It is here that the Lord of this world, called ‘Vishwesh’ (i.e. Shiva representing Brahm) also has his symbolic abode. [This has reference to the Mooladhar Chakra over which the symbolic Lingam of Shiva is situated. Refer verse no. 168 of Canto 1 and verse no. 5 of the present Canto 5.]

By becoming enlightened about this, one can become Brahm-realised. [This is because Yoga enables him to first activate the Mooladhar Chakra and subsequently kindle the hitherto dormant subtle cosmic energy trapped inside his Kundalini which snakes up the Sushumna Naadi. This latter Naadi is also called the Brahm Naadi because it goes up to the top of the head and reaches the brain. According to the philosophy of Yoga, when the vital winds called Pran move up this particular Naadi, the practitioner of meditation experiences an extreme sense of unparalleled ecstasy and bliss. These two latter sensations are like witnessing Brahm first hand. Refer verse no. 18. Further, at the higher level of Yoga, the Pran can even make its exit from the body of the ascetic by escaping through the hair-like slit on the top of the head, called the Brahm Randhra, as clearly laid out in the next verse no. 33-34 below.] (32).

33. The symbol of the supreme Brahm (in the form of the Shiva’s Lingam) is located slightly to the left rear of the Mooladhar. A wise and erudite ascetic should be enlightened about it¹.

By piercing the hexagonal Chakra, the realised ascetic is able to make his exit through the Brahm Randhra² (33).

[Note—¹Refer Canto 1, verse nos. 72, 167-168; Canto 2, verse nos. 6 (Naad Lingam), 8-14, 20; Canto 3, verse nos. 1-15; Canto 5, verse nos. 2-5, 5-16 (as abode of Shakti); Canto 6, verse no. 33. (ii) The Brahm Vidya Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 80 describes the Shiva Lingam symbolically present in the body.

²Refer Canto 1, verse no. 177. The Pran enters the Sushumna Naadi and is propelled up by being heated and energised by the subtle energy of the Kundalini. This Naadi passes through various Chakras in the body which are like the different coordination centers for all the nerves spreading out to reach all the corners of the body. While passing through these centers, the consciousness in the form of Pran collects all information on the way and then when it finally reaches the mind (brain) it

conveys all these to the latter which then sets out to perform its job of sifting through the mound of incoming data and selecting the important ones which require special attention of the intellect. The instructions of the mind-intellect complex are then transmitted back to the body and its various organs through the same network of nerves by which the primary and raw information was brought to it.

In the case of Yoga, the external inputs are cut off because the mind is focused on the inner self. This along with the breath control exercises called Pranayam help the ascetic to concentrate the strength and vitality of the Pran wind so much that it is enabled to enter the Sushumna Naadi through the path of the Kundalini. The next Chakra that the Pran enters is the Swadisthan Chakra which is said to be hexagonal in shape and located in the region of the base of the genitals. Refer Canto 5, verse no. 8. This is the one that is being referred in this present verse.

The Pran wind crosses it and moves further ahead to finally reach the top of the head where the Brahm Randhra is located. This is the hair like slit through which it is believed that Brahm had entered the body of the first creature (living being) at the time of creation when the latter was created in the image of the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic invisible gross body of the sublime transcendental Brahm. This Brahm had then entered and took up his residence in the head from where he decided that he would control the rest of the creation. That is why the mind-intellect complex is said to be closely associated with Brahm because it is the brain that controls all the functions of the body besides being the seat of such grand virtues as wisdom, erudition, sagacity, intelligence, analytical skills, the ability to discriminate between the good and the bad and then decide on the merits of a given situation, and the grand virtue of enlightenment which distinguishes a wise man from an animal. As for the ascetic, if he wishes to obtain liberation and deliverance from this body, he can voluntarily make his exit from the latter by allowing his Pran or vital wind representing his life sustaining forces to make its exit from the Brahm Randhra. Should the ascetic decide to do so, his Atma, i.e. his pure consciousness would withdraw itself from the body and ride literally piggy back on the Pran while it makes its exit through the Brahm Randhra to obtain final emancipation and salvation. See verse no. 34 of this Canto 6 below. The discarded body would eventually disintegrate into its gross elements—viz. earth, water and fire. The air has already left it as the Pran, and the subtle sky or space present inside the body between the various internal organs, tissues and cells would automatically cease to have any existence once the physical structure of the body disintegrates into its elements. In short, all the elements are released and they merge with their primary cosmic forms once the consciousness and Pran leave the body.

The evidence of consciousness withdrawing itself along with the Pran is experienced when the organs begin to become numb and unconscious when the higher state of Yoga is reached. This helps the ascetic to make a painless exit from the body as compared to the death when the Pran is forced to leave the body against its wishes, because then it would try to cling to the body and would have literally to be pulled or torn out of it.]

34. If the Pran is able to carefully pass up through the Sushumna Naadi without getting diverted into the ducts present on the left and the right of it, i.e. without entering the left nostril through the Ida Naadi or the right nostril through the Pingla Naadi, it can go straight up to the head and make its exit from the body by piercing the skull and escaping through the Brahm Randhra (which is the hair like slit marking the place where the two hemispheres of the skull join). This helps the ascetic to attain the final destination of all spiritual endeavours which is literally called the 'Param Gati' and which means to obtain liberation and deliverance of the soul from this body as well as the world. [This is also called the final Mukti or Moksha—final liberation and deliverance, final emancipation and salvation.] (34).

35-36. As long as the living being represented by the Hans (i.e. the pure consciousness known as the Atma which metaphorically is represented by the Swan or Hans and which is the true identity of the creature) continuous to move up and down in the Sushumna Naadi, he is deemed to remain trapped in the cycle of birth and death.

On the contrary, when his Pran becomes steady in the Sushumna Naadi it acquires sufficient power and energy to break through the barrier of the sun and moon (35-36).

[Note—The ‘sun’ is represented by the Pingla Naadi or the right nostril, and the ‘moon’ by the Ida Naadi or the left nostril. The implication of the statement is that the breathing stops through the nostrils during the Kumbhak phase of Pranayam. During this state, the Pran wind is incarcerated in the body which acts like a closed pitcher (Kumbha), and subsequently it makes its exit not through the routine path of the nostrils but through the Brahm Randhra in the top of the skull. As it is obvious here, if the Pran exits through the nostrils as during normal breathing process, it is bound to oscillate between inhalation and exhalation, while if it goes out through the Brahm Randhra its exit would be final. The former would be tantamount to taking birth and death repeatedly, while the latter would be his final Moksha or Mukti.

It is a very interesting analogy here which can be interpreted in a different way also. The ‘sun’ stands for the day when one is involved in all sorts of physical activities involving the body and the material world which is visible and tangible. On the other hand, the ‘moon’ is a metaphor for the night when people sleep and the external world and its activities become irrelevant. The day is like ‘birth’ when the soul gets involved in this world, and the night is like ‘death’ when the same soul withdraws from the external world and becomes unconcerned with it. The day is comparable to the ‘waking state of consciousness’ and the night to the ‘sleeping state of consciousness’.

In other words, as long as the Pran continues to move in and out of the body through the process of breathing, it would not allow the body to die and this process would metaphorically indicate that the ascetic continues to be moving in an endless cycle of birth and death. But if he wants to break free from this cycle, he would have to learn to control his breath, or in other words, learn to exercise self restraint. Once he is successful in this, the Pran would make its exit but not come back. That is, the Pran would now move *not* through the Ida or Pingla Naadis in and out of the left or the right nostrils respectively but would rather enter the Sushumna Naadi and go straight up to the head and escape through the Brahm Randhra. If ‘exit of the Pran from the body is taken to be death’ then this one-way passage of Pran through the Brahm Randhra would be the ‘final death’ of the body of the ascetic, thereby setting his pure conscious Atma free from the fetters of the gross body. This would be tantamount to his breaking free from the cycle of birth and death as well, or piercing through the sun and moon complex. This is because the sun and the moon symbolically indicate this world consisting of an endless cycle of day and night. This is his ‘Kaivalya Mukti’.

By practicing Pranayam the ascetic learns to control his breath and force his Pran, which has already entered the Sushumna Naadi by doing various Aasans and Mudras of Yoga, to move past the nostrils and reach the top of the head from where it would make its exit by the way of the Brahm Randhra. In other words, if the ascetic allows his Pran to move in and out through the nostrils, his body would be kept alive and his Atma would remain trapped in this body as well as the world. But when he becomes an expert in the practice of Yoga and stops the flow of breath through the nostrils by doing Pranayam, the only way the heated and activated wind can escape from his body would be the Brahm Randhra. Once the Pran leaves through this path, it would not be able to re-enter the body. This is a one way exit for the Pran as compared to

the exit through the body under normal breathing process. Therefore, while the former would provide a permanent liberation from the body, the latter would symbolically mean going out (dying) during exhalation and coming back from where one has gone out, i.e. inhalation (taking birth again and entering a new body). Refer verse no. 51 of this Canto 6. The movement of the life consciousness in the different Naadis so as to keep the body alive and active in all planes of existence has been described in Paingalo Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 12, and Dhyana Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 52-60.]

37-40. One should know that the eclectic path of Yoga is to establish a complete and comprehensive harmony, an unchallenged uniformity between all the elements of creation. [In other words, Yoga's main purpose is to bring together the individual creature's Atma, his individual consciousness, and the cosmic Atma or the cosmic Consciousness so as to remove the apparent differences and disparities between them and instead establish an undisputed uniformity between them. This is called the Kaivalya form of Mukti, or the form of spiritual liberation and deliverance, the soul's emancipation and salvation which is unique and one of its kind in the sense that no trace of duality is ever left. It is stressed that to achieve this end, the ascetic has to bring together all his vital winds and merge them with the main wind called the Pran and then collect the Atma and exit from the body to become one with the cosmic wind or air element present outside his body. When this happens, the body would eventually disintegrate into its primary elements which would merge with their respective cosmic counterparts, thereby giving effect to the principle aim of Yoga—bringing together the elements of creation.]

If the Mana's (mind's) propensity to remain restless, agile, fragmented and fragile is removed by fixing it (i.e. its concentration) in the Sushumna Naadi during the practice of Yoga [37] even for a moment or half a moment [38], if the ascetic finds his independent conscious self (i.e. his consciousness as existing in his various organs, both external as well as internal) dissolved into one uniform entity simply known as 'consciousness' in the Sushumna Naadi just like a lump of salt dissolved in water becomes inseparable from the water, or milk and water become inseparable from one another when they are mixed together [39], it can be said that it is only then that all the knots that symbolise his doubts and confusions (regarding what is meant by the concept of non-duality and the main purpose of Yoga) would be removed. These knots of ignorance and delusions keep him tethered to this gross body and the gross world, creating a false notion of duality which create imaginary shackles for his Atma and prevent its emancipation and salvation. When this is made effective, the ascetic becomes as free as the sky (i.e. he is not shackled and tied to anything like the sky element which is eternally free from any fetters) and obtains the supreme state of liberation called 'Param Pad' [40]. (37-40).

41. The spiritually auspicious effect of bathing in the holy river Ganges on its banks at the pilgrim site called Manikarnika Ghaat¹ or at the confluence of this river and the ocean² or even in the ocean itself³ is not even one-sixteenth as compared to allowing the consciousness to flow unhindered in the Sushumna Naadi during the process of Yoga (41).

[Note—¹The *Manikarnika Ghaat* is situated in the ancient city of Varanasi in northern India on the banks of the holy river Ganges. It is believed that Lord Shiva provides emancipation and salvation to all those who are cremated here.

²The *confluence of Ganges and the ocean* is called the holy site of Ganga-Sagar located near the eastern Indian metropolis of Calcutta where river Ganges flows into

the Bay of Bengal. The famous Kapil Muni Ashram (hermitage of sage Kapil) is situated here.

³The famous points where the *ocean* is regarded as being as holy as the Ganges and provides the same spiritual benefit for those who take a bath there are primarily three—in the eastern shore of India at Puri where the famous temple of Lord Jagannath is located, in the southern tip of India where the famous temple of Rameshwaram dedicated to Lord Shiva and said to be consecrated by Lord Rama himself is situated, and in the western shore at Dwarka where Lord Krishna had his capital.]

42. Having an auspicious sight of the religious mountain called ‘Shail’¹, to die in the holy city of Varanasi², to drink the holy water of the pilgrim site of Kedarnath³, and to be spiritually aware of the Sushumna Naadi where the Pran moves during the practice of Yoga—one’s spiritual Mukti (emancipation and salvation; liberation and deliverance) is made possible by all of them. [Or in other words, the ascetic can expect to get the same spiritual reward of Mukti by concentrating on the Sushumna Naadi and making his Pran flow through it as he would get by the other three methods mentioned in this verse.] (42).

[Note—¹*Shail* is the famous Mt. Kailash situated in Tibet and dedicated to Lord Shiva; said to be the Lord’s terrestrial abode.

²*Varanasi* is situated on the banks of river Ganges in northern India where it is believed that Lord Shiva utters the famous Mantra of Lord Ram in the ears of a dying man, thereby providing certain emancipation and salvation to his soul.

³*Kedarnath* is situated in the Himalayan range on the northern side of India and has the famous temple of Lord Shiva. There is a famous freshwater lake located here, and it is called the ‘Mansarovar Lake’ where the Gods are said to take their bath. Its twin site is Badrinath which is also located in the Himalayas and is dedicated to Lord Vishnu.]

43. The auspicious effects of doing one thousand Ashwamedh Yagyas¹ and one hundred Vajapaye Yagyas² are not equivalent to even one sixteenth part of the spiritual benefits got from focusing one’s attention and concentrating the consciousness in the Sushumna Naadi (43).

[Note—¹The *Ashwamedh Yagya*—This is called the horse sacrifice because a horse is sacrificed in it. It is a most ancient sacrifice and can be successfully done by very powerful kings or emperors. The horse is let free to go anywhere it wants for one year and the land where it sets foot is either annexed by treaties or by force in war. The actual sacrifice is though done for only three days. The sacrificial horse is protected by the army and if by chance it is killed by the opposing king then the sacrifice is deemed to be defiled. In practical terms, it was a means to spread a king’s area of influence.

²The *Vajapeya Yagya*—This is performed by one who desires unlimited dominion. This sacrifice had many special features and the number 17 plays a dominant role in it—for there are 17 animals that are sacrificed, 17 objects are distributed as fees for the priests, and it lasts for 17 days culminating in a chariot race in which the patron who does the fire sacrifice is made to win at any cost.]

44. One who perpetually remains moving in the realm of the Sushumna Naadi, i.e. one who does Yoga on a constant basis, deriving immense bliss and great satisfaction from it and remaining focused on achieving success in his spiritual aim of obtaining self-realisation and Brahm-realisation by keeping the Sushumna Naadi activated and the Pran diverted into it and away from other parts of the body by constantly practicing the various aspects of Yoga, is deemed to be free from all sins and their

wicked effects. He therefore becomes entitled to obtain the supreme transcendental state of Mukti (spiritual emancipation and salvation; liberation and deliverance of the soul from the fetters of the body and the world) (44).

45. (That is why--) This Sushumna Naadi is regarded by ascetics as the greatest of pilgrim sites, as the best form of Japa (repetition of Mantras—by metaphorically allowing the Pran or the vital wind to oscillate through it repeatedly), as the best form of Dhyan (concentration of mind, focusing of attention, contemplation and meditation), and the best destination for one's spiritual endeavours (i.e. it is the best path one should seek if one wishes true Mukti or freedom from the fetters of the body and the world) (45).

46. A fraction of the auspicious value of doing Dhyan (concentration of mind, focusing of attention, contemplation and meditation) through the medium of the Sushumna Naadi, i.e. doing Yoga when this particular Naadi is activated, is many times greater than doing other forms of religious rites such as performing many sacrifices, giving away many types of donations or doing huge charities, or keeping religious fasts on many auspicious occasions (46).

47. The supreme cosmic dynamic energy of the transcendental Brahm who resides in the realm of the Brahm Randhra situated at the top of the head is revealed in the form of 'Shivaa'. [Yoga Upanishads treat Shiva as another form of Brahm, and therefore the dynamic energy of Brahm is known by the name of Shivaa.]

This cosmic dynamic energy of Brahm is also known as the pure consciousness and it has an extensive presence in the Sushumna Naadi. [This is because the central nervous system of the body represented by this Naadi is at the core of the man's conscious life and keeps him aware of everything in this world. If the central nervous system blinks even for a moment, the man would fall down unconscious no matter how healthy his other organs are.] (47).

48. The cosmic 'Maya Shakti' (i.e. the great power of the Supreme Being to create delusions and keep the creature engrossed in its deceptions so that the cycle of creation set in motion by the Lord continues to roll on unhindered) is the grosser revelation of the dynamic powers of Brahm by which the latter created this illusion called the world. It is said to be located in the front part of the forehead and is shaped like a lotus¹. In the middle of this lotus is located the transcendental cosmic energy of Brahm which is subtle in nature and is called the Naad Shakti² (48).

[Note—¹This symbolic lotus refers to the Agya Chakra. The forehead symbolically represents the head-light of Brahm much like we have headlights in a car because the eyes of the man's body are located here. The eyes help the man to see the visible creation of Brahm which the latter has created using his maverick powers to create illusions, the power called *Maya Shakti* which literally means precisely this—illusion creating strength and powers. This world is the gross physical revelation of Brahm's stupendous powers to create anything desired. *Maya Shakti* refers to this power of Brahm—to create an illusion which is so perfect and life-like that it appears to be true from all practical view points though it is basically an illusion. This is the great mystery of creation—the world is said to be illusionary on the one hand, and it is pervaded by Brahm who is not an illusion on the other hand. The secret is that the external features of the world as we see is an illusion just like the water seen in the desert mirage, but the underlying principle that creates this illusion in the desert is a scientific truth having a sound reason. Likewise, the world is created by the ability of

the mind to imagine, which is actually Brahm's maverick power on display. Brahm is regarded as being synonymous with wisdom, erudition, enlightenment and knowledge, so the subtle quality of the mind-intellect complex to be analytical, discerning, thinking intelligently, weighing all the pros and cons and then making decisions and arriving at conclusions—these qualities are the subtle revelations of Brahm. But the power of this same mind to imagine and create a astoundingly fascinating world of charming and enticing objects is a revelation of Brahm's Maya Shakti. The man sees this illusions through his eyes situated in the forehead, and this fact is represented here by saying that the 'Maya Shakti is located in the front of the forehead'.

²As compared to this Maya Shakti which has taken a gross form of the physical world having attributes and characteristic features, the *Naad Shakti* is very subtle and has no physical shape or form or attributes. This is because Naad refers to the sound element which does not have any shape or form. It is like the air and sky elements which too have no form or shape. Since sound is a form of invisible energy, it is the first subtle revelation of Brahm at the cosmic level. Scientists call it the 'Big Bang' at the time of creation, while in the sphere of metaphysics it is called 'Naad'—both refers to sound. The concept of Naad and its origin in a point source called the 'Bindu' or dot have been explained extensively elsewhere in this Upanishad as well as in other Upanishads dealing with Naad and Bindu. See verse no. 49 below.]

49. At the 'focal point', literally called the 'Bindu', of this energy generation mechanism is the consciousness which has revealed itself in the form of the Jiva (living being). [This refers to the Atma which is the pure consciousness and the true 'self' of all living beings. At the micro level of creation, this consciousness is called the Jiva, while at the macro level the same entity is known as Brahm.] (49).

50. This consciousness indicative of the presence of Brahm in the living being in the form of his soul or Atma which gives the individual his 'life and identity' is revealed in its gross form as the heart (because without the heart no man can survive). The subtle form of the same divine and eclectic entity resides inside the middle of the heart or at the core of the heart (enabling the heart to beat). [In other words, the presence of the physical organ of the heart inside the body of a man is an ample proof of the presence of the life-giving consciousness known as Brahm in his body because without the heart the man wouldn't survive even for a second. The heart maintains circulation of blood and through it nourishes and protects the whole body much like Brahm who nourishes and protects the entire creation. But the physical organ known as the heart is of no use if there was no subtle life-supporting cosmic energy inside it in the form of the Atma or consciousness that actually enables this gross organ to beat continuously unhindered throughout the life of a man. The heart beats due to the subtle electric current that helps its muscles to contract and expand. This 'electric current' is Brahm in the form of the Atma, the life-giving pure consciousness, residing in the heart of all living beings.] (50).

51. Under the influence of the Pran and the Apaana Vayus, the Jiva continues to oscillate up and down in the body. [This refers to the consciousness present in the body of all living beings which moves up and down the body and radiates to all its corners to keep the body alive and active. This consciousness helps the body to perceive the external world and respond to these perceptions through the organs of perception and action; this consciousness keeps the mind-intellect complex working in prime shape; this consciousness keeps the internal organs and the different tissues and cells of the body working in proper order; this consciousness drives the motor of

the body of the creature called the Jiva. The two vital winds, viz. the Pran and the Apaana refer to the breath that is present in the upper part of the body and the wind passing down in the intestines and is predominantly located in the lower part. The rhythmic movement of the Pran acts like a pump that keeps the bladder-like body throbbing with life, while the Apaana helps it to eliminate the wastes that accumulate in the body. The Pran has a propensity to move upwards while the Apaana has a natural tendency to move downwards. This creates a symbolic oscillating movement for the consciousness, once going downwards along with the Apaana wind but immediately pulled up by the Pran wind only to be pulled down once again by the Apaana. This prevents the consciousness from escaping from the body—i.e. it remains trapped inside it. This is what is referred to in metaphysics as ‘the Atma being trapped by the body’. Refer also to verse nos. 35-36 of this Canto 6.]

Since the vital winds (Pran and Apaana) as well as the consciousness (the Jiva’s vital life-factors) are both invisible subtle and sublime entities, it follows that their movement in the body, whether to the right or to the left, are also invisible and imperceptible. [This refers to the flow of the Pran as breath through the right or left nostrils representing the Pingla and the Ida Naadis respectively. Breath is indeed invisible like the consciousness, and as is obvious now both are synonymous with life because no creature can survive without either of them.] (51).

52. Even as a ball tossed around by the hand never finds rest, the Jiva (the living creature represented by the consciousness present inside a gross body but usually understood to mean the physically visible body of the living being) never finds rest as it is incessantly and persistently tossed up and down by the Pran and the Apaana winds (52).

53. These two winds, i.e. the Pran and Apaana act to pull each other in the opposite direction. That is, the Pran pulls the Apaana in the upper direction, and the Apaana pulls the Pran in the lower direction.

This is metaphorically depicted by the two letters of the Mantra ‘Hans’, viz. ‘Ha’ and ‘Sa’. In other words, the Jiva (consciousness) tries to go up and escape from the body while making the sound of the letter ‘Ha’, and then is pulled down back inside the body while making the sound ‘Sa’. (53).

54. In this way, the Jiva (i.e. all living beings who breathe, for example a man) repeats this Mantra ‘Hans-Hans’ involuntarily while alive. But few understand its metaphysical and spiritual import. On the other hand, those ascetics who are able to grasp the great importance and significance of this eternal and imperishable divine Mantra are indeed wise, erudite, self-realised and enlightened ascetics. [Their entire life is spent in doing involuntary Japa, which is repeating of a divine Mantra and reaping its spiritual benefits, even without making any special efforts do repeat it and obtain its natural spiritual reward. Refer also to Canto 1, verse nos. 131-133; Canto 2, verse nos. 8-11; and Canto 6, verse no. 20.] (54).

55. Above the Kanda (the Mooladhara, also called the Mool Kand) is situated the stupendous source of subtle energy in the body in the form of a coiled structure called the Kundalini. [Refer Canto 1, verse nos. 168-169 and Canto 5, verse no. 5-6.]

This Kundalini can provide liberation and deliverance to wise, erudite and enlightened ascetics on the one hand while trapping those who are ignorant, deluded and stupid on the other hand. [This is because while the wise ascetic uses this

Kundalini in the practice of Yoga to harness the latent cosmic energy trapped inside it for his spiritual enhancement leading to the state of extreme ecstasy and final liberation and deliverance from the body as well as the world, the stupid ascetic on the other hand would enjoy the attendant benefits of Yoga, such as the access to different Siddhis or mystical powers that give him immense authority and super human capabilities, enabling him to enjoy the great fame, attention and public adulation that they bring upon him which would have the effect of dragging him deeper and deeper into the quagmire known as the delusory world, thereby sucking him in and trapping him in instead of letting him find liberation from it.]

This fact is known only to the Yogis (i.e. to ascetics who practice the tenets of Yoga sincerely and diligently) (55).

56. In the entire creation consisting of the three worlds known as 'Bhu' or the terrestrial world or the mortal world consisting of living creatures, 'Bhuvaha' or the sky above the earth and the near space where the sun and moon etc. are located, and 'Swaha' or the distant heaven where the stars and Gods are present, the entities that personify the cosmic energy are such entities as the sun, the moon and the fire. But the combined light, energy, strength and vitality of these are no match for the majestic glory and stupendity, the divine qualities and sublime virtues that are possessed by the supreme transcendental and ethereal entity represented by the word OM. [This entity is 'Brahm', also known as 'Pranav'.] (56).

57. The divine supreme transcendental entity (Brahm) represented by the word OM is more glorious, stupendous and magnificent than the combined glory, stupendity and magnificence of the three Kaals (i.e. the powerful forces of Nature that operate in creation covering the three phases of time, viz. the past, the present and the future), the three Devas (i.e. the three Gods, viz. Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer and protector, and Shiva the annihilator or concluder), the three Lokas (i.e. the three worlds such as the terrestrial world, the nether world and the heaven), the three Swars (i.e. the three types of letters and their sounds, viz. the vowels having a short sound and the long sound, the consonants, and the sibilant letters), and the three Vedas (i.e. the Rig, the Sam and the Yajur Vedas) (57).

58. The tendency of the mind and its various faculties to remain ever restless, agile, freakish, volatile, fickle and unsteady is said to be the cause of this deluding world to come into existence, while the state when this mind becomes focused, steady, peaceful and calm is tantamount to obtaining Moksha (liberation from this entrapping world and its accompanying delusions and attendant miseries).

Hence, one should strive to steady and calm his mind and its various faculties by employing all the strength at his disposal as well as all the power of wisdom and intelligence that he possesses (58).

59. It is the sub-conscious mind and its ability to imagine and conceive things that has not only created this world of imaginary material things and all sorts of delusory perceptions but also expands this imaginary and deluding world so that it acquires an endless dimension.

Obviously, if this sub-conscious mind and its magnificent ability to imagine and remember imaginary things are done away with, the world would automatically cease to exist or matter at all. Therefore, all spiritual aspirants are expected to decimate the role of this tricky mind in their spiritual pursuit (because if they allow

the mind to let it have its way then they are sure to waver and fall on the wayside) (59).

60. The Mana (the mind and its thoughts) is the progenitor of the notion of Ahankar (ego, pride and arrogance). The mind which is conditioned by the sense of ego and pride assumes the dimension of the sky, spreading its tentacles in every direction (i.e. it becomes a huge and insurmountable obstacle in one's spiritual path; no matter what effort the spiritual aspirant makes his ego and pride would put a spanner in the wheel of his progress)¹. The deluding world and its traps are the maverick creation of this mind corrupted by the element of Ahankar².

The wise ascetic must understand that this Mana is not his Atma or his pure 'self'. The Atma is much superior to the Mana; they are not only distinct from one another but the Atma is the Lord of the Mana and it is not the other way round³ (60).

[Note—¹An example would help to explain the implication of this statement. A rich man thinks that he is superior to others and would not like to sit on the floor with them. He would be proud of his worldly possessions that he thinks that he has produced by his own efforts or got as inheritance as a reward of his past good deeds and therefore has the right over them. He never would like to forgo his worldly material possessions and bargain them for the difficult life of a spiritual aspirant, such as leading an austere life and renouncing all material comforts of the world. Similarly a haughty scholar would never acknowledge that his knowledge is limited and so would steadfastly ignore good advice or seek more knowledge. This is because the element of Ahankar puts its leg in and prevents the wheel of wisdom and sanity from moving the chariot of unpretentious simplicity and humility—the hallmarks of spiritualism—ahead.

²It is to be noted that when Brahm had decided to create this world of unimaginable dimensions, the first thing that came into being was 'Ahankar', and the next was 'Maya'. That is, as soon as the immaculate and eternally pure Brahm thought that he has the power to do something as grand as starting the process of creation, the element of 'self pride' and 'ego' corrupted him. No sooner had this happened than the element of 'delusions' swamped him and overcame him from all the sides so much so that Brahm was literally swept of his feet and got himself sucked in the quagmire of the world that he himself had created. He was no longer free to relax and do meditation, for now he had to worry about the sustenance and protection of the world he had created himself. Not only this, he saw that his off springs started petty quarrels and indulged in squabbling, robbing the peace and tranquility that Brahm had been enjoying before this creation had come into being. So he decided to wind up the game, and this resulted in the conclusion of one phase of creation. But this notorious 'Ahankar' element of Brahm did not let him live in peace—for he could not digest the fact that he could not control his off springs and had to punish them by winding up the whole drama altogether. So he decided to give it another try and set out to create the second round of creation. And the cycle continued.

This should act as a beacon of warning for the spiritual aspirant—if this Ahankar is powerful enough that it did not even spare the almighty Brahm from its clutches and drew him in its vice like grip, what chance does an ordinary man has to stand against it? So he should endeavour to nip the bud before it blooms into a flower by cutting off the cause of this world altogether—i.e. to conquer, to vanquish and completely eliminate the mind and crush its maverick tricks. This would do away with Ahankar and also with the Maya that follows in its wake.

³That is, the spiritual aspirant should not despair at the worrying state of the Mana and be assured that though the mind has so many tainting scars influencing its working, it does not mean that the ascetic himself is impure and corrupt because his 'true and pure self' is the consciousness known as the Atma present in his heart which

is a complete independent entity and has nothing to do with the Mana. So when it is said that he should conquer the Mana, it wouldn't harm his own 'self' in the least.]

61. It is the Mana (here referring to the mind and heart combine) that does deeds and gets involved in sins and wickedness. [The gross body is the entity that actually does the physical deed, but it does so at the instructions of the mind. The heart is the seat of emotions, so when the heart is involved in any deed, the creature becomes fully engrossed in it. Both the mind and heart play equal role in making the creature involved in any deed—the mind would control his body and divert his attention to the deed to be done, while the heart would make him endeared to the deed, enjoy it and therefore stick to it for a prolonged periods without getting fed up or weary of it. In other words, when it is said that one is fully engrossed or involved in any deed, it is implied that his mind and heart are both involved in the process. Now, the world is a charming proposition and when the mind and heart get to taste its sweet pill, they are so enamoured by it that they would go to any length to acquire its proximity and enjoy the comforts and pleasures that it has to offer. In this pursuit, they would compel the creature to commit horrendous sins and wicked deeds.]

If the Mana abandons its natural inclinations and habits (by becoming steady and focused on the spiritual path that it ought to follow instead of indulging ceaselessly in this world), there would be no such thing as sin or wickedness on the one hand, and auspiciousness and righteousness on the other. [That is, as soon as the wise aspirant realises the fact that all the problems he faces in his spiritual path are caused by the Mana, he would immediately distance himself from the latter and the deeds done by the body under the instructions of the Mana. When this eclectic state of existence is actually achieved by the Atma which however is the truthful identity of the man doing the deed, he would not be bothered whether the deeds are good or bad, whether they are auspicious or inauspicious. Instead, there would be complete sense of equanimity and evenness in the way he treats this world and deals with it.] (61).

62. When a spiritual aspirant is able to see his own Mana with its own light of wisdom, erudition, discrimination, analytical thinking and logical reasoning, i.e. when he is able to consciously control his mind using its own faculties of intelligence, wisdom and discrimination to decide what is good for it and what is not, thereby becoming steady in his spiritual path by not having any deluding aspirations and worldly desires or getting embroiled in numerous confusions and doubts, and as a result obtains the eclectic state of profound self-control of all his different passions, natural inclinations and temperaments which in turn lead to a high degree of equanimity, contentedness, calm and poise—it is only then that he becomes eligible to have a first hand experience or a divine and holy vision of the supreme transcendental Brahman, something which is most rare and difficult otherwise (62).

63. When an ascetic is able to see his own Mana with its own light of wisdom, erudition, discrimination, analytical thinking and logical reasoning, i.e. when he is able to consciously control his mind using its own faculties of intelligence, wisdom and discrimination to decide what is good for it and what is not, it is only then that he is called an expert and accomplished ascetic. It is only then that he finds true Mukti or liberation and deliverance from the fetters of this world and its delusions. This is the successful culmination of his Yoga practice. It enables him to become indifferent towards everything non-real, non-essential and non-eternal. Instead, he remains focused in remembering the eternal, real and supreme transcendental Truth (63).

64-65. When a spiritual aspirant is able to see his own Mana with its own light of wisdom, erudition, discrimination, analytical thinking and logical reasoning, i.e. when he is able to consciously control his mind using its own faculties of intelligence, wisdom and discrimination to decide what is good for it and what is not, he becomes steady and unwavering in Yoga. Or in other words, he is deemed to be firmly established in Yoga and becomes an established ascetic. This enables him to rise higher in the echelons of those who practice Yoga and obtain a higher position in the hierarchy of ascetics. In effect, he becomes the great ascetic who is like the exalted Lord of all ascetics (a reference to Lord Shiva). [64]

Not only this, he is able to experience the ecstasy and blessedness of witnessing the supreme transcendental state obtained by the most exalted of ascetics. [65] (64-65).

[Note—The emphasis in verse nos. 62-65, 69 of this Canto 6 is on ‘control of the mind’ and the role it plays in helping one to obtain his soul’s peace. As we have seen earlier, it is the mind that is the cause of all troubles for us in this deluding and artificial world which is like a spiritual trap for the man. For example, if the mind decides that it is alright to live in any given circumstance or that the comforts and enjoyments derived from the material world are really not worth the effort made to acquire them, the man would find it easy to cope with even the most adverse of circumstances or lack of material comfort. But it is the mind which sees that other people are enjoying this or that material comfort in this world and then it pokes the man and constantly keeps on nagging at him to go and obtain that thing of gratification for himself, leading to an endless cycle of unsatisfied desires and wants which can never give any rest to anyone. Once the man is able to train the mind to realise that all the things around him are perishable and non-desirable, that the world and its charms are imaginary and deluding while being spiritually demoting and dilapidating, that life itself is short and the soul has been going round and round in circles for innumerable births to take birth as a human being and this is its last chance to break free from this vicious cycle, and that therefore it should focus its attention on obtaining truthful spiritual liberation that can provide it with deliverance once and for all instead of frittering away this golden opportunity in oscillating between non-fulfilled desires and attempts to fulfill them, or wasting precious time to decide what is good and what is bad for it in the long run, or remaining confused about the truthfulness of the conscious Atma and the falsehood of the world around it, it is only then the man can find eternal spiritual peace, happiness and bliss. This very knowledge and awareness is tantamount to obtaining enlightenment and the great contentedness that accompany it. This is the culmination of the journey upon which he has embarked and is the aim of all his spiritual efforts when he had decided to study the scriptures, understand them and implement their doctrines in life as well as when he had made a Guru to help him in this endeavour so that he can find real and meaningful peace for himself.]

66. The supreme, transcendental, eclectic and divine entity known as Brahm, which is an epitome of such glorious virtues as eternal peace, tranquility, serenity and calmness, is much superior to and beyond other eclectic and divine entities such as Bindu (the dot on the top of the symbol for Brahm, i.e. OM, symbolising the origin of creation), Naad (the cosmic sound present in ether and representing the first discernible manifestation of Brahm in the form of sound and its attendant energy), Kalaa (the different aspects of creation revealing the varied qualities of Brahm), Jyoti (light and illumination symbolising wisdom, knowledge, erudition and enlightenment), Ravi (Sun), Chandra (Moon), the Dhruv Tara (the polar star which

remains steady in its place, symbolising the grand virtues of being steady, unwavering, constant, perpetual, consistent and persistent). [These and other such entities are only short aphorisms expressing only a fraction of the composite divine majesty and astoundingly infinite glories of Brahm. Brahm has revealed in all these forms, each being a manifestation of one aspect of Brahm, and therefore each one of them depicts one or the other magnificently glorious and divine aspects of Brahm, but they do not define Brahm in its entirety.] (66).

67. When the self realised ascetic is able to experience first hand the presence of the supreme transcendental Brahm, he spends the rest of his life submerged in extreme bliss and ecstasy, laughing at will and generally being in a perpetual mood of merriment, elation and cheerfulness. In spite of this all round sense of contentedness and happiness, he is always wary and afraid of those things that can throw a spanner in this eclectic state of his blissful and peaceful existence—i.e. he is always scared of this world and its cunning tricks so much so that he remains constantly wary of them and keeps a constant vigil against the traps laid out by this world to ensnare him in its clutches. Once he has tasted the nectar of freedom, it is natural that he would abhor things that would cause him to be bonded once again (67).

68. He forestalls all causes that create sorrows and grief to him. He takes the shelter of wisdom and fortitude if such unfortunate sorrows and grief do occur. He is not attracted to and enamoured by any of the charms and attractions offered by worldly assets and prosperity. In order to keep his spiritual enemies at bay and prevent them from tormenting him unnecessarily, he prefers not to annoy them at all by maintaining a safe distance from them. This is accomplished by remaining completely indifferent towards and paying no heed to any of the sense organs of his own body as well as their respective objects of attraction in the external material world along with other deluding aspects of this world which he treats as being his spiritual enemies. In this way he is not only able to control his enemies but also keep them away from disturbing him. Being thus freed from this fear, he wanders happily and in a carefree manner in this world (68).

69. The spiritual aspirant must be alert enough to realise the moment when his sub-conscious mind and its subtle faculties of paying attention and concentrating upon some thing of importance have been diverted towards the sense objects of this world and involved in having an unending desire for them and then endeavouring to acquire them, because if he is vigilant enough he would take immediate remedial steps to rectify this misdemeanour or misadventure of the mind. The mind is so restless, fickle, undecided and unsteady that it has a propensity to be blown away easily by the slightest gust of breeze representing worldly charms that cause an endless chain of desires, aspirations, expectations and hopes.

So, by being constantly vigilant, the aspirant would prevent his 'self' from being forced to be on a compromising ground with his arch enemy (i.e. the world and its entrapping net of endless material desires and hopes for their fulfillment) due to the mischief created by a careless and fickle mind. [That is, by keeping a close watch where his maverick Mana is, the spiritual aspirant can pre-empt a wide swathe of problems that would otherwise besiege him if he lets off his guard even once or allows himself to be misled by delusions and cunning schemes of Maya. Verse no. 71 below narrates how the Mana can be controlled.] (69).

70. The potentials and powers of the Mana (mind) are similar to the majestic glories of such (visible) entities as the sun and the moon, while its ability to see and perceive is like the stupendous glory of the fire on display.

On the other hand, the Trinity Gods such as Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, nourisher and protector of the creation, and Shiva the concluder of creation, are merely a fraction or aspect of the (invisible) Bindu and Naad.

[In other words, the Mana is the most striking and forceful visible depiction of the astoundingly magnificent potentials of the supreme Brahm even as the sun and the moon in the sky and the fire on the earth showcase Brahm's glorious, overriding and unmatched cosmic authority and powers having amazing potentials and far-reaching effects. On the other hand, the Trinity Gods are not visible in their presence like the sun, the moon and the fire. They are invisible and more abstract than the sun, moon and fire which every living being is able to see for himself first hand. So, the latter (the sun, moon and fire) are a visible and comparatively grosser manifestations of the grand powers, potentials and authority of Brahm as compared to the former (the Trinity Gods which are more subtle and sublime manifestations of Brahm). Since this visible gross world is a creation of the mind, the latter is compared to the other visible manifestations of Brahm such as the sun, the moon and the fire.] (70).

71. Constant paying of attention to and focusing of the mind on the essential element behind the concept of Bindu (i.e. by meditating upon the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm) helps in the decimation of all sorts of Vasanas (worldly passions, lust, desires and yearnings) that veil the aspirant and act as impediments in his spiritual pursuit and progress in it. [When the aspirant concentrates his attention on the power center called Bindu or dot in order to facilitate his meditation process, it is natural that he has to withdraw his mind and all the senses from all external influences of the world and every sort of diversions, and instead focus it on that Bindu. Otherwise he would not be able to meditate in the first place. This practice helps the mind to be trained enough to become independent and stand on its own feet; it helps the mind to learn to make itself free from all external influences and acquire sufficient strength and will power to withdraw from the outside world and remain focused on its chosen spiritual path once it decides to do so. When the mind takes this decision that it has got nothing to do with the external world of artificiality and delusions, and rather it should focus its attention on the primary spiritual goal of life which is to obtain self-realisation that leads to final liberation and deliverance of the soul from the cycle of birth and death and its attending delusions and horrors in this world, it would remain steady and unwavering in this endeavour by eliminating everything else that causes any kind of nuisance and hindrance in it by becoming immune to all sorts of influences exerted by the natural tendency of the body to swerve towards the material comforts and pleasures offered by the charming world in order to satisfy the desire of its organs for self gratification. It ought to be noted here that this is the reason why in early stages of the practice of meditation, the practitioner is advised to focus his eyesight on any object in front of him, such as a picture of his chosen deity or even a simple dot on the wall. This is to train the mind to remain focused on a 'Bindu' or dot or any specific object for prolonged periods of time, instead of constantly jumping from object to object quickly which is its natural habit.]

When this is brought about, the Pran Vayu (the vital winds in the body that keep it alive) also merges and becomes one with the Mana, because the mind (Mana) which is not influenced by any worldly desires and passions (called Vasanas) that the body naturally has becomes free from any kind of morally and spiritually degrading

and tainting effects caused by the latter. Being superior to the vital winds, the mind can then exert its controlling effect on them, thereby effectively controlling the body itself through these vital winds. [The winds have a natural tendency to remain restless and be on constant move much like the mind. This is evident from the fact that the body continues to carry out its different functions internally even when the man is apparently sleeping and not appearing to do anything externally. While awake, the organs continue to perceive, voluntarily or involuntarily—such as the case when the skin continues to feel the bite of an insect or the touch of anything warm or cold even though the man might have closed his eyes, shut his ears, clamped his mouth tight and pinched his nose shut. Since all the functions of the body are controlled by the vital winds, when the body is brought under control by the practice of meditation, it is deemed that all these vital winds have also been controlled. Again, since it is the mind that is the ultimate controlling center of the body, when it is self regulated and under control of the spiritual aspirant it becomes very easy for the latter to control everything else by the medium of the mind. So, when the vital winds have been brought under control as a result of practice of meditation, it is said that they have been subjugated by the mind. The vital winds and the body which is driven by these vital winds would then obey the command of the mind—and therefore remain under the control of the practitioner of Yoga. A wise ascetic has already become enlightened about the futility of pursuing this artificial world, the artificiality and the transient nature of its charms and pleasures, and has learnt that if he has to obtain final freedom from the prison of his body and being enslaved to this world and its sense objects, then he must avoid them completely by diverting his mind (Mana) and vital winds (Prans) away from it, and instead focus their combined energy to help him in progressing ahead in his spiritual path.] (71).

72. What is called Naad (the cosmic sound represented by the Mantra OM) is also known as Bindu (the metaphoric ‘dot or point-source’ from where this sound emanates) as well as Chitta (the invisible and subtle sub-conscious mind which works behind the scene). In other words, they are basically the same and are simply different manifestations in Nature (called Prakriti) of the same non-dual entity (known as Brahm). [In other words, the invisible, un-manifested and attributeless non-dual entity known as Brahm—which is at the core of this entire creation known as Prakriti, and which is represented symbolically by a ‘dot’ or a ‘point source which is vested with all divine authority, cosmic energy, stupendous strength and powers of creation’—has revealed itself in different subtle components of this creation known as Prakriti or Nature at the macro level, and the various subtle components of an individual’s nature at the micro level. Therefore, though each component appears to be distinct from the other, they are basically the same divine entity revealed in that form.]

When the spiritual aspirant is able to realise the oneness and non-dual nature of all these units of creation (Prakriti), he obtains immense contentedness of spiritual realisation and enlightenment which gives him great bliss and happiness, a great sense of joy of knowing the esoteric and sublime Truth and Reality of creation (72).

[Note—The concept of Naad and Bindu has been elaborately explained earlier Cantos of this Upanishad. It is only when the Chitta (the subtler aspect of the mind; the sub-conscious) is totally focused on meditation and contemplation that one is able to hear the Naad reverberating in his Naadis and the head where the brain is located. The Bindu in this context would refer to the area of the brain which perceives the sound and interprets it as an intelligent signal—i.e. the so-called ‘point source’ where the sound waves of the cosmic Naad are monitored and deciphered in the brain as meaningful signals. This location is the tri-junction of the two eyebrows and the root

of the nose, the approximate area of the brain called the cerebrum. This area is also the site responsible for wisdom, erudition, enlightenment and knowledge. The entire process of focusing the Chitta on a Bindu to hear the Naad requires intense concentration and practice. That is why when we concentrate our attention on some subject requiring intense concentration of the mind, when we are pensive and submerged in some deep thoughts, our forehead creases and furrows involuntarily in order to focus on the subject at hand.]

73. In fact, it is the Mana (mind) that is the Bindu or point source of the entire creation—its origin, its sustenance and its development. This Bindu originates from the Mana just like the milk has its origin in the cow. [In other words, this world exists because the mind has wanted it to come into existence and then it is the mind that keeps it there because it wants it to be there. The center in the brain that control its power to imagine is the metaphoric ‘Bindu’ or point from where the entire world is unfolded in the way of an imagination. Once this chain is set in motion, it is difficult to control or role it back much like the milk produced in the body of the cow. Once this milk is generated and begins to ooze out from the cow’s udder, it has to be taken out and cannot be stopped midway. Any action to the contrary would cause unnecessary inconvenience to the animal and might be very injurious to the latter’s health. That is why great emphasis is laid in the Upanishads on the point that if one wishes to get rid of the world and its associated problems, the only way to do so is to control the mind.] (73).

74. When the ascetic is fully acquainted with the secret of the six symbolic energy centers in the body, called the ‘Chakras’¹, and has unfolded their energy, he is then empowered by this energy to enter the seventh Chakra². This seventh Chakra is marked by extreme happiness and bliss; it is the fount of ecstasy, felicity and beatitude. During this process, the Pran Vayus, the vital winds of the body, are all controlled and made to move in a harmonious manner. [The Yoga Upanishads describe in detail how the practitioner of Yoga can collect all his vital winds and channel their flow through the various Chakras after passing through the Kundalini and then rising up through the Sushumna Naadi to go straight up to the top of the head. Once the vital winds reach the head, they create vibrations that have a massaging effect on the nerves of the brain that calms down the nerves and give the practitioner an unmatched and indescribable sensation of bliss, contentedness and spiritual ecstasy.] (74).

[Note—¹The *six Chakras* are the following—(1) The ‘Mooladhar Chakra’, (2) The ‘Swadhisthan Chakra’, (3) The ‘Manipur Chakra’, (4) The ‘Anahat Chakra’, (5) The ‘Vishuddha Chakra/Kanth Chakra’ and (6) The ‘Agya Chakra or Bhru Chakra’.

²The *seventh Chakra* is called the ‘Brahm Rahandra Chakra or Sahasrar Chakra’ which is located in the forehead and has the form of a grey cloud or smoke. It is the hair-like spilt in the top of the skull from where the vital wind called ‘Pran’ makes its exit from the body of a Yogi (ascetic) at the time of his death. Sometimes it is used as a synonym for the ‘Vyom Chakra’ which is symbolic of the sky and it is shaped like a 10-petal lotus located at the top of the head.]

75. Wise and expert ascetics establish uniformity between the different Vayus (vital winds of the body), the Bindu Chakra (i.e. the Agya Chakra located in the forehead as well as the Sahasrar Chakra located in the top of the head because it is here that the vital winds start swirling like a whirlwind and it is here that the ascetic hears the Naad) and the Chitta (the mind and its subtle faculties of concentration and paying

attention)—this helps them to coordinate their individual energy and vitality to obtain the sublime state of ecstasy and bliss which is tantamount to obtaining the elixir of life called Amrit. This is achieved during the state of Samadhi (which is stage in the practice of Yoga when the practitioner is completely lost in meditation and totally oblivious to any kind of external disturbances arising out of the world and the body)¹ (75).

[Note—¹It is during Samadhi that one is able to create favourable circumstances for the unification of all the vital winds present in the body, concentrate them in one place in the head, and then make them whirl around in circles to generate the vibration that lead to ecstasy and bliss, or the hearing of the Naad. Naturally, the mind and its ability to focus attention on any task at hand are very important components in this process—thereby bringing into focus the role and importance of the Chitta. Thus in Samadhi, the practitioner obtains the exalted state of consciousness when he is virtually submerged in an ocean of beatitude and ecstasy from which he derives immense sense of happiness and joy so much so that he would not like to move away from it and continue to drink this divine and eclectic nectar on a perpetual basis. He hears the Naad and its cosmic vibrations completely drown his other senses so much that he loses awareness of the external world as well as the body itself because their presence is felt or known only as long as the nerves carry relevant information to the brain and the latter is free to interpret this incoming information. With these two units numbed by the cosmic vibrations, the entire circuitry sort of short-circuits and the senses become practically numbed out of existence. The only thing that is heard and felt is the Naad and its attendant sensation of blissful feeling.]

76. The fire is always present inherently in the firewood, but it is kindled or made to make its physical presence visible only when this wood is vigorously rubbed as done in the case of fire sacrifices when an Arani¹ is used to light the fire.

Similarly, the light of Gyan, i.e. the illumination provided by enlightenment and wisdom is only brought to the fore by constant and diligent practice. It needs steadiness of purpose and unwavering commitment on the part of the spiritual aspirant to kindle this light of wisdom and enlightenment (that would help him to see who he really is—i.e. to become ‘self-realised’ and then progress further to realise that this ‘self’ is the non-dual and conscious Atma which is the microcosmic image of the supreme transcendental cosmic Atma of the entire creation at the macrocosmic level).

In other words, though each individual possesses the light of wisdom and intelligence that is inherently and naturally present in him for the simple reason that all have a brain and all have the same consciousness flowing in their bodies, but if this divine faculty is not properly polished, trained and harnessed then it would remain dormant and untapped like the fire in the firewood (76).

[Note—¹The fire of the sacrificial pit is to be self produced. This is done by vigorously rubbing two pieces of wood called the Arani. The Arani consists of two pieces of wood used to self-produce the fire during fire sacrifices by vigorously rubbing them against one another. The lower piece is rectangular in shape with a hole or indentation in the middle; it is made of a softer form of wood, usually of the Ashvattha tree (*Ficus religiosa*). It is called the lower Arani or the ‘Adharaa-rani’ and is likened to the female uterus. The upper piece of wood is in the form of a churning or rubbing rod made of hard wood, usually Shami tree (*Acacia suma*), and it is called ‘Uttaraa-rani’. It is equivalent to the male phallus. The upper piece is inserted in the hole of the lower piece and vigorously turned with the help of a long string or cord. This rubbing generates heat and results in the creation of fire at the point of friction. This fire is the offspring of this union of the cosmic male and female.]

77. The oil lamp lighted inside a pitcher cannot spread its light outside of it (because it is enclosed by the body of the pitcher). When the pitcher is broken it is only then that this light can spread and cover the wider realm (77).

78. The body of the spiritual aspirant is like this metaphoric pitcher, and the Jiva (the living being) himself is like the oil lamp. [Or, in other words, the pure consciousness called the Atma which is the true identity of the Jiva, cannot show its light of wisdom, erudition and enlightenment under ordinary circumstances because of the fact that it is covered by the veil represented by the gross body in which it has to live much like the oil lamp put inside the pitcher].

Under the expert guidance of a Guru (moral preceptor and spiritual guide and teacher) when the outer covering of the body is removed, i.e. when one is able to do away with one's attachments with the gross body and be enamoured by its various charms and attractions on the wise advice of his Guru, he would then be able to see the light hidden inside his own bosom in the form of 'consciousness'. This awareness and understanding is like achieving the most exalted state of self-realisation which is synonymous with the state of Brahm-realisation (because the conscious Atma and Brahm are one and the same entity, albeit their planes of existence are different, for the former is at the micro level of existence while the latter is at the macro level of existence) (78).

[Note—The creature has been using the body as the medium through which he has been enjoying the sensual pleasures and various comforts of this material world. So when he is able to symbolically get rid of the body by becoming indifferent to it and its enticements of offering various charms and comforts, it would be symbolically like the breaking of the pitcher.

That is, when the aspirant is able to understand, under the wise advice given by his Guru, that it was the body which had been misleading him to believe that the world outside was the real thing for him—because of the simple reason that it was through the medium of the body that he could interact with the external world and become aware of its attractions and enticements—though he had been told by the scriptures that this world is false and an imagination of the mind, he had found it very difficult to be convinced by this proposition of the falsehood of the world because the body had made him believe otherwise. Now when the body has been removed from the scene by diligent practice and wisdom ignited by the expert advice of the Guru, it is natural that all illusions and delusions pertaining to the world that arise out of the awareness of the body are eliminated for good. When this happens, the aspirant is able to witness another world of the self-illuminated and radiant Atma which radiates an eternal light of enlightenment and wisdom. This world of the lighted consciousness is eternal and blissful as compared to the world to which the gross body related to earlier, i.e. the world of sense organs and their objects which are perishable and transient as well as the cause of all sorts of grief and sorrows which can never give peace and happiness to anyone.

Once this state of eclectic understanding is achieved, the light of Brahm realisation and self realisation that accompany such wisdom comes to the fore. This 'light' had been hitherto lying hidden from view. When the creature loses all interest in the attractions of the body, he would no longer be attached to and attracted by the outside material world because the latter is felt and enjoyed by the medium of the body.

When this happens, the mind would be free to concentrate its attention on more sublime and subtler things other than the gross physical world, i.e. it would be free from being distracted by the numerous inputs of the external world received through the organs of the body. The spiritual aspirant can now become free from the numerous encumbrances of the gross body such as having various Vasanas and

Vrittis (inherent worldly passions and desires as well as habits and temperaments), and instead use all his strength and stamina to unfold the light of the pure conscious Atma present inside his own self. This wisdom and enlightenment leads him on the eclectic path of Brahm realisation which in turn would provide him with a sense of eternal peace and beatitude.]

79. The Guru is like the helmsman who holds the oar of a boat (i.e. he is like the expert boatman who steers the boat and knows how to go about his job with accurate precision), while the wise words or the advice that he gives are like the strong boat itself. The desire to cross this mundane and material world of delusions and artificiality, and find eternal liberation and deliverance from its trap for all times to come, is the ‘Vasana Shakti’, or the ‘power of desire’ that drives one to embark upon this great journey to cross this ocean-like world and reach its other shore (i.e. to obtain emancipation and salvation for the soul) by using this boat and following the instructions of the Guru (who is an expert in this field) (79).

This is what this Yogshikha Upanishad preaches. This is its truthful teaching. Amen!

Thus ends Canto 6

-----Shanti Paath-----

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Chapter 22

Ekakchar Upanishad/Ekakcharo-panishad

This Upanishad has been revealed in the form of an eclectic and sublime prayer coming out of the heart of a truly realised and enlightened sage/seer who sees the same Divinity known as the supreme transcendental Brahm, the Supreme Being having the unique virtues of being ‘Ek’ or one and non-dual, and ‘Akchar’ or imperishable and eternal, as being universally present in the entire creation in a uniform and non-dual manner. In fact, this Upanishad derives its name ‘Ekakchar’ from these two principal sublime qualities of Brahm—i.e. Ek and Akchar.

This divine Being is present everywhere, from the macrocosmic level of the cosmos right up to the minutest atom at the micro level because it is all-pervading, all-encompassing and all-inclusive.

This supreme Lord is worshipped, honoured and revered in his various manifestations—as the cosmic ether, representing the sacred liquid called Soma, that flows throughout the length and breadth of the cosmos, as the Pran, the vital life-forces and vital winds, that move and pulsate in the body of the individual creature, specially in the Sushumna Naadi representing the creature’s central nervous system which keeps him conscious, active and alive, and as the consciousness itself which radiates and pulsates throughout the creation as its vital life.

This eclectic and enigmatic cosmic Consciousness has also revealed itself in the form of the almighty Lord who protects his devotees from all troubles and is therefore known as ‘Arishtanemi’—one who can eliminate or destroy or overcome misfortunes, calamities, disaster, death and other portentous phenomenon. The term is

also applied to 'Kartikeya'—who is also known as Shadaanan, the son of Lord Shiva or of Agni (the Fire God). His other name is 'Skand'—meaning someone who attacks swiftly one's enemy and therefore is the God of War as a leader of Shiva's ghosts against the enemies of the Gods.

Not only this, the supreme Brahm's magnificently glorious virtues and universal overriding authority are manifested in the form of the stupendous powers and virtues that are displayed by such Gods as Indra who is the king of Gods and the controller of all the organs of the creature's body, thereby symbolically ruling over the entire creation, as Rudra who is one of the most potent, ruthless and uncompromising forms of Lord Shiva who can annihilate the entire world when it annoys the Lord by its waywardness and random recklessness, and as Surya, the Sun God (represented by the celestial sun), personifying the most glorious, radiantly divine and the splendorous visible form of Brahm.

The same eclectic cosmic Divinity is revealed as the four Vedas which are the eternal repositories of knowledge, as the three Gunas (Sata, Raja and Tama) which determine all the characteristic temperaments, natures, virtues and qualities shown by all known species of creatures thereby determining the character and personality traits of each single individual in creation, and as the visible world itself at large, both movable as well as immovable.

The wise and enlightened spiritual aspirant is advised to concentrate upon worshipping this one non-dual Divinity instead of frittering away precious time and life in pursuing innumerable paths and Gods. This would surely lead him to his final liberation and deliverance from the cycle of delusions arising out of ignorance of the reality and truth, along with its accompanying horrendous consequences.

-----Shanti Paath-----

Please see appendix no. 1 for the meaning of this Shanti Paath.

1. Oh Lord! It is you who is the one and non-dual imperishable divine entity who is represented by the monosyllable word (i.e. the Mantra 'OM'), who is the essence of the elixir of eternity known as Soma (the holy liquid offered to Gods and used during fire sacrifices), and who is the vitality and life-forces moving up and down or radiating in the Sushumna Naadi (representing the central nervous system which not only keeps the man alive but is also responsible to make him conscious and enabling all his senses to work in a coordinated manner). [In other words, all these glorious principals of creation are nothing but the Lord's own glories on display; the Lord has revealed himself in a sublime and imperceptible form in each and every of these magnificent entities of creation.]

You are the cause and creator of this entire creation or universe. You are the unquestioned Lord of all living beings. You are the Puran Purush, i.e. the most ancient Being who has been lauded and honoured by the ancient mythological scriptures. It is you who is present in all the known forms of creation. It is you who takes the form of rain to inject life in this world (earth), and then protect this life created by you (1).

2. Oh the almighty Lord! It is you who is present as the vital life-giving forces and consciousness in each single unit of this living creation. You are the support and succour for all the well-lettered and learned sages and seers, literally the 'poets' or

mystics, bards and minstrels who sing your divine glories using sacred hymns and holy Mantras of the Vedas. You are the divinity known as Jatveda, i.e. you have revealed yourself in all your splendourous glories and magnificence as the Sun God and the Fire God. You are the Lord of all the realms of the whole creation.

You have revealed yourself as the universal fire element called ‘Ajaat Agni’ because it is unconquerable itself but can conquer the rest of the world. [Obviously the ‘fire element’ has this potentials—no one can ever vanquish the fire in the true sense because if the fire is eliminated, the very existence of life would be jeopardized. On the contrary, the fire would burn anything that is put in it; it can even melt iron and other hard metals without any compromise.]

This astounding potential of yours that is revealed in the form of the fire element or cosmic energy had injected the first signs of life into this cosmos in the form of Hiranyagarbha, the macrocosmic subtle body of creation. [That is, when Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness and the ‘cause’ of this creation, decided to initiate the process of creation, it activated its vital energy in the form of the ‘fire’ element which metamorphosed as the golden cosmic embryo called the Hiranyagarbha. This word comes from the words ‘Hiranya’ which means golden or yellowish in colour, and ‘Garbha’ meaning a womb. Since the fire has a golden or yellowish hue, the cosmic embryo formed as a result of this desire of Brahm to create also had this colour. Brahm in his manifestation as the cosmic bearer of this embryo was Mother Nature which nurtured this Hiranyagarbha till it hatched in the form of the Viraat Purush, the invisible but all-encompassing macrocosmic gross body of Brahm from which the rest of the creation evolved.]

The fire sacrifices and all other auspicious and religious activities are your manifestations. In other words, the sacred fire of the sacrifice symbolise this stupendous power and energy of yours as described above.

You are the one who has revealed himself as the most ancient Lord honoured by the Purans (ancient mythological scriptures) with the epithet of ‘Vibhu’, i.e. one who is almighty, omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent (2).

3. Even as the beads of a rosary or the flowers of a garland are kept together, held in place and given a definitive shape by the cord/string running through them invisibly, this entire world is held together and given its shape by you who hold it in place and give life to it in the form of the vital Pran that flows invisibly through this living world and injects life into it. [This Pran refers to the life-giving forces of Nature represented by the vital winds that permeate through each pore of the creature’s individual body and keep it alive. This Pran is present in all living beings, and is the common thread that binds all life forms together in the sense that had there been no Pran the world as we know it would have disintegrated and fallen off in pieces like a dead body which cannot support itself. This wind is also present in the vast bowl of the cosmos as the universal ether, and as the various gases in the atmosphere of the earth and other planets. It is this Pran that is the common denominator in all forms that life has taken in this creation.]

You have, in other words, not only created life but also sustain and nourish it in the form of this Pran. This creation, i.e. the living world, has been conceptualised in your womb (and therefore you are its creator and mother).

This visible world is like one foot of yours; it is one aspect of you¹.

This endless, fathomless and infinite world has been conceived by you and you pervade and permeate in it uniformly like the wind element that pervades uniformly in the space of the sky.

You are not only the creator but also the protector of this creation of yours as symbolised by your manifestation in the form of Lord Kumar (i.e. Lord Kartikeya)² who holds a bow to give protection and fearlessness to all the creatures against the evil forces of creation. [That is, the Lord protects all those who are righteous and noble in his manifestation as Kartikeya. It ought to be noted that the same Lord has manifested as Rudra, the angry manifestation of Shiva, to annihilate those who are wicked and sinful.] (3).

[Note—¹It is said that Brahm has four 'Paads' or legs which symbolise the four corners of creation. That is, Brahm surrounds this entire creation from all sides. Out of these four legs, the visible world represents one. The rest of the creation stands for the remaining three legs. According to another theory, Brahm is said to have sixty four Kalaas or aspects or levels of existence. Out of these, the known world represents Brahm's sixteen Kalaas, i.e. this world is only one fourth aspect of the entire Brahm—a fact metaphorically depicted by saying that Brahm can measure this world in one step. The rest is the invisible macrocosmic aspect of Brahm which is beyond imagination and comprehension. This is obvious because if one fourth is so difficult to understand, one can easily visualise the astounding vastness and intractable nature as well as the stupendity of the remaining three fourths. If Brahm is a complete cycle of sixty four Kalaas, then the known physical world has $64/4 = 16$ Kalaas. It is a quadrant of Brahm. (Rig Veda, 10/90/4).

²*Kartikeya* is also called Shadaan, the son of Lord Shiva or of Agni (the Fire God). He is called the 'God of War' as a leader of Shiva's ghosts against the enemies of the Gods. Refer verse no. 4. He is also known as 'Skand' which refers to someone who attacks; one who jumps, leaps or hops swiftly and with agility as an active soldier in the heat of battle.]

4. Oh Lord! The midday splendorous Sun dazzling in the sky with the glint and glare of a newly made and sharpened arrow made of gold is a visible manifestation of you as Hiranyagarbha. [The Hiranyagarbha is the macrocosmic subtle body of Brahm in the form of the golden embryo of creation present in the womb of Mother Nature. Refer verse no. 2. Here the vast fathomless and dark depth of the sky is like that cosmic womb of Mother Nature, while the golden Sun is like the embryo called Hiranyagarbha.]

It is your light that illuminates the Bhaskar (Sun) in the sky and gives it its shine and glitter.

You are established and honoured as the Arishtanemi¹ Lord known as Kumar (Lord Kartikeya) who is the commander of the army of the Gods (to give them protection from the evil forces of creation). You overcome and remove all difficulties and hurdles, and in this virtue you resemble Garud (the heron or eagle who is the legendary mount of Lord Vishnu, and who is famous for devouring serpents representing all sorts of torments and sufferings faced by the devotees of the Lord). [That is, you not only protect the good forces of creation represented by the Gods by symbolically leading the army of goodness as its commander known as Kartikeya, but also devour or annihilate those forces that are like poisonous snakes in your manifestation as Garud.] (4).

[Note—¹The word *Arishtanemi* means one who can eliminate or destroy or overcome misfortunes, calamities, disaster, death and other portentous phenomenon.]

5. Oh Lord! You are the great Lord of all the creatures who are the subjects of this vast kingdom represented by this creation in your manifestations as Indra (the king of Gods) who holds the weapon known as Vajra (which is the invincible and the strongest weapon in existence), as well as Lord Rudra (the angry form of Shiva).

[That is, you are the supreme Emperor of this kingdom known as the ‘creation’ in the form of the great God called Indra (who is the King of all Gods). Vajra is the invincible weapon that you hold so that you can control the realm with a strong hand. It also stands for the unchallenged authority that you possess, and in this instance it represents the emperor’s scepter. If the things come to a head and the subjects of your kingdom go out of hand in spite of your strict orders to maintain ethical behaviour, decorum, law and order, and you think that it has become imperative to give out exemplary judgment in the form of capital punishment, you assume the role of Rudra and annihilate the creation.]

It is you who is subtly present as the hidden virtue of ‘Kaam’ (worldly desires, passions, lust and longings) in the heart of all the creatures in order to perpetuate this creation. [It is this quality of Kaam that makes the individual get involved in the activities of the gross material world of sense objects, remain perpetually engrossed in it, and even expand his involvement by procreating. This has been used as a necessary evil by Brahm in order to keep the cycle of creation moving ahead unhindered once he had set it rolling in the beginning.]

It is you who is present as the Moon as its Soma content. [The moon is said to be a pitcher of Amrit, the eternal elixir of happiness, joy, contentedness and bliss drunk by the Gods. The Soma is a metaphor for this Amrit and is the liquid offered to Gods during fire sacrifices.]

When the words ‘Swaha’, ‘Swadha’ and ‘Vashat’¹ are pronounced, it is actually you who is being invoked and worshipped. [This is because these words are pronounced when offerings are made to Gods and the spirits of dead ancestors. They derive their sustenance from these offerings, and it is an indirect way of saying that they are sustained and nourished by Brahm. After all, it is Brahm that has come down on earth as rain (see verse no. 1) that transforms itself as food which is offered to the Gods and Spirits. In other words, the Gods and Spirits derive their sustenance and nourishment from Brahm and nothing else. It is Brahm that gives them their life, sustain them, nourish them and give them their great mystical powers and authority.]

(5).

[Note--¹*Swaha*, *Swadha* and *Vashat*—the word ‘Swaha’ means to offer anything, to dispense, to distribute. The offerings made to the fire sacrifice meant for the Gods is done by saying *Swaha*, while those meant for the dead ancestors is done by saying ‘*Swadha*’. According to the Purans, these two are the divine wives of the Fire God. *Swaha* takes the offerings made for the Gods in the fire sacrifice to them, while *Swadha* is responsible for taking the offerings made for the dead ancestors in the fire sacrifice to them.

The offering made to the sacrificial fire are of four types: (a) *Swaha Kar*, (b) *Vashat Kar*, (c) *Hant Kar*, and (d) *Swadha Kar*. The two offerings called *Swaha Kar* and *Vashat Kar* provide nourishment to the Gods. The third offering named *Hant Kar* sustains the humans. And the fourth offering called *Swadha Kar* provides sustenance to the Pittars (the spirits of dead ancestors).

Swaha and *Vashat* symbolise the offerings made to the fire sacrifice that are meant for the Gods and form which they derive their sustenance. The word *Swaha* is pronounced at the time of actual offering to the fire pit, while *Vashat* refers to the special fire sacrifices meant to honour specific Gods and are done with specific Mantras or mystical formulae and words especially dedicated to that particular deity. Both *Swaha* and *Vashat* are used synonymously because they complement each other (Taittiriya S. 7/5/5/3). These two words are related to the ‘Vaishwanar Agni’ (see Brahmin 9 below) and the Sun God (Maitreyi Brahmin, 4/6/7; Shatpath Brahmin, 1/7/2/11).]

6. Oh Lord! It is you who has manifested himself as Dhata (the creator, preserver, sustainer and bearer of this creation), as Vidhata (the one who has determined the destiny of all the creatures and has set the rules of conduct that they are supposed to obey in this world; the Lord who has created the constitution or the law book of this creation), as Pawan (the all-pervading Wind God), Garud (eagle or heron, the mount of Vishnu—see verse no. 4), as Vishnu (the sustainer and protector of creation), as Varaaha (the third incarnation of Lord Vishnu as a boar in which he had killed the demon Hiranyaaksha and lifted the earth out of the flood waters in which it had been submerged; this is symbolic of the Lord's liberation of the world and preventing it from being drowned in an ocean of sins), and as the night and the day (representing the cycle of death and birth respectively).

You are the past, the present and the future (symbolising the beginning of creation, the current phase of creation, and the final end of creation and beyond it).

You are revealed in the form of all activities and deeds in this world, as well as the movement of destiny and time.

Indeed, you are the eternal and imperishable Supreme Being who transcends these limitations of space, time, era and circumstances that govern the creation otherwise (6).

7. Oh Lord! The three primary Vedas (which are repositories of all knowledge that exist in this creation created by the creator), viz. the Rig, the Sam and the Yajur, are pronounced by your mouth. [According to tradition, it was Brahma, the old patriarch of creation who had created this visible world, who had created this three Vedas. Therefore this verse implies that this Brahma is also one of your forms, and is nobody else. In fact, the word 'Brahma' incorporates the word 'Brahm' in its self, and therefore the former has his existence due to the latter; the latter forms the 'gene' of the former. If 'Brahm' is removed from 'Brahma', the latter means nothing!]

You are the Lord of all assets created in this world for its sustenance in your manifestation of the eight Vasus, the patron Gods who oversee these physical assets of creation¹.

You represent the Antariksha (the space beyond the outer atmosphere of earth). [In other words, you are as vast and fathomless as the space of this universe and harbour all that exists in your bottomless bowl. Nothing exists outside of you.]

You are the Chief of any Yagya (fire sacrifice) both as its patron as well as the chief priest on the one hand, and as the almighty deity to whom worship is offered through the rite and who accepts the offerings and oblations made during the rituals of the Yagya.

It is you who has revealed himself in the form of the eleven Rudras² as well as in the form of the sons of Diti, i.e. as the Daityas (demons), and as the sons of Aditi, i.e. as the Vasus (the Gods led by Vishnu). [This is a remarkable observation—both the demons as well as the Gods are the same Brahm personified. They represent opposite characters in creation, and to say that they are the same principle revealed in two different forms is the ideal example of the virtue of Advaitya or non-duality so much extolled by the Upanishads. And there is no wonder in its truth—because if everything is Brahm revealed in that form, it follows that the demons and the Gods are no exception to this rule. Everything means 'everything', with no exceptions!] (7).

[Note—¹There are *eight Vasus* who are the various patron Gods who preside over the essentials of life. They are—Vishnu as the sustainer, Shiva who is the annihilator, Kuber who is the treasurer of the wealth of the Gods, the Sun, Water, Fire, Wealth represented by gems and gold, and 'Ray' representing glory and fame. The element

‘Fire’ is the most potent, prominent and essential force in creation, because without fire the world would freeze to death. Hence, the Fire-God is said to be the chief amongst the Vasus. The ‘fire’ element is the active force in creation and is primarily responsible for kindling the cosmic cauldron that set in motion the process, and once having set it in motion it then sustained it and would finally annihilate it by burning it to cinders. On the other hand, Lord Vishnu is the passive force of creation represented by his other form of Viraat Purush which is the primary male aspect of creation. Lord Vishnu, who is the sustainer of the creation, is the Lord of Laxmi who is the Goddess of wealth, and is the supreme creator because Brahma, the old patriarch of creation who created the visible world and its creatures, was himself born atop the divine lotus that emerged from the navel of Lord Vishnu. Lord Vishnu utilizes the services of Laxmi who is the personification of the active forces of creation to create, sustain and annihilate the world. The Vasus are symbolic Gods who represent those essentials aspects of creation without which life would be difficult to conceive and sustain and finally conclude.

The eight Vasus are the patron Gods who provide succour and a dwelling place for the whole creation. They symbolise those primary necessities of life without which existence is not possible. They are— (i) Kuber (the God of wealth and prosperity), (ii) the Sun God (who provides energy and food) and his rays and radiance (i.e. sunlight and the energy that it provides), (iii) Shiva (the concluser or annihilator of the creation), (iv) Vishnu (the sustainer), (v) the Water God (called Varun), (vi) the Fire God (called Agni), (vii) any body of water such as a pond, a river etc., and (viii) holy and pious people (who give advice and guidance to the creatures of the creation). According to Brihad Aranyak Upanishad 3/9/3, the Vasus are the following—Fire, Earth, Air, Antariksha (the space of the solar system), Aditya (Sun), Duloka (heavens), the Moon, and the Nakshatras (the stars and the planets).

According to Purans, the eight Vasus are the following—Dhruv, Dhar, Som/Soma the sap of an elixir-providing plant called Som/Soma which is used during religious ceremonies as sanctified liquid offered to the Gods), Aapha (water), Anil (wind), Anal (fire), Pratush and Prabhaas.

These eight Vasus are the semi-Gods who symbolise the various types of assets needed to sustain this world. They therefore represent such assets as jewels, precious stones and gems, gold and other forms of wealth and property. Vasus also refers to the fire and water elements as well as their grosser forms as the terrestrial fire and water bodies such as ponds and lakes; to the virtue of radiance, splendour and glory; to the ray of light; to Kuber (the treasurer of Gods), Shiva, Sun, Vishnu, and a simple and pious gentleman.

Lord Vishnu has one of his names as ‘Vasudeo’ because he is the sustainer and protector of creation, signifying his undisputed lordship over all the essential elements in Nature, called the Vasus of which there are eight in number, which were created at the beginning of creation to help sustain the upcoming creation.

It ought to be noted here that Vishnu is also called Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic gross body of Brahm, and it is from this form of Brahm that the creator of the visible creation, i.e. Brahma the old patriarch of creation, had emerged atop a divine lotus that sprouted from the navel of Vishnu. In other words, everything has its origin in the supreme Brahm.

²Lord Shiva has eleven forms called *Rudras*. The eleven Rudras are the various manifestations of Lord Shiva. According to the Srimad Bhagvat, 3/12/12, they are the following:--(i) Mannu, (ii) Manu, (iii) Mahinas, (iv) Mahaan, (v) Shiva, (vi) Ritdwaj, (vii) Ugrareta, (viii) Bhav, (ix) Kaal, (x) Vamdeo, and (xi) Dhritvrat. The eleven Rudras appear in Rig Veda 1/43/1, and Taittiriya Brahmin 3/4/9/7. They are regarded as the father of the Wind God or the Maruts (Rig Veda, 2/33/1). The word Rudra means one who is angry, terrible and wrathful. Amongst the Rudras, Lord Shiva is regarded as the most senior and enlightened.

According to Vishnu Puran, Ansha (Part) 1, Canto 8, verse nos. 1-11, when the creator Brahma wished to create a son in his own likeness, a child with a blue (purple) tone of the skin (resembling the colour of the sky) was born. The infant began crying aloud and running here and there. At his behaviour, Brahma named the child 'Rudra'—one who cries aloud and causes a nuisance. The child cried again and again seven times, and to calm him down Brahma gave him newer names.

This is how the word 'Rudra' originated. The other names are Bhava, Sharva, Ishaan, Pashupati, Bhim, Ugra and Mahaadev. The other names are Lohitaanga, Manojavaa and Skanda.

According to Shiva Puran, Rudra Sanhita, 18/20-27, Lord Shiva assumed the form of eleven sons of sage Kashyap and his wife Surabhi to fulfill their wish. The names of these eleven manifestations of Shiva are the following—Kapaali, Pingal Bhim, Virupaaksha, Vilohit, Shaastaa, Ajapad, Ahir-burdhanya, Shambhu, Chanda and Bhava.]

8. Oh Lord! Your forms are uncountable and unimaginable. The disc of astounding splendour and brilliance that shines in the sky (a reference to the sun) or as the illuminating disc that shines elsewhere in the subtle sky (i.e. in the heart of the creature symbolising the rounded disc of the full moon) are some of your divine forms. These forms remove the gloomy darkness (representing delusions and ignorance) from this world¹.

The golden sun symbolises both the golden cosmic embryo called Hiranyagarbha present in the womb of the creator (as the macrocosmic subtle body of the un-manifested Brahm) as well as the incandescent illumination emanating from this divine embryo which seeped out of the womb to illuminate the realm around it as represented by the illuminated sky around the sun. Further, since the embryo extracts its nutrition through the placenta attached to its navel, this sun also symbolised the cosmic navel because of the fact that it's light, heat and energy injects life on this earth and sustains all the creatures that live on it.

The rays of light that emanate from all the heavenly bodies that shine in the sky are actually manifestations of your glittering glories that radiate out from you to all the directions in this creation² (8).

[Note—¹In other words, your presence is sufficient to remove the darkness of ignorance and delusions from this world. Or, by being present in the heart of the creature as his Atma or soul, you provide the illumination of life and wisdom to him if he just realises that the sun and the moon in the sky are symbolic reminders for him to see the same brilliant illumination emanating from these heavenly bodies in his own self. This is the essence of the concept of 'Brahm-realisation, self-realisation and enlightenment'. According to Yoga Upanishads, the Sun is said to be the patron God of the Pingla Naadi or the right nostril, while the Moon is that of the Ida Naadi or the left nostril. In this way these two Gods control the life in a man because breathing is central to life. The Sun God has his symbolic abode in the navel, in the Nabhi Chakra, from where the embryo derives its nourishment while in the mother's womb—symbolising the ability of Brahm to not only create life but also to take care of it by providing it with nourishment. The use of the word 'navel' in verse no. 9 below assumes significance in this context. The navel is the 'focal point' of the body from where all the Naadis (nerves; veins) radiate out and spread to the farthest corners of the body in order to sustain it and keep it alive. If the body is regarded as a microcosm, then the celestial sun would be the navel of the world as is evident from the fact that the entire solar system revolves around this 'navel' called the sun. The Moon God on the other hand controls the Mana or the mind, and has his abode in the Kantha Chakra located in the throat from where he controls what he speaks and even his breath. The Mana is the progenitor of everything in this material world of sense

objects as is repeatedly stressed in the Upanishads, for should the Mana decide that the world is inconsequential, so it would become for the creature.

²This alludes to the celestial sun as well as the numerous other suns in the vast bowls of the universe, called the 'stars', which are all the most vivid and splendid manifestation of the stupendous glories of Brahm on display. If the sun represents Brahm then the rays of sunlight represents the glories of Brahm emanating out from it and spreading to each corner of the vast realm of creation. Even as the sun is central to life on earth, Brahm is the focal point of life in this creation. The word 'light' is synonymous with 'life', and its opposite 'dark' with 'death'. Since Brahm is 'life' and not death, it is apt to use the word 'light' as an aphorism to describe Brahm.]

9. Oh Lord! It is you who is all-knowing and omniscient. You are the protector and sustainer of all the existent worlds (refer verse no. 13), and the inhabitants of those worlds. In metaphoric terms, you are like the navel which helps the embryo to draw its nourishment from the mother; or you are the focal point around which the entire edifice of creation is built. [Or you like the sun which is the symbolic 'navel' or focal point around which the entire solar system revolves or depends.]

Being all-pervading, immanent and all-incorporating, you permeate the entire creation which revolves around you (i.e. it is dependent upon you).

You are the final resting place of all deeds and actions. [That is, you are the final objective of all the noble things that are done in this world; you are the final aim of all auspicious and religious endeavours undertaken by a person, and you are the ultimate destination where the soul wishes to go and find its final rest by so many doing good things in life and diligently observing all the tenets of the scriptures.]

It is you who is present in the womb (navel) of the Viraat Purush (Vishnu) as Prajapati (Brahma). [This has reference to the fact that Brahma the creator of the visible creation had emerged atop a divine lotus that sprouted from the navel of Vishnu. Obviously Brahma was present there and was lifted atop the lotus as it emerged from this navel.]

It is you who has revealed himself in the form of the Chandas, i.e. as the poetical hymns of the Vedas as well as of all the other scriptures (9).

10. The glories, majesty and magnificence of the Viraat Purush (i.e. the macrocosmic, all-encompassing, infinite and invisible form of the Supreme Being known as Brahm) are of such stupendous and infinite proportions that they can neither be measured (known, ascertained, described, enumerated, defined and explained) nor their dimensions found and end known or seen or determined by even the most wise, learned, erudite and sagacious persons such as great sages or seers who delve in the great Vedas and employ them in an attempt to do so for the simple reason that these Vedas, such as the Sam Veda, which have been singing and lauding the Lord's divine eclectic glories from time immemorial have not themselves been able to do so inspite of their best of efforts, their ceaseless attempts and their highly evolved level of knowledge because they are in fact created by the creator Brahm himself as embodiments of knowledge and are the greatest repositories of knowledge and had been ever been created by him. [Having failed to do so, they surrendered by saying 'Neti-Neti'—literally meaning 'not this not this' or 'neither this nor that'. That is to say that first they made an attempt to define something that is essentially indefinable and beyond comprehension, and then feared that it was not the correct definition. They then endlessly searched for words and epithets, listed them in reams of words, and still could not fine the beginning or the middle or the end of Brahm. So they

threw in the towel saying that what they have just said is not Brahm, and neither is he something that they had said in the past or some time back.]

Oh Lord! The Supreme Being who is adored and worshipped by means of the hymns of the Sam Veda as well as the Yajur Veda during fire sacrifices by experts of these Vedas is none else but you (10).

11. Oh Lord! You are revealed in all forms the creation has taken, such as a female or a male, as a girl or as a boy. You are mother earth (which supports the entire living world as known to us—see verse no. 12).

You are Dhata (creator and protector—see verse no. 6), Varun (the Water God), Samraat (emperor), Samvatsar (the full year symbolising one complete cycle of seasons and life of a creature), Agni (the fire element and the Fire God), and Arayama (the Sun God).

Indeed, whatever that exists that has ‘life’ is nothing but you in that form (11).

12. Oh Lord! You are revealed in multifarious forms as Surya (Sun), Garud (the mount of Vishnu), Chandra (Moon), Varun (the Water God), Prajapati (the creator Brahma), Vishnu (the sustainer and protector of creation), Savita (the splendid sun; the element of light, heat and energy represented by the sun), and Gopati (literally the lord of cows but more broadly meaning someone who is the lord of all non-human creatures as well as is the lord of the various organs of the body; also referring to Lord Krishna because he was born in the cowherd clan).

In your manifestation as Vishnu, you provide solace and succour by giving protection to the entire creation against the torments inflicted by the wicked forces of creation represented by the various demons.

You are the creator and sustainer of the whole world in the form of mother earth. The entire creation is enveloped by you or encircled by you, and you form its outer boundary. [In other words, nothing exists beyond you; you encompass everything in existence.] (12).

13. Oh Lord! You are revealed in the form of the three worlds represented by the words ‘Bhu’ which refers to the terrestrial world where the mortal creatures live, ‘Bhuvaha’ which refers to the world above the surface of the earth such as the world of the sky borne creatures, and ‘Swaha’ or the world of the heavens where the stars and other celestial bodies live (refer verse no. 9).

You are ‘Swayambhu’—i.e. one who is self born; one who has no parents and any cause for coming into being.

You are ‘Vishwatomukh’—i.e. one whose face is turned everywhere; one who faces on all the sides; one who is present everywhere; one who is omnipresent and ubiquitous; and by extension one who is all-knowing because he is present everywhere and therefore nothing is hidden from him; one who is therefore the visible face of the multifaceted creation.

Any person who is wise enough to realise that the supreme Brahm who is the Lord of the entire creation, who is most radiant and glorious like the sun, and who is reverentially honoured and highly lauded by the ancient scriptures, lives secretly in his (i.e. the enlightened person’s) own cave-like heart in the form of the pure consciousness known as the Atma, as well as in the form of the life-sustaining vital wind forces known as Pran that are ubiquitously present in the body—such a wise, erudite and enlightened person is able to attain the supreme stature that is the exclusive domain reserved for those who are self-realised and Brahm-realised. He

overcomes the delusions created by the mind and attains this exalted and exclusive state of realised and enlightened existence.

This is the esoteric and eclectic knowledge pertaining to the Divinity known as Brahm as preached by this Upanishad. Amen! (13).

-----Shanti Paath-----

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Chapter 23

Akchi Upanishad/Akchyu-panishad

This Upanishad is dedicated to the Sun God and has two parts. In the first part, sage Sankriti has prayed to the Sun God and asks him to show the world true light. The Sun is a visible manifestation of the glorious divinity, the radiant splendour and stupendous magnificence of the supreme transcendental Brahm. By praising the Sun God one is actually paying his obeisance to the Supreme Being who has revealed himself as this God. There is an Upanishad especially dedicated to the Sun God, called the Surya Upanishad, and it appears as the 17th Upanishad of the fifth volume in this series dealing with the Upanishads of the Atharva Veda.

In the second part, the Sun God describes to the sage the metaphysical knowledge of this Brahm, called the Brahm Vidya, and emphasises that Yoga is the true and effective means to realise this Brahm. The path that leads to Brahm-realisation has seven distinct signs or stages, called the 'Seven Bhumikas of Brahm Yoga'. Refer also to Varaaha Upanishad which is Chapter 30 of this volume. Each Bhumika marks a distinct stage or step of enlightenment, and they have been elaborately described in part two of this Upanishad. These seven stages are listed in the way of ordinal numbers, with the first indicating the preliminary or the preparatory stage, and the seventh number marking the ultimate and highest spiritual order which is equivalent to Brahm-realisation. The distinctive characteristics of each stage have been clearly brought out in a beautiful way in this Upanishad.

Being revealed by the Sun God himself, it is one of the 'revealed Upanishads'. Other Upanishads of the Krishna Yajur Veda that very closely resemble this Upanishad are Kaivalya Upanishad which is Chapter 4, Brahm Upanishad, Chapter 3, and Brahm Vidya Upanishad which is Chapter 16 of this volume.

-----Shanti Paath-----

Please see appendix no. 1 for the meaning of this Shanti Paath.

Canto 1

1. Once upon a time, the wise and enlightened sage named Sankriti went to the divine abode of the Sun God¹ called the 'Aditya Loka'. There, the sage bowed most

reverentially before the Sun God and offered prayers and his obeisance to him by what is known as 'Chakshyushmati Vidya'².

The sage prayed thus—'Oh Lord! I most reverentially bow to the Sun God who is the one who lights up the organ of the body which gives the creature his ability to see, i.e. he blesses the creature with the magnificent faculty of sight and gives consciousness to the organ known as the eye so that it can carry out the function of seeing on behalf of the creature who is a microcosmic revelation of the macrocosmic, all-encompassing Supreme Being.

I bow to Lord Surya (the Sun God) who moves across the path of the sky. I bow to him who is the great commander of the brilliant army (having glinting armour) represented by the thousands of rays (of the sunlight) emanating and radiating out from him (in all the directions of the realm under his dominion and helps to exercise control over the entire visible creation). [This alludes to the fact that the world and its existential life depends on the sunlight more than anything else. If the sun were to be blocked out, life as we know it would be extinguished. Life can be sustained without the moon, but it is unimaginable without the sun. The Sun moves across the sky with his army of light rays to protect the world from the evil of darkness.]

I bow most reverentially to Lord Surya who personifies all the three qualities of Sata, Raja and Tama that exist in creation³.

Oh Lord Surya! Take us from the path of falsehood towards the path of truth. Take us from darkness (representing delusions and ignorance and their attending horrible consequences for the soul) towards light and illumination (symbolised by the eclectic virtue of wisdom, erudition, sagacity and enlightenment which would make our lives worth living and worthy, which would us distinguished and differentiated from being an animal, which would make us put this opportunity of having got a human body to become spiritually elevated and become self-realised and Brahm-realised, which would open the floodgates of eternal peace and contentedness for us, which would light up the 'eternal existential truth' for us by removing the veil of darkness signifying delusions and ignorance, and which would light up our lives with glory and magnificence).

Oh Lord! Take us away from death and mortality towards eternity and immortality; take us away from darkness towards light.

The Bhagwan (Lord God Sun) is like the pure Swan (representing the pure consciousness that lives as the Atma of all living beings). He is the one who forms an image or reflection⁴ (of the supreme Brahm or Truth).

He (i.e. the Sun God) is the bearer of the entire living creation (because life would be unimaginable and impracticable without sunlight). He is adorned by a glittering gown consisting of dazzling rays of light glinting out from it in all directions. He wears an equally marvelous crown from which streaks of dazzling light radiate out to all corners of this world. [That is, his divine Being is so holy and auspicious that it glows with a magnificent halo that effuses out of his divine Self and surrounds him from all the sides besides illuminating the vast stretches of the realm around him as well to mark his august presence in the sky as its Lord. This is a metaphoric representation of the Supreme Being's august presence in our midst; even as the entire life on earth revolves around the presence of the sun in the sky, the very existence of all living beings depend upon the presence of the conscious Atma, the counterpart of this Supreme Being residing in each individual as his 'true self', to remain alive and active.]

He is 'Jatveda', i.e. one having whatever is born or created as his property; the all-possessor; one who knows everything and is known by all creation. [This word is

usually applied as an epithet for the eternal fire element of which the sun is a visible manifestation and container.]

He glows like molten gold (signifying his purity and immense intrinsic value for creation). He is an embodiment of all the divine and glorious virtues represented by 'light' (which provides this creation with illumination, energy and heat—the essential factors of necessary for life; the word is also used as a metaphor for the grand virtues of wisdom, erudition, sagacity and enlightenment as compared to darkness which symbolises a life of falsehoods, illusions, ignorance and delusions).

He is endowed with the eclectic virtues of Tapa (i.e. he glows with his natural brilliant light because he has done severe Tapa, or has observed sincere austerity, done penance and has generally endured sufferance for a noble cause of sustenance and well being of this creation created by him, and is therefore rewarded by its divine fruit in the form of unmatched brilliance representing his divine glory and spiritual accomplishment that effuses out of him as his brilliant light and splendour which makes him burn fiercely like a cauldron of eternal fire because the word 'Tapa' itself is used as a synonym for 'fire' with its great powers, potentials and virtues).

That divine Surya (the sun; the Sun God) is revealing himself before all the living beings with all his splendourous radiance emanating out of his self as thousands of glinting rays of glittering brilliance and dazzling light. [The present tense used in this statement indicates that when this prayer is offered, the sun is gradually rising from the deep bowls of darkness in the horizon at dawn and gradually begins to light up the vast realm with its light as a token of the Sun God's acceptance of the prayers of the worshipper and blessing him with his largesse.]

This same Surya has revealed himself in the form of hundreds of forms and manifestations in which this living world exists. [Here, the Sun God is likened to the consciousness present in all living beings in this world because it is this consciousness that makes the creature alive and active. The day time marked by the presence of the sun is like the waking state of consciousness when the creature wakes up to the realities of existential life and goes about his daily life, while the darkness of night is like his sleeping state when nothing of the world is known to him as the world is plunged in darkness in the absence of the sun's light. The revelation of the sun in the form of all living things alludes to the fact that all the living creatures who live in this world have the same consciousness called the Atma living inside their bodies though their external features show a wide variation in colour, form and shape much like the same sun appearing differently when seen at different times of the day, during different seasons of the year, and from different locations on earth.]

I bow most reverentially to Lord Surya, the son of Aditi (the mother of Gods), who symbolises the light in our eyes. [According to the Upanishads, the Sun God had taken up his residence in the eye of the man's body at the time of creation.]

We offer everything that we have to the Surya God who is the one who makes the day move by his own movement. [This refers to the fact that had there been no sun, there would have been constant night, and neither would there be any progress in the day-and-night cycle representing the cycle of birth and death, or creation and destruction. It also alludes to the fact that Brahm whom the sun personifies has revealed himself in all forms of life in which the vast creation exists. Life is characterised by movement; anything that has no life shows no movement as proved by the fact that when the man is dead, no matter what is done to provoke him he would just not respond. Since life is a visible form of the magnificence of Brahm, since life reveals Brahm's astounding virtues, potentials, powers, authority and glories in vivid form which would otherwise have remained unknown and secret because

Brahm is such an esoteric and mysterious entity that nothing is definitely known of its attributes and qualities, and since the Sun God is a vivid manifestation of this Brahm's glories and divinity, it follows that the movement of the sun across the sky and its setting at a predetermined time only to re-emerge the next day is symbolic of the rhythmic movement of life in this world. It also implies that after every phase of darkness and depressing hopelessness, there is always a day of hope and light. So a wise man should utilise this day to the best of his ability.

You (the Sun God) are the bearer of the entire life in this world. [This is obvious from the basic fact that life without sunlight and its accompanying light, energy and heat is simply unthinkable and impracticable.]

When the sage had prayed to the Sun God with this prayer called the 'Chakshyushmati Vidya', the Lord was very pleased with him. He felt exhilarated and blessed him with this boon—'A Brahmin (any learned person) who offers his prayer and worships me with this hymn everyday does not have to suffer from any diseases pertaining to the eyes, and no one suffers from the curse of blindness in his family. When eight learned Brahmins are taught this Vidya (i.e. when eight men are educated with this profound divine knowledge about the real meaning, the metaphysical significance and spiritual truth behind the worship of the Sun God), the teacher becomes an expert in it; he accomplishes 'Siddhi' or acquires great mystical powers that come with successful acquisition and practice of such eclectic knowledge. A person who is well-versed with this esoteric knowledge acquires great name and fame; he becomes revered, honoured, exalted and great' (1).

[Note—¹The Sun God—(a) The Sanskrit word for the Sun God or Aditya is *Surya*. This word has three connotations—viz. (i) *Sarteha*—one how moves. This refers to the Sun because it moves constantly across the sky. It also refers to the supreme cosmic Consciousness that makes all movement possible. (ii) *Sviriyate*—this means one who receives and accepts. This virtue refers to the fact that all offerings offered to the fire sacrifice are done in the presence of the Sun, and since the latter is the celestial cauldron of fire all the offerings are deemed to be offered to it. In another plane, it refers to the Jiva, the living being, who receives stimuli from the world and then accepts them and deduces that the world from where they originate is real and true. (iii) *Suvateha*—meaning one who shines. This is very obvious in the case of the Sun. This virtue refers to the supreme Self or supreme Consciousness that is self-illuminated and self-effulgent.

Sun God or *Surya* appears first in the Rig Veda, 1/50. He is one of the chief Gods that sustain life. He is closely related to the Fire God; the Sun is a visible manifestation of the fire element. The sun is regarded as the 'eye' of the Viraat Purush, and at the time of creation when this Viraat Purush revealed himself as the individual creature such as for example a cow, a horse and a man, the Sun God took up residence in the eye (refer Aitereyo-panishad of Rig Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 4, and Canto 2, verse nos. 3-4). He is also regarded as visible manifestation of the supreme transcendental Brahm (refer Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, 2/1/2; 2/5/5; 3/7/9. The Sun God watched the deeds done by all the creatures (Rig Veda, 1/50/2). The Sun is like the Atma of all the creatures (Akchu Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 1; Rig Veda, 1/115/1; Shatpath Brahman, 14/3/2/9).

The Sun is regarded as a fount of light, energy and heat from a physical perspective, and as a great treasury of knowledge and wisdom symbolised by its magnificent light and brilliant splendour. As an embodiment of this virtue of knowledge, wisdom, erudition and sagacity he has been held in high esteem and as the great teacher and preacher of eclectic knowledge pertaining to the philosophy expounded by the Upanishads. He had assumed the form of a horse and revealed the Shukla Yajur Veda to the great sage Yagyavalkya. He was also the teacher of

Hanuman, said to be incarnate Wind God and Lord Shiva, and who was the great, most ardent and the wisest devotee of Lord Ram.

According to mythological accounts, the Sun God was the son of sage Kashyap and his wife Aditi from whom all the Gods were born. He is said to be a revelation from the eye of the Viraat Purush also known as Vishnu who is the macrocosmic all-pervading and all-encompassing vast and invisible form of the Supreme Being known as the transcendental Brahm. The physical Sun in the sky is the Viraat Purush's visible form. He was married to Sangya, the daughter of Vishwakarma who is regarded as the architect, builder and planner of the Gods. Sangya had two sons and one daughter from the Sun God—viz. the sons named Shraadhdev also called Vaivaswat Manu and Yam the god of death, and the daughter named Yamuna which is also the name of a famous river in India. Sangya could not bear the intensity of the Sun's heat and light, so she left her 'shadow' or image and herself went away disguised as a mare to do severe penance. From this 'shadow' were produced two sons and a daughter. The two sons were Shani God who is believed to be full of malice and evil forebodings reflecting the genes of his mother as a dark shadow, and Saarvarni Manu, and the daughter was Tapti literally meaning one who is fierce and hot. In due course of time, the Sun God found out that his real wife Sangya was involved in doing severe Tapa, so he was extremely pleased with her and brought her back. It was from her form as a mare that the Ashwini Kumars were born. They derived their name from the root 'Ashwa' meaning a horse. These twin sons of the Sun God are regarded as the medicine men of the Gods.

The Sun God revealed himself as Sugriv, the king of the monkey race, during Treta-Yug when Lord Ram incarnated, and as Karna during Dwapar when Lord Krishna came as an incarnation of Vishnu. Sun God rides a chariot driven by Arun who is the son of Vintaa (his mother) and the elder brother of Garuda, the legendary heron or eagle who is the mount of Lord Vishnu. The seven horses of the chariot represent the seven colours of the Sun's light. He is constantly on the move and controls and regulates the seasons, months, solstice and year.

According to Yoga Upanishads, the Sun God has his symbolic presence in the naval of the body in the Nabhi Chakra or the Manipur Chakra, and as the fire element in the Mooladhar Chakra, the Swadhisthan Chakra and the Kundalini. The dynamic energy of the sun represented by its life-giving powers is revealed in the form of consciousness that flows in the Pingla Naadi, the nerve passing through the right nostril.

The *Akchu Upanishad* lists some of the virtues of the Sun God in its Canto 1, verse no. 1 which is exclusively dedicated to his grand virtues as follows—he provides the creature with the ability to see; he lights up the world for him; he provides the creation with its life and sustains it; he moves across the sky with his army of light rays to protect the world from darkness; he personifies the three basic Gunas of Sata, Raja and Tama much like Brahm; he takes the creature away from darkness representing delusions and ignorance towards light symbolising wisdom, knowledge, erudition and enlightenment; he is like the Swan—pure and immaculate; he is the bearer of life; he is the Jatveda (one having whatever is born or created as his property; the all-possessor; one who knows everything and is known by all creation; the word is usually applied as an epithet for the eternal fire element of which the sun is a visible manifestation and container); he is as intrinsically valuable as molten and purified gold; he is Tapa (austerity, penance, sufferance for a noble cause) personified; he is the emperor of creation and is crowned with a glittering crown and wears an equally glittering robe consisting of rays of the sunlight; he is the son of Aditi, the mother of Gods, and he lives as 'sight' in our eyes.

Aditya or the Sun God has been repeatedly regarded by the Upanishads as a manifestation of the Viraat Purush who himself is the macrocosmic gross body of Brahm. For example, Chandogya Upanishad of Sam Veda—1/6/3, 5, 6; 1/10/7; 2/9; 2/14; 2/24/12-14; 3/1-11; 3/18; 5/13; 6/4/2 etc.; and Brihad Aranyak Upanishad of

Shukla Yajur Veda—2/1/2; 2/5/5; 3/7/9; 3/9/5; 5/15; Brahmo-panishad of Krishna Yajur Veda—verse no. 1, etc.

The *Akchu Upanishad* of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition is fully dedicated to the Sun God. It has two parts—in its Canto 1 sage Sankriti offers prayers to the Sun God, and Canto 2 contains the metaphysical and spiritual teachings of the Sun God for the benefit of the sage.

The *Taittiriya Upanishad* of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its Valli 1, Anuvaak 1, verse no. 1, says that the Sun God is known as 'Mitra', literally meaning a friend. This is because the Sun God's benevolence and life-sustaining abilities make him a fast friend of every single living being in creation. He fosters life and is a friend of life rather than being its enemy by annihilating it. He helps the world to develop and grow as well as to acquire its stupendous magnificence and glory—refer *Taittiriya Upanishad*, Valli 1, Anuvaak 5, verse no. 2.

He is also known as 'Savita'—refer *Savitru-panishad* of Sam Veda tradition, and *Shwetashwatar Upanishad*, Canto 2 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition. The name 'Aditya' is endorsed by a number of Upanishads—e.g.

He is a visible manifestation of the 'Viraat Purush'—refer *Taittiriya Upanishad*, Valli 1, Anuvaak 5, verse no. 2. He is the 'eye' of the Supreme Being—refer *Aiteriyo-panishad* of Rig Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 4, and finds his abode in the creature's eye—refer *Aiteriyo-panishad*, Canto 2, verse no. 4.

The *Naryan Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 1 says that he was born from Lord Narayan, i.e. Lord Vishnu. The same thing is asserted in *Brahmo-panishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 1 which states that Aditya, the Sun God, is a manifestation of Lord Vishnu. But this is understandable because Vishnu and the Viraat Purush is the same Lord having different names according to the degree of subtlety and the scriptural text one is referring to; both are synonymously used. Whereas the Viraat Purush was the macrocosmic gross body of the supreme transcendental Brahm that appeared in the first stage of creation when Brahm decided to initiate it, he was called Vishnu at a little later stage when the visible creation was just about to be initiated, because it is from Vishnu that Brahma the creator was born who later gave shape to the creation itself.

'Aditya' or the Sun God appears in the Vedas as follows—Rig Veda-- 1/41/4-6; 2/27; 8/47/14-18; 10/185; Sam Veda—395; 397; Yajur Veda—23/5; 34/54; Atharva Veda—5/3/9-10; 16/3.

The *twelve Adityas*—(a) According to mythology, there are said to be *twelve Adityas* which are simply as many forms of the Sun God. These are the revelations of Brahm in the form of the Sun to carry out the following functions of creation—(a) take care of the world (Rig Veda, 2/27/4); (b) are like the heads (Taittiriya Brahman, 1/2/3/3) and eyes (Jaimini, Uttar. 2/1/2/3) of all the creatures.

These twelve Adityas appear first in the Rig Veda 1/41/4-6 and 2/27. They are the sons of Aditi, the mother of Gods (Atharva Veda, 8/9/21). They are the following—the eight Vasus + Indra + Sun + Vishnu + Shiva = twelve in number.

(b) According to Brihad Aranyak Upanishad 3/9/5, the twelve months of the year represent these twelve Adityas, one month for one Aditya. In this Upanishad, sage Yagyavalkya draws a parallel between the twelve months of a year and the twelve Adityas for the following reasons—First, with the passage of one complete year, a corresponding number of years are subtracted from the total number of years that a person is supposed to live in this world. That is, death comes so much the nearer to him. The passage of the sun across the sky from dawn to dusk is used as a symbolic way of depicting the passage of the life of a man from his birth till his death. Since there are twelve mythological suns and twelve months in a year, a parallel is drawn between them and the life of a man.

Second, the whole life of an individual creature as well as the entire creation as a whole depends upon the various seasons that appear in a year. If even one of the

seasons is disturbed, the entire cycle of life is disturbed correspondingly. For the smooth functioning of life, all the seasons must appear in a rhythmic and systematic manner, and it is a scientific fact that the seasons, upon which the life on earth is so dependent, also themselves depend upon the sun. That is why the Adityas are termed as being synonymous with the twelve months of the year as well as with the life cycle of creation.

(c) According to Vishnu Puran, the twelve Adityas are the following—Dhata, Aryamaan, Mitra, Varun, Anshu, Bhug, Indra, Vivaswan, Pusha, Parjanya, Twashta and Vishnu.

The Sun God is worshipped by twelve names during the twelve months of a year. These names and the months are as follows—(1) as Dhata during the first Hindu month of Chaitra also known as Madhu (roughly corresponding to mid-March and mid-April); (2) as Aryama during the second Hindu month of Vaishakha also known as Madhav (roughly corresponding to mid-April to mid-May); (3) as Mitra during the third Hindu month of Jyestha also known as Shukra (roughly corresponding to mid-May and mid-June); (4) as Varun during the fourth Hindu month of Ashad also known as Shuchi (roughly corresponding to mid-June and mid-July); (5) as Indra during the fifth Hindu month of Sravan also known as Nabha (roughly corresponding to mid-July and mid-August); (6) as Vivaswan during the sixth Hindu month of Bhadrapad also known as Nabhasya (roughly corresponding to mid-August and mid-September); (7) as Pusha during the seventh Hindu month of Aashwani also known as Tapa (roughly corresponding to mid-September and mid-October); (8) as Kratu during the eighth Hindu month of Kartik also known as Tapasya (roughly corresponding to mid-October and mid-November); (9) as Anshu during the ninth Hindu month of Marga Shirsha also known as Saha (roughly corresponding to mid-November and mid-December); (10) as Bhag during the tenth Hindu month of Paush also known as Pushya (roughly corresponding to mid-December and mid-January); (11) as Twasta during the eleventh Hindu month of Magh also known as Esh or Ish (roughly corresponding to mid-January and mid-February); and (12) as Vishnu during the twelfth Hindu month of Phalgun also known as Urj (roughly corresponding to mid-February and mid-March).

Since the Sun God is a manifestation of the Supreme Being known as Viraat Purush, he is like an Emperor who, during his sojourn across the sky which is like his vast realm, is accompanied by many sages called Rishis, celestial courtesans called Apsaras, celestial musicians called Gandharvas, servants called Raak-chhas or demons, guards known as Bhalls, and serpents called Naags. The Rishis walk in the front singing the Lord's glories in sacred hymns; the Apsaras dance to the music scores by Gandharvas; the Raak-chhas (demons) push the chariot from rear; the Bhalls take care of the chariot and guide it along, while the Naags pull it forward.

These attendants are also different like the forms in which the Sun God is worshipped in different months as described above. The list is outlined month-wise in the following sequence—Rishi, Apsara, Gandharva, Raak-chhas, Bhalla and Naag.

- (1) The month of Chaitra—Rishi is Pulastya; Apsara is Kritsthal; Gandharva is Tumburu; Raak-chhas is Heti; Bhalla is Rath-krit; and Naag is Vaasuki.
- (2) The month of Vaishaakha—Rishi is Pulaha; Apsara is Punjikasthal; Gandharva is Naarad; Raak-chhas is Praheti; Bhalla is Oja ('Ojaha'); and Naag is Kachaneer.
- (3) The month of Jyestha—Rishi is Atri; Apsara is Menakaa; Gandharva is Hahaa; Raak-chhas is Paurusheya; Bhalla is Rathaswan; and Naag is Takshak.
- (4) The month of Ashadha—Rishi is Vashishta; Apsara is Rambhaa; Gandharva is Huhu; Raak-chhas is Shukra; Bhalla is Chitraswan; and Naag is Saha-janya.
- (5) The month of Sraavan—Rishi is Angira; Apsara is Pramlochaa; Gandharva is Vishwaa-vasu; Raak-chhas is Varya; Bhalla is Srotaa; and Naag is Elaapatra.
- (6) The month of Bhadrapad—Rishi is Bhrigu; Apsara is Anumlochaa; Gandharva is Ugrasen; Raak-chhas is Vyagrha; Bhalla is Aasaaran; and Naag is Shankha-paal.

- (7) The month of Ashwin—Rishi is Gautam; Apsara is Ghritaachi; Gandharva is Dhananjay; Raak-chhas is Vaat; Bhalla is Suruchi; and Naag is Sushen.
- (8) The month of Kaartik—Rishi is Bhardwaj; Apsara is Varchaa; Gandharva is Parjanya; Raak-chhas is Senjit; Bhalla is Vishwa; and Naag is Eieraawat/Earaawat.
- (9) The month of Maargashirsha—Rishi is Kashyap; Apsara is Urvashi; Gandharva is Ritsen; Raak-chhas is Vidy-chhatru; Bhalla is Taakcharya; and Naag is Mahaa-shankha.
- (10) The month of Paush—Rishi is Aayu; Apsara is Purvachitti; Gandharva is Sfurja; Raak-chhas is Arishta-nemi; Bhalla is Uurna/Oorna; and Naag is Karkotak.
- (11) The month of Maagh—Rishi is Jamdagni also known as Richik-tanaya; Apsara is Tilottamaa; Gandharva is Shatjit; Raak-chhas is Brahmapet; Bhalla is Dhrit-raashtra; and Naag is Kambal.
- (12) The month of Phaalgun—Rishi is Vishwaa-mitra/Vishwamitra; Apsara is Rambhaa; Gandharva is Suryavarchaa; Raak-chhas is Makhaapet; Bhalla is Satyajit; and Naag is Aswatar.

(d) The Sun is said to have *twelve Kalaas* (shapes, forms, dimensions or aspects) and the Sun with each Kalaa would therefore be known by that name. They are called ‘Dwaadash Aditya’, meaning the twelve forms in which the Sun God is known. They are the following—Tapini, Taapini, Dhumraa, Jwaalini, Ruchi, Shushumna, Bhogadaa, Vishwaa, Bodhini, Dhaarini and Kshamaa.

That is why lord Ram was said to belong to the Solar race because he had twelve Kalaas possessed by the Sun. There is an obvious parallel here.

(e) The *eight Adityas*—According to the Taiteriy Brahman, 1/1/9/1 gives the name of only eight Adityas—(i) Mitra, (ii) Varun (iii) Aryaman (iv) Ansha (v) Bhag (vi) Dhaata (vii) Indra, (viii) Vivaswan.

²The word ‘Chakshu’ means the eye or that which pertains to the eye, i.e. the faculty of sight and the ability to see the external world, while ‘Vidya’ means knowledge. Hence, the Chakchu Vidya is a special hymn composed in honour of the Sun God who happens to be the patron God of the eyes and lights up the world for the creature. Without the eyes and their ability to see, the world would have been a terrifyingly foreboding and a dark wasteland as well as non-existent and useless as far as the individual is concerned. That is why he thanks the Sun God for lighting up the world for him. The individual’s ability to see this world also depends upon the light that the celestial sun provides as is evident from the fact that no one can see anything in the pitch darkness of the night and so cannot enjoy the beauty of Nature and see the myriad charms of this immensely fascinating world.

There is another interesting spin off to this hymn. Since it is offered to the rising sun, it indirectly gives many health benefits to the person—one, he has to be an early riser with its accompanying many health benefits, two, the early rays of the sun are beneficial for the eyesight which is very crucial for a modern man who spends most of his time in artificial light in his office and other close spaces away from natural light which in turn creates a number of problems for his eyesight, and three, he becomes wise and realises the golden opportunity offered to him as a human being that he is able to ‘see’, and therefore he should strive to ‘see the truth’ and spiritually benefit from this spiritual insight.

This is the prayer which is based on the metaphysical interpretation of the faculty of sight and the organ that exhibits this function of seeing, i.e. the eye. At the macrocosmic level, the Sun is the eye of the cosmic Brahm, while its counterpart at the microcosmic level of the individual creature is the physical organ of the eye. Both perform the same function—i.e. to give light and awareness. The celestial Sun is like the heavenly eye of the Supreme Being through which the latter is able to oversee the functioning of the entire creation, while its counterpart in the individual creature is

the latter's individual eye. This ability of the Sun to light up the world for the Supreme Being is metaphorically represented by the organ of the eye present in the gross body of the man and which enables him to see the world by the inherent light present in the eye.

When extended further, the inherent presence of light in the man's eye implies that every man inherently possesses the virtue of enlightenment, wisdom and erudition, but unfortunately they get darkened and covered in a veil of ignorance and delusions so that he is misled by the illusive charms of the artificial world, falls in its trap and gets diverted from his true goal of life. This digression leads to his spiritual downfall inspite of his having 'eyes' to 'see', and there being abundant 'light of the day' to illuminate the path in front to show him that there is deep pit or horrible trap in front to be guarded against, and that he must walk carefully. But still he falls in this pit or gets trapped in the snare—say, what can be said of such a stupid man?

A man is an image of the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic gross body of the Supreme Being who is also known as Brahm, and the Sun God who was created from the eyes of the Viraat Purush at the time of creation took up his residence in the man's eyes. [Refer Aitereyo-panishad of Rig Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 4, and Canto 2, verse nos. 3-4.] From this fact it follows that the eye of the man at the micro level of creation is aptly compared to the sun as being the eye of Brahm at the macro level of creation. Even as the world would be plunged in darkness for a man without the eye, the vast realm of creation would be plunged in a similar darkness if there was no sun. Therefore, this prayer basically lauds and honours the Sun as the source of light for the world, not only the physical light that shines upon this world and gives it its illumination, heat and energy that supports life in this creation, but more importantly and metaphorically the metaphysical light of knowledge, wisdom, erudition and enlightenment that removes darkness of falsehoods, ignorance and delusions that have shrouded the creatures from all sides, thereby illuminating and showing the correct spiritual path of liberation and deliverance of the soul to all the creatures of this creation.

³The character of all the living beings in the entire creation is dependent upon three primary qualities called Sata, Raja and Tama. Sata is the best of the three and marked by a propensity for auspiciousness, probity, propriety, piety, holiness and righteousness. The second quality is Raja and it makes a man more attracted to this material world and its charms and less spiritually inclined. The third quality is the meanest of the three and leads to the inclinations for committing sins and all sorts of demeanours. The varying quantity and intensity of these three in any given individual would decide his specific character and how he is inclined to deal with the world and a given circumstance.

⁴The Sun is an image of the glorious and astounding divinity of the Supreme Being; the supreme Brahm has revealed his glorious powers in the form of the Sun. According to numerous Upanishads, the Sun is a visible manifestation of Brahm. Anything that has a truthful existence and reality would form an image and reflection in a mirror. Since the sun can not only be seen in the mirror but this image formed in the mirror would also appear to produce its own light which appear to emanate from the image of the mirror and form a patch of light on the wall of a room when the mirror is held at the correct angle against it. This patch of light is actually formed by the sunrays bouncing off from the surface of the mirror and falling on the wall directly, but for all practical purposes they appear to come from the image of the sun formed inside the mirror. The metaphysical significance here is that the glory of the Atma, the pure consciousness residing in the bosom of all living beings, is actually the glory of the supreme Brahm. The visible world seen around is actually the reflection of the stupendous magnificence and brilliance of Brahm as it is lighted by the latter's own light emanating from his own image in the Sun. The Sun stands for the truthful aspect of Brahm, and anything other than this truth is falsehood—this fact is symbolised by the shadow formed by anything in the light of the Sun. This shadow

is always formed in the opposite direction of the Sun, indicating that when one turns towards the truth one would see light, while if one turns one's back to this truth one would see the long shadow of darkness of delusions and falsehoods.

The importance of the eye and the Sun God vis-à-vis this organ has been elaborately discussed in a number of places in the Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad—for instance, Canto 4, Brahman 1, verse no. 4; Canto 4, Brahman 2, verse nos. 2-3; Canto 4, Brahman 3, verse no. 2; Canto 5, Brahman 5, verse nos. 2-4.]

Canto 2

1. Next, sage Sankriti said to the Sun God—‘Oh Lord! Please preach me on ‘Brahm Vidya’, or the knowledge pertaining to the supreme transcendental Brahman.’

The Sun God replied—‘Oh Sankriti! I shall now narrate to you the ‘Tattva Gyan’, i.e. the rarest and most eclectic of knowledge related to the essential philosophy pertaining to Brahman and the Atma, and described as the basic tenets of metaphysics and spiritualism. Listen carefully, because by becoming enlightened about this knowledge you shall become ‘Jivan Mukta’, i.e. obtain liberation and deliverance for your soul even while you are still alive and retain your gross body with which you can go about your normal work in this world (1).

[Note—The concept of *Brahm Vidya* has been the chief subject of discussion of a number of Upanishads, especially the Kaivalya Upanishad which is Chapter 4, Brahman Upanishad, Chapter 3, and Brahman Vidya Upanishad which is Chapter 16 of this volume dealing with the Upanishads of the Krishna Yajur Veda.

The concept of *Jivan Mukti* or spiritual liberation and deliverance, or emancipation and salvation of the soul while the aspirant is still alive has been elaborately described elsewhere in the Upanishads, notably the Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 1/4/3-4; 2/3/6-7; 2/4/5-6; Paingalo-panishad, 3/5; Adhyatma Upanishad, verse nos. 12, 43-47; and Muktiko-panishad, Canto 2 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition; Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 2 of Atharva Veda tradition; Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 1-32 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

2. You should cultivate the greatest of serenity, dispassion and equanimity by treating all living beings as ‘one’, and you should have no sense of duality between them and your own self (because essentially all are one single non-dual Atma that has revealed itself in all the myriad forms that are seen in this visible creation). [In other words, you should forget about the notion of ‘he’ and ‘me’, or of ‘his’ and ‘mine’.]

You should be convinced that all are, in their essential and basic form, an entity that has no birth (because it is imperishable and infinite), is peaceful and calm, is without an end (because it is infinite), is unwavering, constant and steady, is imperishable, unchanging and eternal, and is pure consciousness personified.

When you develop the level of wisdom and erudition that would enlighten you about this basic knowledge behind existence and the form that this creation has taken, the knowledge which is called ‘Tattva Gyan’ (i.e. the knowledge of the essentials, the knowledge of the fundamental principles of metaphysics and spiritualism, the knowledge of the basic tenets that the Upanishads preach), you would become peaceful and calm. You should live a contented and tranquil life of joy and happiness with this enlightenment (2).

3. The ‘Avedan Yoga’ or the higher form of true Yoga¹ is the eclectic state of existence when one is not even aware of anything else except the existence of the pure

consciousness in the world around him (i.e. as the Atma, whether in the form of the individual creature or as the cosmic power known as Brahm). It is the enlightened state of awareness when nothing else exists or matters for the spiritual aspirant except the Atma at his individual level and the supreme all-pervading cosmic Atma called the Parmatma at the grander state of existence. It is the exalted state of spiritual existence when the mind is calmed down and its natural tendencies overcome to the extent that it is virtually rendered ineffective and unable to influence the aspirant any longer, being as good as eliminated or destroyed for all practical purposes. It is the state when there is an effortless and seamless blending of the individual soul with the cosmic Soul so as to establish an entity that is non-dual and uniform in every possible way.

So, when you have thus become spiritually enlightened and achieved the exalted state of self-awareness of the infinite divinity of your soul, you could continue to live in this world and perform your duties and carry on with your routine life without getting unduly perturbed and restless about anything, or getting involved in anything related to the delusions of the material world. You must be careful not to become careless in anything you do, and always be on the alert so that you do not fall in any kind of delusions that act as spiritual traps for the ordinary man who is careless and less diligent. You must be careful that neither are you mentally, emotionally and sentimentally involved in anything or deed that you do, nor are you too indifferent and careless about what you do so as to ruin the work done by you². [In other words, be careful and vigilant. Do anything in a dispassionate manner, thinking that it is your destined and designated duty to do certain things, but do not get mentally, emotionally or sentimentally attached with either the deeds or their results. This way you would be doing them diligently but with a sense of un-involvement, thereby doing them with the best of your abilities but remaining free from their attendant headaches such as the anxiety related to their results which might cause you fear of suffering from their bad effects or getting unnecessary excited about their expected good results.] (3).

[Note--¹*Avedan Yoga* may be defined as a sincere effort made by a spiritual aspirant to do everything possible to bring about a seamless union between his individual soul with the supreme cosmic Soul of creation. Due to misconceptions and delusions, his soul appears to have obtained a separate identity from the cosmic universal Soul, and the main thrust of Yoga is to remove this false and illusionary distinction and dichotomy between them and instead restore the original uniformity and universality of the soul. The ultimate aim of such spiritual aspirants is to merge their individual self with the universal Self known as the supreme transcendental Brahm in the language of the Upanishads. Since the type of Yoga described in this Upanishad does not entail any hardships for the practitioner as is usually the case with other forms of Yoga involving arduous and most difficult exercises involving various stern Aasans, Mudras and Bandhas, it becomes a relatively easier option to achieve the same goal as the latter. It basically involves the training of the mind to gradually remove itself from its involvement with the material and artificial world and instead turn inwards to see the reality of the pure consciousness hidden in one's own bosom. It inspires the mind and intellect to become concentrated and devote its energy and potentials in acquiring the truthful knowledge about one's self and the reality of existence as propounded and enunciated in the scriptures by studying them deeply under proper guidance of a wise and experienced teacher. This learning should then be implemented in one's daily life and become a part of one's routine personality instead of just remaining a perfunctory knowledge acquired to gain popularity, money and fame.

The first stage described in verse nos. 4-9 is the preliminary stage when one is acquainted with the necessary eligibility requirements of this Yoga. Once the aspirant

is ready, he is initiated into the second stage when he is expected to take the shelter of a learned teacher and guide who would kind of hold his hand and become his mentor. It also narrates the benefits that the aspirant gets, such as his ability to distinguish between the right and the wrong.

It is the mind that is at the center of all thought processes. It is the mind that creates this world because first it becomes 'aware' of it, then gets 'attracted' by its charms, and finally gets 'hooked' to it so much so that it starts hallucinating and imagining things that actually do not exist. But when the aspirant has been successful in training his mind by doing meditation, thereby stopping it from paying any attention to this world, the efforts of the mind can then be diverted to nobler pursuits. Since the mind has a natural tendency to remain in a perpetual state of flux, without resting for a moment, it is imperative for any spiritual aspirant to divert it to some constructive work because if it is left to its own device and remains unattended, it would automatically swerve towards the world and its artificial but most alluring charms. Meditation and contemplation techniques are meant for focusing the mind towards the inner self instead of the outside world. Once the mind turns inwards, the outside world ceases to exist as far as the individual is concerned, and all the disturbances that arise from the latter would naturally be eliminated. The result would be a sense of profound serenity and calmness that would surround the aspirant like an all-enveloping veil of peace and contentedness, because all his worldly desires and wants, all his passions and yearnings, all the causes for his getting attracted towards the world and getting hooked to its charms would lose their meaning, importance and essence.

The purpose of Yoga is to bring about a harmony between apparently separate units of creation which often work at odds with each other though they are fundamentally different aspects of the same thing. When the aspirant is able to understand the basic principle that the same Atma prevails uniformly in this creation in all the living beings, when he understands that all forms of deeds are actually done by the gross body and not the Atma, that it is the mind that is the creator of all sorts of attachments and distresses pertaining to this world which is however artificial and delusory like the mirage seen in the hot desert, he would develop a profound sense of indifference and equanimity. He would deem to have controlled his mind, because it is the mind that is at the root of all thinking processes and imaginations, it is the mind that weaves its own cobweb and gets entangled in its own creation.

²Since you have risen to a higher level of wisdom and enlightenment, since you have realised what the 'truth' is and confident of yourself in this matter, it is expected of you that mundane matters and artificial things of this delusory world that normally act like a quagmire for ordinary persons or an entangling cobweb for them would not have the strength to delude you and trap you in their ever-expanding vicious tentacles, pulling you down back in the bog from which you have already extricated yourself after great effort by inculcating spiritual virtues, by acquiring the great knowledge about the Atma, and becoming aware of the ultimate goal of life as preached in the tenets of metaphysics and spiritualism. You should be vigilant from falling or slipping back into the deep and dark pit of ignorance, or getting enticed by the deceptive sweet charms of this falsehood once you have managed to extricate yourself from their tight embrace. You must be wary of the evil design of this cunning monster that would first entice you with tall promises, and once you get close enough he would devour you. You must ensure that whatever progress you have already made is not nullified by any single misstep on your part, whether advertently or inadvertently for you might not get a second chance at rectification.]

4-5. [The first sign or preliminary symptoms of this higher form of Yoga are the following--] As one progresses ahead in the path of true Yoga (which would ultimately bring about the union between his own self and the supreme transcendental

Brahm by making him enlightened and self-realised), his inner self gradually distances itself from all thoughts pertaining to this world and stops having any Vasanas related to it. [That is, when a spiritual aspirant progresses in the path of spiritual enlightenment, all worldly passions, lust, desires, yearnings and longings are shed off in a gradual manner. He develops a sense of total detachment, indifference and dispassion towards them.]

The aspirant does noble, auspicious and righteous deeds as a routine matter, without getting emotionally involved in them and neither hoping to reap any personal rewards from them. He abhors the way ignorant and stupid people get engrossed in worldly deeds, remaining submerged in deriving pleasure and comfort from this material world and gratifying the natural instincts of their sense organs.

He does not allow himself to do cheap talk and gossip about someone's personal secrets to which he is privy. He does not get involved in tattling and back-biting or betraying the trust of others that they have reposed in him.

Shunning all these misdemeanours, he prefers to remain straightforward and upright in his dealings and deeds done by him in the day-to-day life (4-5).

6. He does those merciful, compassionate, kind and gracious deeds and takes such actions that do not harm anyone in the least, or make them unnecessarily excited, agitated or perturbed by any one of his deeds or actions.

He is always wary of doing sinful acts and remains careful to avoid doing anything that is considered unworthy, unholy, inauspicious and unrighteous.

He does not have any longings for or wish to acquire any material objects of this world that would satisfy the lust for gratification of the sense organs and their desire for obtaining pleasures and comforts from these objects. [That is, he does not want anything pertaining to this material world of sense objects. He does not seek material comfort and pleasures.] (6).

7. He speaks in a tongue that is naturally sweet and pleasant, which is full of love and compassion. [That is, he never uses harsh words for anyone and neither does he speak anything, directly or indirectly that would cause pain to others.]

His words are not only sweet and pleasant but also tuned in accordance with the proper laws and codes prevalent from time to time and suitable to the present circumstances as well as for the person for whom they are meant. [That is, he speaks carefully words of wisdom after giving due thought to what he is speaking. He does not shoot off his tongue aimlessly, and recklessly speak in an irresponsible manner. He fine tunes his words according to the audience and the circumstances in which they are spoken or would be applied or interpreted. The same group of words would have different effects when spoken under different circumstances and to different groups of people. So he weighs all the pros and cons before speaking. He realises that speech is a manifestation of the great Goddess called Saraswati, and therefore should be used with the greatest care so that nothing is said which demeans or insults the exalted stature and nature of this divine Goddess.] (7).

8. He should very sincerely endeavour to have contact with good people from all walks of life, and inculcate their noble values in his deeds, speech and thoughts. He should also alongside study good books and scriptures on a daily basis and try to access them from wherever they are available. [This would help him to improve himself in a general way. Good company and good books are the best means to improve oneself.] (8).

9. The state of existence as described above is called the first stage or milestone in the path of spiritual enlightenment that is the ultimate aim of Yoga. Only those who are sincerely interested in crossing this huge ocean-like world of entanglements and delusions opt for such path and give priority to giving thought to following the advice given herein. [Others would rather spend their time enjoying the material comforts and pleasures of this deluding and entrapping world of ignorance and artificiality, and remain contented in whirling around in an endless cycle of birth and death with its attendant miseries and sorrows. They would not like to find a way out of this predicament of the soul because, in their utter spiritual ignorance, they think that their 'self' is the gross body instead of the pure consciousness known as the soul, and that this world is the real thing and therefore one should, and is entitled to, enjoy to the hilt its material comforts and the pleasures of its sense objects.] (9).

10. A person who thinks in this noble and auspicious way and shows the above eclectic signs of specially-gifted spiritual inclinations is regarded as more fortunate, enlightened and wise amongst his peers.

He graduates to the next (second) stage of enlightenment as his thoughts become more and more mature and focused, and his intellectual ability to deeply analyse the various aspects of spiritualism gets more robust and effective (10).

11. In this next stage (i.e. second stage), he takes the shelter and refuge of such persons who are acclaimed as experts in this spiritual field and are able to very clearly and articulately explain the intricate meaning of various scriptures such as the Srutis and Smritis (i.e. the Vedas, Upanishads and Purans), who are well-versed in the laws of morality, ethics and propriety, and who can correctly show and guide the aspirant on the path of Dharna and Dhyan (auspicious belief and meditation). [That is, in the second stage of one's spiritual progress, the aspirant should take the shelter of a wise and self-realised Guru who is a teacher, moral preceptor and guide. This would help him to move further ahead on his spiritual path under proper guidance. This would also help him to remove all his misgivings, fears and misunderstandings. Should he face any problems, he would have a mentor to look up to who would not only remove any such unforeseen spiritual hurdles but also keep him encouraged to move ahead in spite of initial hiccoughs. This Guru would act like his guardian and patron angel who would be only too pleased to see his ward shine and acquire success in his spiritual endeavours.] (11).

12. By diligence and focused attention, by sincerity and steadfastness of purpose, by proper application of the mind and intellect, by having firm faith and conviction, and by steadily moving ahead undeterred on his spiritual path the aspirant becomes an expert in understanding the different aspects of all the things in this world, and in distinguishing between the truth and the false.

Becoming well-versed in the principles enunciated by the scriptures which are worthy of hearing and paying attention to, and having inculcated the correct knowledge of what they say and having understood the profound implications of their teachings, he is able to determine what the righteous duty that ought to be done by one is, and what is not to be done and therefore should be avoided (12).

13. His mind and attention are not at all affected or influenced by such worldly negative tendencies as having Mada (arrogance and hypocrisy), Abhimaan (pride, ego

and undue self importance) Maatsarya (envy, jealousy and malice), Lobh (greed, rapacity, yearning and lust) and Moha (delusions, attachments, attractions etc. that pertain to this material world). He is free from them.

If he finds that even inadvertently and involuntarily he is involved in this external world or his natural inclinations are pulling him towards this world of material comforts and sensual pleasures, he should immediately take remedial action by shaking it off like a serpent who abandons his cuticle without any difficulty and qualms (13).

14. A wise aspirant who inculcates these eclectic values is able to acquire the rarest and most secret of spiritual knowledge and achieve success in his spiritual endeavour by the coordinated help that is available to him by way of access to knowledge contained in the scriptures (which act like a constant ready reckoner for him) as well as the expert and judicious guidance provided to him by his Guru (moral preceptor, teacher and guide) and other self-realised and enlightened men who are well-versed and experienced in this path. [That is, he has the scriptures for consultation, and in the event that he needs more clarifications he has the Guru and other acclaimed experts to guide him. All circumstances seem favourable for him and he should make the most out of it.] (14).

15. Then he enters the third stage of this Yoga. This is called 'Asansarg'—meaning to have no contact, relation, proximity, association, interaction and familiarity with anything pertaining to non-truth and non-spiritual. His condition becomes immaculate, clean and holy like a man who has changed into new and clean clothes, and then sits down on a seat of fresh flowers to relax or do something he wishes to do (15).

16. Being wisened and enlightened enough to become totally detached from this material world of sense objects and its deluding charms, such a spiritual aspirant should have firm faith in what the scriptures affirm and remain steadfast in his convictions. He should fix his mind on the wise teachings of the scriptures and follow them in letter and spirit.

He should live in solitude in hermitages of those who engage themselves in doing Tapa (observance of penances and austerities; sufferance for some noble and great cause requiring sacrifices) such as ascetics, sages and seers who live in secluded forests, spending his time in talking and discussing about the scriptures. [That is, he should spend his time constructively by delving deeper into the scriptures and thinking of nothing else except spiritual matters. The hermitages provide him with the right atmosphere conducive for this. This would have the effect of diverting his mind from matters of this world to matters concerning his spiritual welfare. This would also help him to gain peace and tranquility of the mind and heart, besides acquiring more knowledge enshrined in the scriptures from those who are well-versed in them.] (16).

17-19. He sits upon rocks and spends his life in observing strict norms of austerity and sufferance (so as to steer himself clear from all sorts of artificial comforts and pleasures that his sense organs have become accustomed to while he was engrossed in this material world of sense objects by abstaining from all physical comforts and pleasures such as those obtained by using soft mattresses and quilts which would make him lazy and indolent and indulgent in self gratification, because the body has a

natural inclination and urge to avoid sufferings and hardships, and instead prefers comforts and pleasures).

Such an enlightened man who is an ardent follower of the tenets of the scriptures lives in solitude in pleasant forests which give his mind and his inner self the much sought after eternal happiness, peace and tranquility. Having tasted the pleasure and charm of natural surroundings and enjoying their profound calming, exhilarating and spiritually uplifting effect on his self, he would then begin to abhor artificial and transient comforts and pleasures of the material world of sense objects in a natural way, without the use of any force and compulsion. He begins to enjoy the things that Nature provides him in abundance, and progressively begins to find them to be more and more naturally attractive and charming instead of the artificial attractions and charms that are the hallmarks of everything provided by this material world of sense objects. [That is, once he tastes the pristine and exhilarating nectar-like beauty of the forest and a life marked by great solitude and extreme carefree-ness from the worries of this world, he would then see the difference between this life and his earlier life when he was never at peace, was never rested as he was always worried about one thing or the other. The natural surroundings also have a profound positive effect on his all round general health and peace of mind, giving him the real bliss that he had for so long yearned for.]

Study of the scriptures and doing auspicious and righteous deeds helps one to develop a sense of wisdom and the ability to see things with the correct perspective.

By reaching this third stage of Yoga, he becomes wise and erudite in a natural way, and begins to observe the difference between the way he had seen the world earlier and the way he sees it now (17-19).

20. The Yoga described above, i.e. the 'Asansarg Yoga', has two dimensions. I shall narrate them, listen carefully. This Yoga is of two types—viz. 'Samanya' or ordinary, and 'Sreshtha' or special and exclusive (20).

21. [Verse nos. 21-24 describe the first type of Asansarg Yoga, i.e. the ordinary or common form of detachment and non-involvement obtained by a spiritual aspirant.]

'I am not the doer of anything, and naturally therefore neither am I the enjoyer nor the sufferer from the good or bad effects of the deeds done. I am totally free from all fetters, and am not the one who can be subjected to any obstacles or hurdles of any kind. I am under no compulsions as I am a free Spirit, and I am not bound to anything or anybody'—this way of natural thought is called the normal sign of Asansarg Yoga, i.e. a spiritual existence when the aspirant is not attached to and involved in anything or anybody in this world. He is not even concerned with his body and what it does, and therefore there is no question of his expecting any rewards from the deeds done by the latter. Since all relationships are limited to the physical body and not the soul, it naturally follows that such an enlightened person is not related to anybody or anything (21).

22. 'Everything that I face in this life is the result of the past deeds done in my previous life or according to the destiny destined for me by the creator, and therefore the happiness and miseries that I am being subjected to in this life are not of my own creation and so why should I get overly worked-up or perplexed due to them'—this is the way such a man thinks and believes in (22).

23. 'Accumulation of worldly objects of comfort and pleasure, hoarding of worldly assets and treasures that give material satisfaction and help in gratification of the senses portend great troubles for me and my spiritual welfare and are like a horrible disease which is better avoided and taken precaution against.

All attachments, relationships, unions and interactions that pertain to the world in any manner whatsoever result in the sorrow and grief of separation because all things in this material world are perishable and transient, coming to an end one day, voluntarily or involuntarily, which would result in grief and sorrows of separation when one is forced to abandon them either by way of death or by way of their own decay and destruction by passage of time.

All sorts of mental worries and agonies that engulf the creatures in this world are nothing but a sort of disease of the mind that is deluded and ignorant of the truth.' (23).

24. 'Everything that is present in this world is perishable and transient; they are mortal and devoured by the ferocious jaws of Kaal (death personified) in due course of time. Nothing is everlasting'.

The study of the scriptures and proper understanding of them inculcates profound wisdom that makes an aspirant becoming uninterested and detached from the world along with all its material objects and the various relationships that one is inclined to establish in this world. This is defined as common form of 'Asansarg Yoga' (24).

25-26. [Verse nos. 25-26 describe the second type of Asansarg Yoga, i.e. the higher or special form of detachment and non-involvement obtained by a spiritual aspirant.]

The next stage that is obtained by the aspirant after he has been fortunate enough to get close communion with enlightened and experienced peers, and has, as a result of this contact with them, become convinced that he is not the doer of anything in this world, that whatever he suffers from or enjoys is a carry-over from his past life or destined by the creator and not due to his own personal doing, is to become free from all mental agitations, restlessness, perplexities and worries as to what is happening now and what would happen in the future. In brief, he stops worrying at all in all matters. [This is an obvious deduction—because he never worries for anything at all and accepts them as and when they come his way, for he believes that everything is pre-destined for him and his worrying over them and losing sleep would not change anything at all, rather it would only give him more trouble and pain by way of mental agitation and worry for things over which he has no control. So he becomes calmed down and lets the things take care of themselves.]

Becoming free from all worries and not getting perplexed unnecessarily by the web of words (of the scriptures) and their so many interpretations, he develops a sense of profound serenity and detachment towards everything.

As a result, he becomes steady and silent by withdrawing himself from all external relationships and worldly involvements, and instead turns inwards. He sits in a virtual Aasan of regular Yoga in the sense that he has learnt to exercise control over his sense organs and their natural tendency to be extrovert and restless, thereby remaining steady and unwavering in his state of detachment and its attendant bliss. He becomes calm, composed and tranquil, giving all restlessness and agitations a good bye. This posture gives him internal peace and tranquility on a perpetual basis.

This is called 'Sreshtha Asansarg Yoga'—or the best form of non-involvement with the world. It is the high level of detachment from and dispassion towards this

world when one becomes silent and full of equanimity and fortitude. Such a man would remain unruffled and unmoved under any circumstance (25-26).

27. When the inner self of the aspirant is prepared to accept the blessed state bliss, ecstasy and contentedness obtained by turning inwards and away from all external falsehoods and delusions of this world, it acts like a fertile ground on which small sprouts of the plant that drips Amrit, which is the elixir of eternal life and immense happiness, takes a firm root. This stage marks the onset of the first Bhumika or sign that the aspirant is ready and prepared to move ahead on the path of Yoga leading to his ultimate realisation of the Truth and Reality of creation. It is the background on which the other signposts of his spiritual progress rest, because if this ground is not properly prepared, i.e. if he is not sincere to follow the path of self-realisation by observing the tenets of Yoga as described in this Upanishad, then all his other efforts would fall aside and crumble to pieces like a house build on weak foundation (27).

[Note—The concept of Bhumika has also been described in detail in *Varaaha Upanishad*, Canto 4 which is devoted to this concept for the most part of it, and Canto 5, verse no. 71-75 which lays stress on Yoga and draws a parallel with the three steps of Pranayam, such as Purak, Kumbhak and Rechak.]

28. As soon as the ground is prepared, i.e. as soon as the aspirant is mentally and emotionally prepared to follow the exclusive path of Yoga that would pull him away from this world and divert him towards his pure and truthful self, leading to his ultimate communion with the supreme Truth known as Brahm, the aspirant can confidently move ahead on his spiritual path and step on the other rungs of Yoga. That is, now he can achieve success in the second and third steps of the Yoga as described above (in verse nos. 10-26) (28).

29-31. The third Bhumika¹ or state of existence of a spiritual aspirant who follows the path of this special Yoga (as described in verse nos. 15-26) is ranked amongst the best stages of Yoga because now the aspirant has abandoned all his worldly inclinations and tendencies that have their origin in his inherent nature of having numerous passions, desires and yearnings pertaining to this world and its sense objects. This is achieved by him by exercising control not only over his own self by controlling the gross sense organs as well as the subtle mind-intellect complex of his body but also by having firm faith in the teaching of the scriptures and removing all doubts, confusions and perplexities by consulting his wise moral preceptor, the Guru, with whom he has constant contact. Besides this, he lives in a secluded place in a forest where there are no chances of this world being able to entice him with all sorts of charms that might act as a bait to trap him off-guard that would lead to his spiritual downfall.

In brief, during the third state of existence of his consciousness when he loses all attractions for the world and the latter no longer charms him or has any relevance for him, an aspirant becomes oblivious of the existence of the external world and remains contented with his inner world of eternal bliss and peaceful existence. The material world with its myriad variations and ever changing nature ceases to matter for him. This in turn removes all the causes for perplexities and anxieties that normally submerge a person who is engrossed in the mundane affairs of the world. He becomes rooted in a state of constancy and uniformity where there is no sense of duality and dichotomy because nothing exists for him except his own 'self' (in the form of his pure consciousness; his Atma). His vision of existence undergoes a

profound degree of metamorphosis—he begins to see oneness and non-duality in everything around him.

When this stage of total uniformity of existence is achieved, when there is a universal sense of non-duality and oneness all round, he is able to accept this world as a dream. [This is because all the different things that are seen in one's dream are false and imaginary and everyone known it as a matter of fact. When one sees a dream he remains unaffected by it and his body continues to lie motionless in sleep, motionless even though he might be an active participant in the events of the dream. Likewise, a self-realised aspirant who has understood the fact that this world is like a dream continues to live in it and do his duties in it as destined for him, but remains completely detached from them at the physical, mental and emotional levels; his 'true self' is totally unruffled, unmoved or unaffected by anything that the body does in this world. This helps him to remain calm and indifferent not only to the deeds and their results but also to this world in which the deeds are done and in which all the sense objects are located. In spite of all the turmoil and upheavals of mundane life, he remains markedly calm and poised.] (29-31).

[Note—¹The term *Bhumika* means the stages of development of wisdom; the background, characteristics, qualities, traits, attributes or virtues that helps one to become spiritually wise and enlightened. The eclectic concept of what actually are these Bhumikas has been explained in *Varaaha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 4, in great detail. This is Chapter 30 of this volume.]

32-33. The first three Bhumikas or stages or backgrounds of Yoga are like the waking state of consciousness, while the fourth Bhumika is like the dreaming state¹.

When he progresses ahead and enters the fifth state of existence called the 'Pancham Bhumika', his sub-conscious mind ceases to remain active and becomes quiet and dysfunctional—it metaphorically vanishes from sight like the dark clouds of the rainy season that vanish during the winter season. [The dark rain-bearing clouds rumble and thunder and let out streaks of violent lightening during the rainy season. But during the winters, the sky is absolutely clean and quiet. This is used to indicate the calmness obtained by the spiritual aspirant when his mind ceases to exert any influence upon him, and when he has completely withdrawn himself from all involvements with the body and the world. This is a state of extreme neutrality and non-alignment.]

In this state of existence, only the pure consciousness remains, and since the mind has been side-lined and rendered ineffective there is no question arising for any sort of doubts and confusions requiring clarifications by the aspirant (32-33).

[Note—¹The consciousness has five states of existence—the waking, the dreaming, the deep sleep, the Turiya and post-Turiya called Turiyateet.]

34. The fifth Bhumika is likened to the deep sleep state of consciousness called 'Sushupta'. This is natural progression of the earlier state of consciousness (i.e. the dreaming state) and is the state when the sense of non-duality is firmly established. All causes of restlessness and perplexities are laid to rest in this fifth state of Yoga (34).

35. In this fifth stage of Sushupta, the aspirant witnesses the fount of bliss sprouting out from his pure conscious self (because every other sort of distraction has been eliminated), and this experience gives him an extreme sense of blessedness and ecstasy (35).

36. Although he might interact with the external world but for all practical purposes he is submerged in his own self, remaining perpetually in a state of bliss and indifference to all external involvements. This gives rise to the impression that he is careless, indolent or plain inattentive to matters of the external material world. He appears to be weary and tired of this world; he looks as if he is sleepy and acts listlessly because he is not interested in its affairs. [This is because he is perpetually submerged in the bliss obtained in his own self, and the mundane duties of this world appear to be burdensome to him.] (36).

37. Acquiring expertise in this stage, the spiritual aspirant moves to the next higher state of existence, i.e. he enters the sixth Bhumika of Yoga called 'Turiya'. [In this state, the sense of blessedness and bliss becomes more robust and permanent. Though this state has been achieved in the Sushupta stage as well, but now the aspirant has transcended that state and risen higher. The earlier transient and fledgling state of Sushupta has now become permanent and robust in the sixth Bhumika. The degree of enlightenment in the Turiya state is many notches more than the earlier state. Now no cause can bring him back to the lower levels again.]

No Vasanas (worldly passions, lust, desires, yearnings and wants) have any trace in him any longer (37).

38. In this exalted state of transcendental existence, there is no notion of Sat or Asat, or of Ahankar and non-Ahankar. [That is, now the aspirant need not distinguish between what is true and what is not for the simple reason that he lives in a state of non-duality where only one Truth lives, and it is the pure consciousness residing in his own self. That is why also there is no question of having any kind of pride and ego because such negative notions have any relevance only when one is aware of the body and its relationship with other individuals who also have a body. When there are no two entities, when everything is one indivisible non-dual Soul, the question of me being superior to him does not arise, and therefore there is no role of ego and pride.]

In this way, he becomes extremely fearless and brave. [Because now he has no enemies or competitors for him that he needs to have a false sense of self respect or a pride that has to be preserved. All are one in his enlightened eyes. Again, since a wise and enlightened person has realised that it is the body that dies and not the soul, and that the soul is his true 'self' and not the body, he overcomes the perpetual fear of death that stalks all ordinary living beings.] (38).

39. When all the knots of the heart are untied (i.e. when all his spiritual fetters are broken and he is let off to freedom), the spiritual aspirant is said to be liberated and delivered in spite of his having a gross body and having to live in this world and do the duties assigned to him by destiny. These knots of the heart act like shackles that tie a person to this body as well as the world and its material attractions, creating in him a sense of belonging and attachment, a sense of yearning and deep longing for the enjoyment of the material comforts and pleasures of this world along with the insatiable desire for obtaining gratification for the sense organs of the body. The heart impels him to have the tendency to enjoy them and remain engrossed in them, the tendency to cling to them and grieve from their separation. All these have a combined effect of creating an emotional fetter that shackle his Atma and prevent its liberation.

So, when these knots which are like a millstone around someone's neck are done away with, all his spiritual doubts, confusions and perplexities about what is the

truth and what is not are eliminated, which is tantamount to his soul obtaining liberation and deliverance from ignorance and delusions.

Such a person is said to have obtained 'Jivan Mukti', i.e. the state of spiritual liberation and deliverance even while he is still alive in this world and has a physical body (as compared to the Videha Mukti when he sheds his mortal coil and obtains physical freedom from the fetters of the body and the horrible troubles of the world at the time of death). In this state he might remain in this world and go about his duties in a normal way, but at the emotional and sentimental level he is not involved in anything.

Thus, though he has not obtained physical liberation of the soul by the way of shedding the body as done at the time of death, called 'Nirvan' (emancipation and salvation) in the conventional terms, he is deemed to have obtained a state of exalted and divine existence that is equivalent to it and in no way less in its spiritual significance (39).

40. His condition can be compared to a lighted lamp which has a steady flame. After successfully living in this sixth state of existence (which is called Jivan Mukta state), he finally enters the last state, the seventh Bhumika of Yoga. It is called the 'Videha Mukta' state of the consciousness. [The word 'Videha' means without a body. It has two implications—one, it refers to the higher state of Jivan Mukta when the spiritual aspirant is not at all aware even of his own body so much so that if it is beaten or burnt alive he is not aware of this event. Second, it refers to the actual shedding of the physical body as in the case of death. In both the cases, the soul is liberated and its salvation and emancipation obtained.] (40).

[Note—The sixth state of Yoga is called Jivan Mukta, while the seventh state is called Videha Mukta.]

41-42. This most exalted and divine seventh Bhumika of Yoga is the pinnacle of spiritual achievements and it cannot be described by speech or words. This is like the outer periphery of all other Bhumikas of Yoga and marks the culmination of all Yoga efforts.

An aspirant should abandon all involvements with the world, with the body, and even too much entanglement with the scriptures. [This is not to be construed as insulting the scriptures, for the hidden meaning is that once the objective of studying them is achieved, there is no point in reading them endlessly and discussing them forever just like the case when once a man passes out of college he need not read his text book daily except when he wishes to consult them when the need arises to do so and deemed necessary.]

He should instead spend more time and energy in implementing what he has learnt and experiencing the truth of the scriptures in practical terms by constantly practicing the tenets of Yoga on a regular basis.

The entire creation revealed in the form of Vishwa, Taijas and Pragya (corresponding to the three stages of existence, viz. the waking state, the dreaming state and the deep sleeping state that respectively involves the gross body, the subtle body and the causal body in this order as described in earlier verses as the first till the seventh state of Yoga) is nothing but the same non-dual supreme transcendental all-encompassing cosmic entity known as 'Omkar'. [The word Omkar refers to the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm. The latter has no attributes but the first sign of its existence is available in the form of cosmic vibrations in the ether, known as Naad or Pranav. This Naad represents the energy of Brahm in a most subtle but vast,

diffused and cosmic form. It is this energy that metamorphosed itself into other forms and helped the visible world to assume the structure that it has finally acquired.] (41-42).

43-48. There is no difference between the object of all spiritual pursuits and the pursuant himself because both are the same pure consciousness called the Atma.

The entire creation has been revealed from this one indivisible entity represented by the eclectic word OM. This word OM has three letters—viz. A, U and M. They correspond to the Vishwa (the gross body and its waking state of existence), the Taijas (the subtle body and the dreaming state of existence) [43], and Pragma (the causal body and the deep sleep state of existence) respectively.

As one prepares to enter the state of Samadhi (a transcendental trance-like perpetual state when one is totally engrossed in contemplating upon one's consciousness and remains totally oblivious of the surrounding world), he should deeply ponder on the great implication of this statement [44], and make efforts to merge the gross and the subtle with the pure consciousness.

He should accept the eclectic fact about the divinity of his 'self', that the most exalted and divine consciousness is his true nature and identity. [That is, 'he' is not the body which the world is accustomed to recognise as the identity of an individual, but something very high and pure in the form of consciousness. The body is visible but this consciousness is not, and that is one reason why the world cannot come to terms with it because it needs visible proof of everything to be convinced of its existence. But it forgets in the process that the body is perishable and the consciousness is not, besides the fact that without this consciousness being present in the body the latter would be worthless. This is the great delusion created by this world.]

With this firm conviction, he should contemplate thus—'I am the entity which is Nitya (eternal and imperishable; constant and steady), Shuddha (pure, immaculate and uncorrupt), Buddha (wise, erudite, self-realised and enlightened), Mukta (inherently liberated, delivered and emancipated), Sad (the true authority and Truth personified), Advaya (non-dual and one of its kind) [45], Parmanand Sandoha (a treasure of supreme and transcendental bliss and joy personified), Vasudeo (personified from of Lord Vishnu who is the Lord of creation, who is the supreme Brahm in his cosmic manifestation as the all-encompassing and all-pervading Viraat Purush from whom the rest of creation has emerged), and am an eclectic entity that has no beginning, no middle and no end (because the Atma is eternal, infinite, imperishable and ever present)'.

Since the world of delusions and falsehoods can give nothing but grief and miseries in its wake, right from its beginning thorough its present till its end [46], it is prudent and wise therefore, oh the sinless one, to abandon it and instead establish one's self in the Truth as described herein above.

Instead, think in these terms—'I am not deluded by the darkness of ignorance. I do not imagine anything unreal [47]. I am a personification of Anand—bliss and extreme happiness. I do not have any Mals—I do not have any sort of impurities, faults, taints and blemishes of any kind in this world. I am Shuddha—I am clean, pure and uncorrupt in every way. I am not visible to and comprehensible by the mind and speech—i.e. the mind cannot fathom my true form and nature, and the faculty of speech cannot find the right words to describe me. I am Pragma Ghan—I am a treasury of wisdom, erudition, sagacity and enlightenment. I am indeed that Brahm

who is personified Anand—who is a living embodiment of bliss, ecstasy and spiritual delight, who is beatitude and felicity personified’.

This is the teaching of this great Upanishad. Amen! [48]. (41-48).

-----Shanti Paath-----

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Chapter 24

Avadhuta Upanishad

The Avadhuta Upanishad deals with the concept of Avadhut Sanyas which is a spiritual way of life of an ascetic marked by exemplary renunciation and total detachment from the world and its material sense objects along with its deluding charms as lived by a most enlightened and self-realised person. Emphasis is laid on describing his enlightened thought processes and mental bearing which is central to a man’s behaviour, personality and temperament. It is marked by an extreme sense of dispassion, detachment, equanimity, fortitude, holiness and piety. This attitude of the mind and intellect would automatically lead to a commendable state of all-round calmness of demeanours and tranquility of the mind.

This mental bearing can only happen when the enlightened ascetic has risen above the mundane and has reached a high level of spiritual evolvement when he can actually experience the eclectic Truth about the great tenets of the scriptures outlining the divine and glorious nature of one’s Atma and its equivalence with the supreme Atma of the creation known as Brahm. The Avadhut leads a life worth emulating by other spiritual aspirants and marks the pinnacle of self-realisation. The great tenets of Sanyas as espoused in this Upanishad are complimented by the Kath Rudra Upanishad which is Chapter 25 of this volume.

This Upanishad was expounded by the great seer and sage Dattatreya who is considered as an incarnation of the Trinity Gods (Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva the concluder) to answer queries on the subject raised by sage Sankriti. Dattatreya is regarded as the patron saint of all Avadhut Sanyasis.

The word *Avadhuta* is an acronym derived from the first letters of the following words—the letter ‘A’ from Akshar meaning imperishable, eternal and infinite; the letter ‘Va’ from Varenya meaning worthy of accepting and honouring; the letter ‘Dhu’ referring to the worldly deceit and conceit known as Dhut; and the letter ‘Ta’ from the word Tyakta meaning to abandon and discard. Hence, the term Avadhut refers to the person who moves straight to his aim of life, which is self-realisation and truth-realisation, as well as liberation and deliverance of the soul from the cycle of transmigration and worldly miseries, and obtaining eternity and peace. This is accomplished by discarding all deceits and conceits associated with life in this materialistic world of delusions and artificiality.

The Avadhuta state is one of the highest categories of the life of Sanyas. This Upanishad details its characteristic features, especially the mental state more than the physical state, and highlights the fact that such people are so engrossed in contemplation that they are free from external pretensions of piety and holiness to

such an extent that their external worldly behaviour is often construed as being unconventional and strange. But this oddity is not out of some defect in their character or due to some evil design on their part but out of a high level of spiritual attainment which is not understandable by ordinary people.

-----Shanti Paath-----

The meaning of this Shanti Paath is given in appendix no. 1 of this volume.

1 Sage Sankriti¹ went to the great seer and sage Dattatreya² and requested him—‘Oh Lord! Please tell me who is an ‘Avadhuta’. What are his characteristic features; what are his unique signs, special qualities and virtues? How does he live, and what characterises his way of life? How does he interact with the world, and what is his way of thinking?’

Hearing his earnest query, the most merciful and compassionate Dattatreya replied—(1).

[Note—¹*Sankriti* was a great devotee of the Sun God and an Avadhut Sanyasi, a renunciate ascetic of the highest order. He was enlightened and a self-realised wise sage. Two Upanishads of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition are attributed to him—viz. Akchu Upanishad and Avadhut Upanishad. In the Akchu Upanishad, Sankriti has offered his obeisance to the Sun God by praying to him in specially composed hymns in the Lord’s honour, and as a blessing the Sun God revealed this Upanishad to him in which he expounded the eclectic virtues and divine characteristics of those who have attained success in doing Yoga (meditation and contemplation); it describes the seven Bhumikas or signs of such success in simple terms. The Avadhut Upanishad is an exposition on the grand characteristics of Avadhut Sanyas which is the highest spiritual stage of renunciation, and was preached by sage Dattatreya to Sankriti. This fact establishes that Sankriti was a contemporary of Dattatreya.

²Lord Dattatreya is a fractional incarnation of Lord Vishnu, the supreme Lord of creation in his cosmic form as the Viraat Purush from whom the rest of the creation, including the creator Brahma himself, was created. The word ‘Dattatreya’ means ‘one who was given to Atri’. According to mythological accounts, sage Atri and his chaste wife Anusuya were childless, and having a desire to have a son they prayed and did severe penance. All the three gods of the Hindu Trinity, i.e. Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva the concluder appeared before the couple and requested them to ask for a boon. Upon the couple’s request, all the three Gods became their sons. Brahma became the sage known as Chandra representing the Moon God, Vishnu became the wise and enlightened sage Dattatreya, and Shiva became the angry sage Durbasa.

According to another version of this story, the three Gods decided to check the chastity vows of the wife of Atri and came disguised to cheat on her. Anusuya was no ordinary lady, and realising their ill intentions she transformed them into her son with three heads and six arms, each head standing for one of the Gods.

Dattatreya is counted amongst the seven celestial sages called the Sapta Rishis. He is said to have created the Som Plant whose juice, called the ‘Som Rasa’, is used during fire sacrifices as an offering to Gods.

Iconographically, Dattatreya is shown with three heads and six arms holding the emblems of the three Gods, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, viz. a water pot, a conch and a discus, and a trident respectively. A bull representing Dharma (righteousness) is

depicted as his mount. Four dogs representing the four Vedas are his constant companion.

The concept of Dattatreya is an attempt by ancient sages and seers to harmonise the three cults of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva that had created an artificial and unwarranted rift in the edifice of religious unity amongst the Hindus.

An Upanishad titled 'Dattatreya Upanishad' appears in the Atharva Veda tradition. He had also preached Prahalad, the great devotee of Lord Vishnu, about the eclectic state of Avadhut Sanyasi in the form of huge python. He had taught many kings and saints on the essential principles of metaphysics and spiritual truth. The prominent ones are the following—

- (i) During Sata Yuga, he had taught Lord Kaartikeya and Lord Ganesh.
- (ii) During Treta Yuga, he had preached king Alark, king Purukhaa and king Aayu.
- (iii) During Dwapar Yuga, he had sage Parashuraam, and kings Kaartaviryaarjuna and Yadu as his disciples.
- (iv) In the current Kali Yuga, it is believed that great saints such as Shankaracharya, Gorakhaath, Chaitanya Mahaaprabhu, siddha Naagaarjuna, Gyaneshwar, Eknaath, Tukaaraam etc. had benefited by his teachings.

Being a great Sanyasi himself, he was endowed with stupendous mystical powers called Siddhis. One of the sects of Siddhas regard him as their patron sage.

Sage Dattatreya had made *twenty four Gurus* or teachers. The remarkable thing is that none of these twenty four Gurus was a human being—he had learnt even from the elements (earth, water, fire, air, sky), animals (elephant, deer), birds (pigeon, hawk), reptiles (snake, worm), insects (moth, bee, spider), a fish, the moon and the sun, a child, a girl, a prostitute, an arrow-smith etc. This is a very interesting episode, and is being briefly summarized here.

The following are the twenty four teachers and what Dattatreya learnt from them.

- (1) Earth—the earth sustain all sorts of life and nourishes each creature, even those who virtually eat into her bosom by mercilessly and ruthlessly exploit her and dig into the bowels for his vested self interests.
- (2) Air—the wind moves everywhere, visits all kinds of places but never gets attached to any place or thing. It purifies everything and gives life to all without any discrimination on the basis of gender, caste, race, creed etc. It gives life to a friend as much as it gives life to one's enemy.
- (3) Sky or Akash—the space of the sky accommodates everything and everyone. This taught him to accept and accommodate all in life but remain uninvolved in or unattached with them just like the sky which harbours uncountable things in its bosom but remains totally indifferent to them and unaffected by them.
- (4) Water—it is refreshing and cool and nourishing. No life is possible without water, and it is regarded as the only universal elixir of life. This taught him to sustain all and be soothing and refreshing for all the creatures.
- (5) Fire—it gives light, heat and energy. It is upwardly mobile—as is evident from the direction the flame of a raging fire takes. It is all-purifying on the one hand, and burns to ashes whatever impurity is put in it on the other hand. This taught him to welcome everything like the fire but purify them before finally accepting anything, and reduce to ashes all that is impure and tainting for the purity of the Atma.
- (6) Moon—it appears to wax and wane but really it remains the same. This taught him the fact that the world and the body undergo innumerable changes but the true 'self' remains uniform and immutable.
- (7) Sun—it is the 'eye' of the world and gives the latter light, heat and energy in a selfless and unbiased manner. The sun illuminates all but does not need anything to illuminate it and neither does it get tainted by the thing it illuminates. This taught him to illuminate the world and removes its darkness of ignorance by the light of knowledge and wisdom while remaining immune to the darkening effects of this world.
- (8) Pigeon—this is the typical story of a householder's life. The parent pigeons went out in search of food for their young one day when a bird-catcher spread his nets and caught the offspring. When the parents return, the mother pigeon saw the plight of the young one and jumped into the net. Then the male pigeon too jumps into the net

because he cannot live without the family. The bird-catcher was overjoyed. This taught him that worldly attachments lead to ruin and downfall. (9) Python—it stays at one place and swallows any creature that happens to pass that way. He would not forage for food but wait for it to come to him. This taught him to be contented with what comes his way. (10) Ocean—it never overflows when rivers flow into it continuously. It remains contented, calm, un-wanting, fathomless, steady and endless. These are grand virtues that a wise man should inculcate. (11) Moth—it gets attracted to the fire and gets caught and burnt. This taught him not to be caught by the beauty and charm of colour and form of this artificial world. (12) Honey Bee—it collects nectar from numerous flowers and converts them into one homogenous honey. This taught him to imbibe knowledge from whatever source available. A mendicant should also collect a little bit of food from different household instead of relying on one house. (13) Elephant—it is notorious for the sense of touch. During the mating season they rub against each other. This weakness is exploited by hunters to catch them. This weakness taught the sage that he should be wary of the pleasure obtained by touching sensual things in this world. (15) Honey Gatherer—he stealthily takes away all the honey collected by the honey-bee assiduously over a long period of time involving immense labour. This taught him two things—it is useless to hoard things as one day death would snatch everything away, and second it is futile to hoard without sharing things with others because one day they are bound to be snatched from us. (15) Deer—it is by nature attracted to music, a weakness exploited by the hunter to trap it. So, one should be wary of pleasant and sweet sounds emanating from this world because poison is more often than not laced with sugar. (16) Fish—it is attracted to the hook and got caught due to its desire to eat the bait. So, the fish taught him to have control over the taste buds of his tongue. (17) Pingala—she was a prostitute. One day the saint, during his wanderings, came to take rest under the tree on a street where she lived. He watched her eagerly waiting for a customer who never turned up. She finally gave up and went to sleep with the realisation that if she had spent so much time invoking the Lord present in her own bosom, she would not have to wait for him so long. This taught the saint that disappointments come to us when we expect something from this world and hope it to provide us with comfort and joy. The real happiness lies inside. (18) The Kurara Bird (a species of Hawk; an Osprey)—the bird had a small piece of flesh in its beak and other larger and stronger birds pounced on it. Distracted, the Kurara suddenly realised that the cause of its torments is the piece of meat, and so it dropped it from its beak. The other birds swooped on the meat and stopped pursuing the Kurara. This incident taught the saint that if one clings on to material things, no matter how desirable they are, they would never let him live in peace. It is better to drop them at the earliest; it is better to drop all worldly attachments and devote time to the Truth of life. (19) Child—a child becomes so engrossed in his playthings that he forgets hunger and other bodily needs. Children fight with each other during the course of playing, but soon forget everything. This taught him to remain engrossed in contemplation on the ‘self’ and play with it like the child, remaining immune to the world and even to one’s own bodily problems. A wise man must be innocent like a child—he might get angry at others but never takes anything to heart. The child plays with toys, but suddenly throws them away and wants something new. Likewise, the wise man enjoys the world but never gets hooked to it at the emotional and sentimental plane. (20) A Girl—some people had come to see the girl with a proposal for marriage. She went inside the house to prepare food for them. In the course of grinding spices her bangles clashed with each other and made a disturbing noise. She removed them one by one until one remained—then there was no noise. This taught him that when the mind is distracted by so many things, the man never finds peace. So the best way to concentrate the mind is to remove all extraneous distractions in the form of numerous paths and philosophies, and instead focus on one ultimate Truth preached by the Upanishads, the Truth that is absolute, uniform and immutable. (21) An Arrow-smith—he was so

engrossed in his single pointed devotion to his work of preparing the arrows and giving them the right contours, aerodynamic shape and the sharpness to their tip that he was unaware that the king's entourage was passing by. This taught the saint the importance of single-minded pursuit of one's goal. (22) Snake—it never makes its own hole and lives in holes made by nature or other animals. A true saint should realise that the Atma has no body of its own but lives on borrowed bodies during its sojourn in this world. Again, the snake effortlessly leaves its dead cuticle to teach him that the Atma would similarly leave this body without any effort, pain or attachment to find a new abode for itself. (23) Spider—it creates a web from itself, moves around it and then swallows it, the supreme Lord has created this world, sustains it and finally retracts it into himself. Further, the spider creates the web and remains trapped in it much like the creature who creates this artificial world by his mind and then remains trapped in it for life. And finally (24) Worm—a wasp caught hold of a worm and kept it in a hole. The wasp kept humming around this worm that was so terrified of the wasp and continuously subjected to this humming that ultimately it became a wasp itself. Similarly, when a man concentrates upon something continuously, whether willingly or unwillingly, he would become one like the subject on which he contemplates. If he contemplates upon the world, he would become one like other mortal ignorant creatures, and if he contemplates upon the sublime and divine he would become sublime and divine himself.]

2. 'An Avadhuta'¹ is an exalted and realised person who has the following eclectic qualities and divine virtues ingrained in him—he firmly believes in the concept of the imperishability of the soul, the pure conscious Atma, as well as in the divine entity that has this unique characteristic, i.e. on the supreme transcendental Brahman; he is worthy of being accepted and honoured as a realised and enlightened soul (i.e. he is pious, holy and divine by nature and behaviour, and is worth emulating and looking up to); he is free from all the fetters that are represented by the various aspects of this entrapping world of ignorance, artificiality and delusions; and he is one who visibly exemplifies or personifies the great tenets of the scriptures such as 'Tattwamasi'—'that supreme essence and truth is you'¹ (2).

[Note—¹The word *Avadhuta* is an acronym derived from the first letters of the following words—the letter 'A' from Akshar meaning imperishable, eternal and infinite; the letter 'Va' from Varenya meaning worthy of accepting and honouring; the letter 'Dhu' referring to the worldly deceit and conceit known as Dhut; and the letter 'Ta' from the word Lakshaya meaning aim or target—referring to the person who moves straight to his aim of life, which is self-realisation, truth-realisation, liberation and deliverance of the soul from the cycle of transmigration and worldly miseries, and obtaining eternity and peace without getting entangled in the cobweb-like world and without having any of the evil characteristics and negative attributes that veil an ordinary man who is less wise and enlightened in this world.

²The life and thoughts, the behaviour and temperaments of such a realised and enlightened Avadhut Sanyasi showcase in practical terms what is meant by this 'Tattwamasi' and other great sayings of the scriptures that basically teach that each individual creature, including the Avadhuta, is an image of the one and non-dual supreme transcendental Lord known as Brahman, that there is no distinction between two individuals, and that the ubiquitous Atma residing inside all living beings is essentially one and the same; it is a non-dual divine entity that is universal, uniform, immanent, quintessential and personified Consciousness. Hence, there is no cause for any kind of distinction and dichotomy to exist in this world.

There are a number of other Upanishads that describe the great sayings of the Vedas, called the Mahavakyas. (i) Rig Veda—Atmabodha Upanishad. (ii) Shukla Yajur Veda—Paingalo-panishad, Canto 3, verse no. 2-3, 8; Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, Brahman 2, section 2, verse no. 5; Brahman 2, section 4, verse no. 4;

Brahman 3, section 1, verse no. 6; Brahman 3, section 2, verse no. 2; Adhyatma Upanishad of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse nos. 2, 10 describe the great saying 'So-a-Ham', i.e. 'that essence is me', and in verse nos. 30-31 describe the other great saying 'Tattwamasi', i.e. 'that essence is you'. (iii) Krishna Yajur Veda—Shuka Rahasayo-panishad, verse no. 22; Kaivalya Upanishad, verse no. 16; Sarwasaar Upanishad, verse no. 12-14; Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 32, 37. (iv) Sam Veda—Chandogya Upanishad of Sam Veda tradition describes the great saying 'Tattwamasi' in great detail in its Canto 6, sections 1-16 with numerous examples when Uddyalak, son of Aruni, taught this great axiomatic maxim of the Vedas to his son Shwetketu. It winds up the exposition with the final declaration of 'Tattwamasi', 'that art thou', in verse no. 3, section 16 of Canto 6. (v) Atharva Veda—Atma Upanishad.

The term *Tattwamasi* has been explained in detail in the Shukla Yajur Veda's Paingal Upanishad, Canto 3, verse nos. 3 and 8, and Adhyatma Upanishad, verse nos. 30-31; Sam Veda's Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 6; and Krishna Yajur Veda's Sarwasaar Upanishad, verse nos. 12-14.]

3. An ascetic and self-realised person who rises above the restrictions imposed by the different Ashrams and Varanas in society¹, and instead lives a life centered around the Atma, the pure Consciousness and the ultimate quintessential Truth of creation which is not only immanent and irrefutable but universally present in a uniform manner in all the creatures as their 'true self', is eligible to be called an 'Avadhuta'. [That is, such a person believes in only one universal truth known as the Atma which is one and the same in all the creatures. He does not distinguish between any two individuals or any two circumstances—because for him all are alike; sufferings and joys are the same for him as are his enemies and friends. He does not recognise anything other than the truthful Atma as being of any consequence and value. For him everything is either the truth in the form of the consciousness known as the Atma which is worthy of being accepted, or false and non-Atma and hence worthy of being abandoned. Obviously, such a person is highly enlightened, wise and erudite; he has understood the essence of the scriptures, and hence he need not adhere or conform to the strict codes of conduct and behaviour as ordained by them for they are basically meant for maintaining orderliness and discipline in the vast society and regulate its functioning, because even without any formal restraint imposed upon him or the guidelines shown to him such a man would himself act in a well regulated and disciplined manner. He would not need someone to tell him what is auspicious, good and righteous, and what is not.] (3).

[Note—¹The Hindu society has been divided into four Ashrams and Varanas by ancient sages and seers for its regularization and smooth functioning by delegation of authority and powers.

Briefly, the four *Ashrams* are the following—(a) Brahmacharya—this is the 1st phase of life in which a person studies the scriptures under the tutelage of a wise teacher. This phase of life is marked by austerities, keeping of vows, observing celibacy, abstinence and continence as well as leading a regimental life style of a boarding school. (b) Grihastha—when a person has studied and prepared himself to face the world, he comes back to his house and enters the 2nd phase called Grihastha Ashram which is a householder's life. He marries, raises a family, produces wealth and helps to carry forward the cycle of creation. This is the most important and enjoyable phase as well as the most tough one because on the one hand there are the comforts and pleasure of the world to be enjoyed, and on the other hand there are the various tribulations and miseries of a family life alongside the dealings with this deceptive world with all its accompanying horrifying problems. (c) Vanprastha—this

is the 3rd phase when a man hands over the responsibilities of the world to his heirs and renounces his attachments to the house as well as the world, and heads for the forest, leaving the home for his next generation. It is now that he goes on pilgrimage and prepares for the final stage of his life, and (d) Sanyas—this is the 4th and last stage of life when there is complete cutting-off of all the ties with the world, spending time in contemplation and meditation, living a life of total renunciation, and begging for food for survival while single mindedly endeavouring for emancipation and salvation. This phase of Sanyas also has many stages depending upon the spiritual elevation and accomplishments of the aspirant, viz. Kutichak, Bahudak, Hansa, Paramhans, Turiyatit and Avadhut.

These four Ashrams, their characteristic features and virtues are described in detail in an Upanishad called 'Ashramo-panishad' belonging to the Atharva Veda tradition.

The four *Varanas* are the following—(a) Brahmins*—the learned and teaching class; a wise one well-versed in the knowledge of the ultimate Truth about the supernatural Being called Brahm. They also presided over religious functions as priests, because these functions were central to life in the Vedic period; (b) Kshatriyas—they were the warrior, fighting, kingly class. They were assigned the job of giving protection to the society, dispensing justice and maintaining general law and order. (c) Vaishyas—they were the trading and farming class responsible for commerce and wealth generation. They provided for the necessities for a comfortable life. And finally (d) the Shudras —the service class of people whose main function was to free the other three classes from the humdrums of daily chores and concentrate their energies to the particular jobs assigned to those classes to which they belonged.

*The salient features of Brahmins are the following—they should possess these noble qualities—(1) 'Riju'-be expert in the Rig and the Yajur Vedas, (2) 'Tapa'-should be involved in doing penances, observing austerities and enduring sufferings for the welfare of the soul and the society, (3) 'Santosh'-be contented and satisfied, (4) 'Kshamaa'-to be forgiving and tolerant, (5) 'Sheel'-to have such virtues as good character, dignity, decorum and virtuousness, (6) 'Jitendriya'-to have self control over the sense organs, (7) 'Data'-to be a giver, one who sacrifices his own interests for the benefit of others, (8) 'Gyani'-one who is well learned, wise, enlightened and erudite, (9) 'Dayaalu'-to be merciful and compassionate. [Shatpath Brahmin.] An entire Upanishad called Vajra-shuchiko-panishad, belonging to the Sam Veda tradition is devoted to the subject. The eclectic virtues of Brahmins have been expounded in Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 3, Brahmin 5 as well as in Canto 3, Brahmin 8, verse no. 10

These four classes of the human race were created from the single father, the Viraat or Brahma. Their origins are indicative of the different jobs that they were assigned so as to enable the creator perform the task of governance just like a king assigns separate jobs to his different ministers. But it must be clearly understood here that each class of the human race was like a part of the body of the Supreme Being, and even as a man feels disfigured and handicapped as well as feels the pain equally if his leg is cut off from the rest of his body as he feels when his arm or head is severed, the Lord feels betrayed and hurt when even one of his sons is subjected to humiliation and pain. The four classes had specific jobs cut for them so that the society could function smoothly.

The Brahmins have their origin from the mouth of Brahma the creator. Since the mouth is used to give advice and teach others, the primary job of the Brahmins was to act as moral guide to their brethren. The four Vedas, which are repository of all knowledge that exist, were also created from the mouth of Brahma; hence these Brahmins were considered most wise and learned. The arms are metaphors for strength and powers; they are used to protect and help others. Hence, the Kshatriyas, who were created from the arms of Brahma, were those sons of his who would give

the needed protection and security to their other brethren. In order to feed his creation, Brahma had to toil and labour to provide for the maintenance and financial and material well being of the society for merely teaching and protecting would not suffice without some one to take care of the other necessities of life. So he created the Vaishyas from his thighs, symbolising labour, to pick up the mantle of mundane affairs of life. But there must be someone who would do the daily chores, such as tilling the fields, doing the harvesting, washing and cleaning, and all other such odd jobs. This was assigned to the Shudras created from Brahma's feet symbolising service.

Yajur Veda 31st Chapter, 11th Mantra says that Brahmins are the mouth of society, the Kshatriyas are its arms, Vaishyas are its stomach or abdomen, and Shudras are its legs. The body is regarded as a symbol of the society. As is obvious in this analogy, all these four units of the body must function properly and in close cooperation with each other in order that the body can survive and live comfortably and carry on with its assigned duties in an orderly fashion. The mouth is important because it is the medium by which the body takes food and speaks; the arms procure food and gives protection to the body against enemies; the stomach digests food and supplies the whole body with the energy needed by it; the abdomen holds all the internal organs; and the legs carry the body wherever it wants to go such as the place where food is available. Since food is the basis necessity of life, this instance is cited here. And the logic can be extended to everything else. Each component of the society must work properly in order that the whole society survives; each component is as vital as the other; each has its own importance in the bigger picture.

The Paingalo-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 1, verse no. 7 and Canto 2, verse nos. 3 describe how the three basic Gunas of Sata, Raja and Tama were used by the supreme Brahm to create different types of creatures in this creation. Other Upanishads which give a graphic detail of these four Varanas are the Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, 1/4/11-15 and the Aitereyo-panishad, 1/1/4. The Niralambo-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 10, states the reason for the classification of the society in four classes. The Subalo-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 1, verse 6, and Canto 2, verse 1 describes the origin of these four classes in society.

The Mantriko-panishad, verse no. 5, the Shewata-shwatar Upanishad, Canto 4, verse 4-5, and the Paingalo-panishad, Canto 1, verse no. 3 narrate how the colour of the skin was used symbolically to indicate the dominance of one or the other of the three basic Gunas, the Sata, the Raja and the Tama, in a particular individual that determines to which class of society he belongs, and which formed the basis of this classification which depend heavily on the quality displayed by an individual to become eligible to belong to one or the other class. The Gunas displayed by him holds a greater importance than his mere birth in a particular section.]

4. For such an exalted ascetic, whatever is very dear to him, i.e. is his 'Priya', is located in the region of the head¹.

Being in a constant state of eternal happiness and joyous abandon, he feels happiness and delight everywhere he sees or goes; there is happiness and joy to the right of him and to the left of him. This fact is symbolically depicted by his right and left arms—the right arm symbolising 'Moda' and the left symbolising 'Pramod'. [The words Moda and Pramod both refer to happiness, joy, delight and pleasures.]

With such an eclectic state of existence overflowing and submerged in eternal sense of 'Anand' (extreme bliss and ecstasy), he is like a cow¹ whose feet supports its holy body. [Here the ascetic is compared to a cow to indicate that he is as revered and holy as the sacred animal.] (4).

[Note—¹The dearest entity for a wisened and enlightened ascetic is the supreme Brahm symbolically located in the exalted point of the body, which is the head.

According to Yoga Upanishads, Brahm resides in the area of the head called the Brahm Randhra (i.e. the area around the cranium), in the Vyom Chakra as the eclectic sky element, as well as in the Agya Chakra located in the tri-junction of the two eyebrows and the root of the nose (i.e. the area of the cerebrum) as the virtues of wisdom, erudition, enlightenment, insight and knowledge. It is here that the 'third eye' of deep insight and ability to think and analyse is located. Brahm is also depicted as being present a little further from the tip of the nose, symbolising the vast and fathomless sky element. That is the reason why a divine halo of diffused glow of light is witnessed around the head of self-realised and Brahm-realised persons.

The mind and intellect (i.e. the brain) also have their location in the head, and since Brahm is an embodiment of wisdom, erudition, enlightenment and knowledge, this mind-intellect apparatus is an apt symbol of Brahm.

Brahm is the Emperor of creation, and emperors have their residences on a raised or elevated ground such as a hill or mound, called the 'capitol' or 'citadel'. The high location is symbolic in nature to indicate that this is the seat of final authority and the central government. In the individual creature's case, the head is clearly such a seat because the mind and the intellect is the controlling authority of everything in this world.

²The cow is regarded as a holy animal, and by alluding to it in this verse it is meant that once the ascetic develops this divine view regarding his own body as not being merely an entity having physical organs that are meant to enjoy the transient sensual pleasures and comforts of the material world and its sense objects but to enjoy the eternal bliss obtained by realisation of the Atma, he becomes as holy as the cow. The four legs cited here represent the four aspects of self-realisation mentioned in this verse—viz. Priya, Moda, Pramoda and Anand. Basically, all the four refer to the divine state of ecstasy and bliss obtained when one becomes self and Brahm realised. This state is perpetual and it constantly accompanies the ascetic wherever he is and in whatever condition he is in. It ensures that he remains in a constant state of bliss and joyous mood of self-realisation, unconcerned by the world and its attendant sorrows and miseries.

A very similar concept occurs in Taittiriyo-panishad, 2/5.]

5. A wise ascetic should not treat this symbolic cow's head, middle part of the body or the legs as symbolising Brahm. [Then what is to be regarded as an emblem of Brahm? The answer is--] The tail of the cow represents the established glory of Brahm¹. A wise person who knows Brahm in this way is able to obtain the most exalted stature which is equivalent to Brahm² (5).

[Note--¹It is believed that the dignity and self-esteem of the cow is in its tail though it is at the rear of its body. The tail hides the cow's private parts, the vagina and the womb in which the embryo is conceived. It alludes to the fact that Brahm hides inside his bosom the entire secrets of creation. Further, it is noticed that the cow uses the tail to wave off flies etc. that keep tormenting it by flapping them with the brush of hair at the end of the long tail. This is symbolic of the effort made by the wise creature to ward off worldly torments that constantly nagging at him by relying upon Brahm. That is, a person who has inculcated wisdom as expounded by the Upanishads realises that the body is not the real thing to be worried about or indulged with, but attention should be diverted to higher targets of life such as contemplating upon the Truth and the proper path to be followed so that liberation and deliverance of the soul, or spiritual emancipation and salvation can be achieved in the least possible time. The wisdom of the Upanishads wizens him about the fact that the organs of the body have a natural tendency to be teased by their respective sense organs because these organs have an inherent affinity for them. This situation is like the flies constantly teasing and causing irritation for the cow which uses its tail to ward them off. Similarly, the wise ascetic should use the wisdom of the Upanishads to ward off

the attractions of the body and the sense objects of the world in the light of their entangling effect on his soul and keeping him restless and agitated.

The tail also represents the fag end of the cow's body, implying that when the creation comes to an end, it ends in Brahm. When cowherds try to tame a calf or control a cow or a bull, they usually catch hold of the tail, indicating that a wise person can tame this world by holding on to Brahm.

It also might mean that by following Brahm, one can reach one's spiritual goal in life just like young cowherds who get lost in the vast stretches of land while accompanying the cattle set loose to graze at will catch hold of their tails and follow them calmly back to their homes without worrying to find out the way back. This is because the animal has an uncanny sense that helps it to trace its path correctly back to its home. The catching of the tail also ensures that the cow does not run and gets lost, or goes beyond the reach of the cowherd and leave him perplexed and lost in the wilderness, not knowing what to do.

²This observation means that one who sees Brahm not only in the physical existence of creation represented by the body of the cow which gives milk but even in its fag end or 'tail end' is really aware of Brahm's all-incorporating nature. A man usually pays scant attention to an animal's tail and judges its worth by examining its body. So this statement means that even the most inconsequential and lowly aspect of creation that is usually sidelined is as important as the prominent aspects. Each aspect and unit of creation is a manifestation of Brahm, and one should not show disrespect or neglect even the lowliest and the humble even as the cow has great respect for its tail.

It is pertinent to note here that a major Upanishad, the *Birhak Aranyak* 1/1/1-2 belonging to the *Shukla Yajur Veda* tradition uses the metaphor of a sacrificial horse to describe Brahm. The *Aieteriya Upanishad* of *Rig Veda* tradition, Canto 1, section 2, verse nos. 2-3 says that Brahm created three bodies in the beginning of creation where his personified forms as various Gods could take up their residences—a cow, a horse and a human.]

6. The state of eternity and attainment of the exalted stature of divinity cannot be obtained by a person either by doing various deeds, or with the help of his subjects (such as sons, kith and kin), and also with the aid of money and power¹.

The only way (and easy one at that) to achieve it is the path of 'Tyag'² [This is the eclectic spiritual path of *Sanyas*.] (6).

[Note--¹That is, if one believes that one can obtain eternity and the exalted stature of being one like the Supreme Being by doing righteous deeds such as doing great religious sacrifices, making charities and giving donations, then it is not possible and he is very mistaken. Had it been so, poor mendicants, hermits, ascetics, sages and friars would have had no chance of ever attaining this auspicious niche for the soul and it would be dominated by the rich and powerful who can spend large sums of money on such deeds.

Similarly, just like the case that the medicine has to be taken by the patient himself and not by his son to cure a disease, attainment of spiritually advanced stature and reaching of the pinnacle of divine spiritual glory is to be achieved by the person concerned himself by his own efforts and not by the aid of anybody else. That is, it is futile to believe that the son or one's kith and kin would do some great religious sacrifice in order to enable the person to go high up in the heaven or obtain liberation and deliverance for his soul. He would have to tread the path himself. A similar idea has been expressed in *Kathrudra Upanishad*, verse no. 13 which is Chapter 25 of this volume.

²Tyag—The concept of Tyag is an important and central to Hindu philosophy of religion and finds a prominent place in the scriptures. Broadly speaking it covers such virtues as to give up something that is very dear to one, voluntarily and willingly for a noble cause; to surrender; to renounce; to relinquish; to make sacrifice; to forsake; to

be dispassionate and detached; to resign and forfeit one's claim and rights. It assumes different connotations under different circumstances, and all these definitions would apply to the eclectic concept of Tyag depending upon the different situations one is dealing with.

Tyag usually involves sincere giving away and renouncing something for an auspicious and noble cause. When one develops natural dispassion towards the charms of the material world, when one does deeds selflessly without expecting any rewards from them, when one sacrifices his own comforts and pleasures for the good and welfare of others, when one remains a neutral observer to this world and forsakes all involvement in its affairs, when one does not yearn for anything and gives up his rights cheerfully and willingly, when one forsakes falsehood, non-truths, delusions and misconceptions, when one assumes a state of total neutrality and develops exemplary equanimity and fortitude—he is said to be observing Tyag in its purest form. Merely physically abstaining from material comforts of the world but mentally very much attached to them or even remembering them, or not doing deeds in the false belief that doing deeds would entangle him in this world or pretending to be a renunciate monk is no Tyag at all. Rather, it is worse than openly remaining involved because it is pretension and deceit which is abhor-able and demeaning for the soul.

The great spiritual and metaphysical importance and significance of Tyag has been succinctly summed up in Kaivalya Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda in its verse no. 3 which says that one can access the essential elixir of eternity and bliss, called Amrit, only by observing Tyag and not by doing numerous deeds (including religious sacrifices), or by the help of subjects (such as sons, family members, priests etc.), or by the help of wealth (such as by making huge donations and doing great charities).

The immense importance of non-involvement in deeds as a significant form of Tyag is highlighted in Geeta pronounced by Lord Krishna, in its Canto 5, verse nos. 7-9 which briefly declare that he who has transformed himself as an embodiment of Yoga in its various connotations, who is a living example of Yoga and what it stands for, who has cleansed his self and his soul from all impurities and taints, who has learnt to exercise self-restraint of the sense organs and his inner self (mind), who sees no difference between himself and others—such a man remains un-involved in deeds in spite of doing everything in a normal way. He who has developed exemplary equanimity and dispassion, who treats everything alike should realise that he is not doing anything at all. He must realise that the various deeds done by the body are the normal functioning of its sense organs, such as seeing, hearing, touching and feeling, smelling, eating, walking, sleeping, breathing, speaking, giving, accepting, arising and lying down, getting excited and feeling low etc. The best approach is to offer these deeds as an offering to the Supreme Being, and this would absolve the aspirant of all ill-effects of such deeds. This is called Tyag because one does not expect any rewards from these deeds, thereby remaining indifferent and unconcerned with them as if they do not belong to him at all.

The Bhagvad Geeta, 18/2, gives a general definition of Tyag as giving up the fruits of all actions, i.e. not expecting any rewards of deeds and doing them selflessly and dispassionately. It categorizes Tyag or abandonment of actions into three basic types—viz. Satvic, Rajsic and Tamasic.

Satvic Tyag consists of performing one's duties but doing them selflessly and dispassionately, being detached from them and their fruits, or not expecting anything from them. Rajsic Tyag is not doing anything because it entails a lot of physical exertion or difficult to do. Tamsic Tyag is doing deeds in a confused manner and under delusory effects of ignorance. [Refer Bhagvad Geeta, 18/7-9.]

It ought to be noted that auspicious deeds such as Daan (charity, alms giving, donation), Yagya (any religious exercise) and Tapa (sufferance for some noble cause, observing austerities and doing penances) should not be given up on the pretext of Tyag, but done without expecting any reward.

If one is unable to achieve anything desired, and realising it is inaccessible for him pretends to forgo it by saying that he is renouncing it or surrendering his right over it or giving it up for some noble objective or did not wish to have it, he is only cheating himself as well as others. Similarly, if anything is forcibly taken away by a stronger opponent and cannot be retrieved, giving it up is not Tyag.

Tyag has two vital aspects—Daan and Vairagya. Daan is giving away voluntarily and without coercion to those who are in need, such as making donation, charity and alms. Vairagya is renunciation when one becomes wise and enlightened about the truth and reality of existence, about the falsehood of the material world and anything related with it, about the futility of possessing anything that is perishable and transient and which acts as an obstacle hindering one's pursuit of his spiritual goal.]

7. The ascetics are at liberty to behave as they want. [That is, no restrictions are placed upon them to do this and not to do that. It is left to their own wisdom to decide what is auspicious and righteous, and what is not. This freedom is based on the premise that once a person has become an ascetic or taken the sincere vows of Sanyas, he would exercise the greatest of self-restraint and never do anything inauspicious or unrighteous even though freedom is given to him. This is because he is deemed to be a self-realised, wise, enlightened and exalted man. It is not expected of him to act in a frivolous, irresponsible, deceitful and undisciplined manner.]

For example, so many of them wear clothes, and there are so many who remain naked. For the exalted self-realised and enlightened ascetics there is no such concept as one thing being auspicious and righteous and the other not, or one thing being pure and holy and the other not. [This is because they see nothing but the Atma or the ultimate Truth everywhere, and therefore they do not distinguish between any given two entities. For them all are alike; a child for them is the same as the old man, a woman is likewise the same as the man. They have developed an eclectic sense of neutrality and profound equanimity marked by great equity and total detachment. There is another reason for the development of this temperament—they are so deeply engrossed in contemplation and meditation upon the Truth and the Atma that they are virtually in a perpetual state of Samadhi, a trance-like state when one is not even aware of his own body, what to talk of the external world, and hence such a man cannot distinguish between any two entities because he is not even aware of their presence or importance; he does not see any difference between them and treats them equally.]

From the point of view of a man's natural tendency of collecting and hoarding assets, such enlightened ascetics collect their sense organs and keep them restrained. This is their equivalence of collecting and hoarding assets of the material world as done by ordinary men¹. [The sense organs have a natural tendency to move towards this material world and spread out in every direction much like the wealth that is spread in all the corners of the world and is to be collected with great effort and stored in a treasury by a man. In other words, a wise ascetic reins in his sense organs and prevents them from moving out towards the world and its charms, and instead diverts their efforts towards enabling him to achieve success in his spiritual pursuit. He uses his mind to contemplate and his sense organs to help him to meditate and help to maintain the strict discipline and observe the rigours of a renunciate way of life meant for him.]

The external fire sacrifice done by others, such as the great Ashwa Medh Yagya (the horse sacrifice), is replicated by them internally in a symbolic manner by sacrificing the sense organs and the mind by exercising greatest of self restraint on their natural wayward tendency and their worldly yearnings and desires. They turn

inwards and spend time on contemplation and meditation on the pure 'self', the consciousness known as the Atma. This is their Ashwa Medh Yagya².

For a truly enlightened ascetics, this is the greatest of Yoga (meditation) and the greatest of Yagyas (fire sacrifices) (7).

[Note—¹This paragraph can be explained in a different way. A man works hard and earns money and collects assets which are clearly visible to every person. For example, his salary is known to all, the yield of his field is known to all, and even the stock of his go-down is also there for everyone to see. But he would not let others know about his personal finances, how he keeps his personal wealth and how he hides his gold and cash. The open harvest of a farmer's land is hidden by him in his barn as it becomes his personal property after he has paid the labourers who worked for him their due. He hides the produce for fear of thieves, tax-collectors and even from his enemies who are jealous of his affluence. In other words, he collects known assets openly from the external world but hides them in a secret place known only to him, and he protects these assets from inquisitive and preying eyes. Similarly, the sense organs have a natural tendency to rest on their respective objects in this external world. The wise Avadhut ascetic withdraws them from these external objects and hides them in his own self by restraining them and using their powers and strength to achieve spiritual high. This is a metaphoric way of saying that he collects his sense organs from the external world and fixes them inside.

²Turning inwards and contemplating upon the Atma is a great spiritual activity that is compared to doing the famous Ashwa Medh Yagya or the horse sacrifice because the offering here is made by controlling and sacrificing the freedom of the mind and the sense organs which are no less restless and outwardly mobile than the horse. They are equivalent to a wild horse as all of them have a natural urge to gallop away towards their respective sense objects in this world, allured by the enticing charms and countless attractions proffered by them. It is difficult to tear them away from these objects and teach them self discipline and restraint much like the wild horse clamouring to break away from its shackles and cantor away to freedom, throwing its bridle, breaking its harness and bothering the least about the rider. The severe Tapa, i.e. the observance of austerity, doing of penance and sufferings undertaken by the spiritual aspirant are no less than important and rigorous than the ones observed when doing the elaborate fire sacrifice called Ashwa Medh Yagya.

If the restraint of the mind and the sense organs is equivalent to restraining the sacrificial horse, the actual practice of Yoga, i.e. the contemplation and meditation done to realise the 'true self' or the pure conscious Atma, is like physical rituals during the horse sacrifice when oblations and offerings are made to the deity worshipped, which however in this case is the Atma. Since the Atma is the micro level representative of the supreme transcendental Consciousness known as Brahm, it follows that the ultimate deity worshipped by contemplating upon the inner self and the Atma is Brahm. The sacred fire in this case would be represented by the pure consciousness illuminating the inner self, and the offering are made by doing Yoga involving many exercises and auspicious observances. The various Yoga Upanishads enumerate them in great detail.

Like the Ashwa Medh Yagya which establishes a king's fame and glory not only in his own kingdom but even in distant lands as a person who does noble deeds, undertakes great religious exercises, is pious and god-fearing, gives huge donations and make large charities as a necessary accompaniment of such Yagyas, and generally bestows him with welfare and great auspicious rewards, bestowing him with honour and respect besides granting him lordship over a large area on earth if he is able to successfully accomplish it, this internal Yagya provides the practitioner with equal auspicious rewards, but this reward is much higher, more valuable and spiritually better as it pertains to the Atma which is eternal and imperishable as compared to worldly rewards gained by external Ashwa Medh Yagya. This sacrifice

gives him access to the supreme Truth of this creation, bestows him with great mystical powers called the various Siddhis, and paves the path for his final liberation and deliverance from this world and its endless cycle of ignorance and delusions as well as birth and death along with their endless chain of miseries and torments. A person who has been successful in this internal fire sacrifice gains access to spiritual glories and finds liberation that sets him free from all the fetters that shackle an ordinary man to the body and its sense organs; he is no more bound to this gross world as he has become the ethereal entity known as the Atma. This is because he has now realised that his true 'self' is the pure consciousness known as the Atma, and not the gross body consisting of both the gross sense organs as well as the subtle mind-intellect complex. He gains honour and respect much like a great and noble king who has successfully done the Ashwa Medh Yagya.

Again, as only kings who were strong and fearless could successfully complete the Ashwa Medh Yagya because if the sacrificial horse was caught by an opponent and held captive, it was considered a defilement of the sacrifice and invited wars to liberate the horse which only powerful kings could afford and win, it follows that only strong-willed, really wise and enlightened and sincere spiritual aspirant can successfully do such internal fire sacrifice as envisioned and described in this verse. It may be possible to subdue an enemy with the strength of the arm of a strong and well-trained army, but it is virtually impossible to control one's own self and one's own sense organs; it is very easy to lecture others but most difficult to implement what one preaches.

The concept of doing the great fire sacrifice internally as opposed to doing it externally is also described in detail in Pran Agnihotra Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition. Its verse nos. 21-22 especially are very explicit on this subject.

A brief word on the Ashwa Medh Yagya would be in order. The Ashwa Medh Yagya is called the horse sacrifice because a horse is sacrificed in it. It is most ancient sacrifice and can be successfully done by very powerful kings or emperors. The horse is let free to go anywhere it wants for one year and the land where it sets foot is either annexed by treaties or by force in war. The actual sacrifice is though for only three days. The sacrificial horse is protected by the army and if by chance it is killed by the opposing king then the sacrifice is deemed to be defiled. In practical terms, it was a means to spread a king's area of influence.]

8. In this way, the entire character and behavioural pattern of such ascetics are unique and more often than not unconventional, baffling, mysterious, funny and erratic. One should not make any kind of derogatory remarks against them, insinuate or insult them, call them disgraceful, lowly, vile, possessed of evil spirit etc., or in any way cast any kind of demeaning and wild aspersions on them for their unconventional, strange and odd behaviour which is often inexplicable and inconsistent with the norms set down for civilized, auspicious and righteous conduct in the society.

This is their great sacrifice that they bear with stoic fortitude and calmness sneers and comments of the world; it is their great sacrifice that they have forsaken artificiality and pretensions so much evident in the formalities and niceties observed by ordinary people in this world. They do not adhere to the norms created for the artificial world because they do not subscribe to the principle of creating an artificial and false sense of being civil, cultured, well-behaved and learned by observing codes of conduct and decorum at the cost of freedom of the soul. Besides this, their heightened level of self-realisation and spiritual enlightenment has turned their attention inwards towards their conscious 'self', their Atma, so much so that they remain oblivious of their body and what it does, as well as unconcerned of how the world would treat them and respond to their actions and behaviour. They are so lost in the bliss obtained by contemplation and meditation and the subsequent experiencing

of the presence of the supreme transcendental Divinity inside their own self as the pure conscious Atma that they do not have the time or the inclination to bother about what others think of them and how they treat them.

Such spiritually enlightened and self-realised exalted ascetics do not remain attached to this world and therefore need not bother to observe worldly formalities and niceties that are usually followed by ordinary people who remain busy in appeasing the world and trying to pretend to be civil, well-behaved and cultured in this artificial world so that they are given respect and honour but in the process are actually robbing their Atma of its inherent freedom and liberty to do what it wishes. [The Atma is an ethereal entity, and therefore is as free as the wind and the sky. The Atma cannot be bound by fetters; it cannot be shackled; it can fly to wherever it wants, think what it wants, and do what it wishes to do.]

Hence, wise and renunciate ascetics roam around freely without getting perturbed and being burdened by the necessity of observing useless and perfunctory formalities which act like millstones around the neck of less enlightened men. They roam freely without being encumbered by anything, by being deterred by anything, or getting attached to anything. They are not concerned whether what they do is correct or not because it is deemed that all their deeds and actions would be auspicious and righteous. [This is because it has already been said that they have obtained full control over their senses organs, both those of perception and those of action, so there is no scope of these organs doing anything that is not considered auspicious and righteous by scriptural standards. The ascetic has no time for the external world and neither the inclination of indulging in worldly pursuits or the need to please this world at any cost, so the question of either appeasing the world or getting annoyed and perturbed by it does not arise as far as they are concerned.] (8).

[Note--This is the way of life led by truly self-realised and renunciate ascetics who have not only detached from the external world of sense objects but remain submerged in experiencing the bliss of self-realisation and Brahm-realisation. They are unaware of their bodies and how it acts; their mind is so engrossed in contemplation and meditation that it has no time and inclination to bother how to behave nicely that would be acceptable to the world. So to accuse them of behaving strangely and unconventionally is only showing ignorance of their heightened state of enlightenment and exemplary detachment. They do not come within the purview of codes of conduct that are applied to ordinary persons who appear to be observing imaginary and artificial niceties and formalities of the material world and think that they are cultured and civilized, whereas actually they are only pretending to be so because they have never witnessed the inherent exhilaration obtained when the soul is set free like the bird. The soul of ordinary people is tied in worldly fetters and it has forgotten its inherent free nature, so such worldly people act in an artificial manner and become pretenders of freedom. They may dance the whole night, appear to be merry externally and enjoying the world to the hilt, but internally they are unhappy, disquiet, distressed and most stressed-out. A non-enlightened man lives an artificial life of bondage—bonded to his body and its myriad needs and problems, to the world and its own set of needs and problems, besides the requirement to observe formalities and maintain artificial relationships. The soul actually knows no such things and needs to observe no formalities or codes of conduct because it is eternally free and an ethereal entity that is all-pervading and all-encompassing.

It ought to be noted here that the oddity in the external behaviour of self-realised ascetics is not due to any defect in their mind-intellect or their character but due to the fact that they have tasted the divine elixir of spiritual bliss and ecstasy effusing from their inner self and therefore they are not concerned with external formalities or enjoyments. They are not mentally sick, evil, pervert or reckless, they are not lunatics

or deranged in any manner. Some of the oddities in their behaviour are their not taking regular bath or meals or attending to nature's call. They may not pray regularly and perform religious sacraments daily which seems unrighteous on the face of it. But it should be noted that this is due to the fact that they worship the supreme Lord not somewhere in the external heaven but inside their own Atma, the pure consciousness residing in their own bosom. This highly evolved state of his mental faculty is clearly highlighted in the following verses.]

9. Just like the fact that the Sun accepts all sorts of oblations offered to it and the Fire can devour anything put into it with neither of them affected at all by such offerings, an ascetic remains detached from and indifferent to all the sense objects of this world and their inherent attractions, charms, comforts and pleasures inspite of his having to use them in the course of his routine life in this world. Therefore, he remains untainted and untouched by them and remains as pure and uncorrupted as if he has had no contact with them at all.

Since he is not involved internally (mentally, intellectually and emotionally) with any of the sense objects of pleasures and comforts in this material world, he is not tarnished by their tainting effects, and neither can he be accused of having committed any sins or misdeeds pertaining to their use or contact, nor pretending to be too upright and righteous by not being attached to these objects. In fact, he is completely unaware of their existence at all for all practical purposes (9).

10. Similarly, just like the vast ocean filled with water has no desire whatsoever of acquiring more water to replenish its stock but accepts the water when it is incessantly pours into it by rivers etc., the ascetic too accepts whatever comes his way calmly and with stoic indifference though he has no desire for anything. That is, inspite of being surrounded by the enticing objects of the material world which give comfort and pleasure, he remains unruffled by their illusive and transient charms which are no less than traps to ensnare him in their vice-like grip. He remains unattached to them; he maintains his mental peace, poise and calm demeanours. He is never in dearth of these noble and eclectic virtues, thereby remaining ever contented and fulfilled like the vast ocean cited here¹.

Ordinary men who have desire and yearning for enjoyment of the pleasures and comforts offered by the sense objects of this material world cannot ever hope to achieve this state of calmness and peace (10).

[Note--¹Rivers continue to pour their water in the ocean, but it never boils over and submerges the land due to this continuous pouring. The heat of the sun continuously evaporates its water, there are hot summers and rainless days, there might be drought on the land, the rivers and lakes dry up and there is all round shortage of water so much so that crops dry up and people die due to thirst, but the ocean never dries up, nor its level of water falls short of the normal mark. Rivers may at one time flood the plains and inundate huge tracts of land, or completely dry up to leave a parched bed, but the ocean never breaks its laws and never submerges the earth. Come to think of it—the ocean occupies roughly three-fourths of the surface of the earth as compared to rivers which are not even seen from the outer space, and had the ocean wished it could have easily submerged the entire land by just raising its level by a foot or so. But it has never done so; it is so self-controlled that it has not even devoured an inch of sandy banks on its side. Could not the ocean have gnawed at the sands gradually and imperceptibly over million of years and spread its tentacles—or realm—over large tracts of land by its shore? Global warming has melted the glaciers, but they have not raised the level of the ocean nor reduced its water content. The rivers change course, but the ocean never does so. It roars like a lion, but never devours.

The same thing applies to the Avadhut Sanyasi. He is always the same; he neither boils over with pride when praised or by the great mystical powers that he possesses, nor does he get angry at being chided or insulted. He is personified virtues of calmness and poise, equanimity and fortitude, forgiveness and charity, blessedness, piety, divinity and holiness et al combined into one.]

11. Therefore, the factual position is that there is no such thing as dissolution of the soul and freedom from birth or the fetters and bondages that are deemed to be tying a creature to this world. An aspirant does not have to follow some special path to achieve an exalted stature and find liberation and deliverance of his soul from worldly shackles and the cycle of birth and death, nor is there any special state which can be designated as being free from any bondage.

In other words, everything depends upon how a man thinks and treats his self, his present circumstances and the world around him that determine whether or not he is liberated and emancipated, whether or not the world has been able to tie him in knots, whether or not he has renounced the world and its illusive charms, whether or not he is really peaceful and happy, and such other noble virtues that characterise the life of a wise, erudite, enlightened and self-realised man.

If only he detaches himself from getting emotionally, mentally and intellectually involved in this world and its illusionary charms, if only he remains distanced internally from the objects of the senses in this world, if only he remains neutral and indifferent to everything extraneous to his pure conscious Atma which is the only truth recognised by wise men, if only he treats everything with stoic calmness, if only he remains unruffled, unperturbed and unmoved by the gravest of provocations from this world, neither hating anything nor getting attached to them, if only he can maintain sincere and profound sense of equanimity, neutrality and fortitude—it is only then can he be said to be truly self-realised, wise, erudite and enlightened. He is deemed to be eternally free and emancipated; he is not under any bondage or shackled to anything. He need not run away from this world and find a separate existence of physical distance from this world, because even if he remains in close proximity to this world but maintains mental distance from it then he is better off than a man who stays far away in a forest but remains mentally attached to the world (11).

12-17. 'In order to fulfill my worldly obligations and ensure at the same time that I get Mukti after death (i.e. I get final liberation and deliverance from this world of transmigration so as not to enter this cycle again), it was necessary and ordained for me to do certain auspicious and righteous deeds. I have fulfilled all my obligations and have done whatever I could do to the best of my ability. But that phase is past now, and I am free'. With this sense of satisfaction and feeling absolutely contented with his life and the deeds that he had done, he becomes calm, quiet and peaceful [12 ½].

Then he begins to ponder further—'Ignorant persons remain trapped in this world by hoping for sons and other worldly acquisitions. [That is, ordinary worldly men desire to have a large family and the need to have sons to carry on the family line and maintain and enhance the assets accumulated by them. People desire to have a son to carry forward their achievements and good name, or complete unfinished tasks, or even to accomplish something which the man had strongly yearned for but could not do himself due to so many constraints.] [13]. But I am fulfilled and overwhelmed with the happiness and joys of having led a fruitful and auspicious life. I have no

desires left in me, so why should I allow myself to get unnecessarily trapped in the snares of this world? [13 ½]

Those who desire to go to heaven or aspire to have some auspicious future for themselves after death continue to do auspicious and righteous deeds in the hope that their desires and aspirations for a sound future would be fulfilled [14].

Let them do what they want. But I have realised that I am the Atma which is immanent, imperishable, universal and all-pervading, not only in the present but would also remain the same in the future. I have become universal, uniform and immanent in the sense that my true identity is this Atma, and it is a universal, ubiquitous and quintessential entity in creation. So there is no point in my doing something to ensure a better future for my Atma because it is not affected by any dimension of time and circumstance, and would constantly remain always the same. Therefore obviously, why should I bother about doing any deed (to better my future or enhance my present stature which is already exalted and divine)? [14 ½]

Let those who so wish and have the expertise to read and preach the scriptures do what they are good at—i.e. read and preach the scriptures. But I am not eligible to do so and I remain completely inactive and neutral. [That is, studying and teaching of the scriptures are no longer needed by me as I have already understood their essence and principle teaching by realising the truth about my Atma and the supreme Brahman of which this Atma is an image.] Therefore, I need not study or preach the scriptures [15 ½].

I have no desire or the need for sleep, to beg for food, to bathe or to attend to other daily routine chores of life (because these are needed by the body whereas I am the ethereal Atma or the universal soul, and not the gross body) [16].

Those who think that they are wise and erudite thinkers, let them indulge in ponderings and imagining things. I am not concerned with such artificial imaginations [16 ½].

Ignorant people might imagine the presence of a latent fire in the shrub known as Gunja (*Abrus presotorious*) because of its red colour, but their imagination of fire in it would not burn and harm this shrub at all. Likewise, the inner self is immaculate and pure, unaffected by any of the taints and shortcomings associated with the world, so how can I imagine that I need to worship any divine entity and seek its intercession to either protect myself or clean my inner self? [17]. (12-17).

18. Those who are not able to know and understand the essential Truth themselves, let them hear about it and get it explained by others. But I, being an exalted Avadhuta, am fully conversant with it myself. So why should I hear about it from others?

Those who have doubts and confusions, let them study and ponder to remove their doubts and confusions. But I do not have any sort of doubts and confusions, and that is the reason why I do not study the scriptures or ponder over their tenets. [This statement is not meant to indicate that the Avadhut Sanyasi is boastful and pretentious, but to highlight the level of his enlightenment and self-confidence. After all, one reads and studies the scriptures for self improvement and realisation of one's spiritual goal, and once this aim is achieved it would be a futile exercise in spending time delving in the vast and endless volumes of the scriptures just to find out something that has already become known. It is highly incredulous and unimaginable that an enlightened man would boast of himself and his knowledge, and treat the scriptures with any kind of disrespect.] (18).

19. Those who are inclined to forget or get confused about the Truth, those who develop misconception about the Truth, let them remember it again and again to refresh their memory and reinforce their belief, faith and commitment. But where there is no confusion or forgetting, there is no need for repetitively remembering the Truth.

I am not misled to believe that the body is true and it is my truthful identity, so there is no need for me to constantly remind my self that the body is not my 'true self' (and instead of it, it is the pure conscious Atma residing in this gross body as my 'true self') (19).

20. 'I am a human being'—this conception about the Atma is also due to ignorance and forgetting about its eternally ethereal and divine nature. [This is because the human being is mortal and has a lot of worldly faults and limitations associated with the gross body, whereas the Atma is divine, ethereal and eternal, not at all subjected to any taints and limitations that mire the man's physical existence.]

This misconception about who the truthful 'self' is, is also due to prolonged indulgence in worldly passions and desires. [This is because the world can be enjoyed only through the medium of the gross body, and when one becomes habituated to enjoying the sense objects of the world he forgets who he actually is. That is, he forgets that when asked the question 'who are you?' the man should answer 'I am the universally pure conscious Atma which has no attributes' instead of 'I am the man with this body having certain characteristics'.] (20).

21. It is only when the effects of past deeds wear out that this worldly behaviour comes to an end. But as long as the past deeds and their accumulated results continue to exert influence upon the creature (through his mind-intellect complex that controls his thoughts and the functioning of the gross body), he would continue to remain entangled in worldly behaviour. [That is, as long as any man does not distance himself from the body which is actually the entity that does all the deeds, he cannot get rid of allowing himself to be involved in the deeds done by the body, and as long as this situation prevails he is bound to the chain of rewards, bad or good, that these deeds produce. It is only when he disassociates himself from the body and becomes highly neutral towards the deeds done by it that he absolves himself from their consequences. Anyone is punished or rewarded for things done by him or her, and since the wise man has realised that his 'true self' is the Atma which is ethereal and pure consciousness, and separate from the body, he is not the one who is doing the deeds now under changed circumstances, and therefore cannot be either punished or rewarded for these deeds.] (21).

22. If you (here referring to Sankriti who is hearing this preaching) have a desire to continue doing deeds and thereby remain entangled in their web, then do as it pleases you. But in my considered view, the doing of deeds have no role to play in one's spiritual upliftment and the soul's final liberation and deliverance. So why should I (i.e. the Avadhut Sanyasi) contemplate and ponder on this matter any longer? Why should I think what to do and what not to do? (22).

23. My (the Avadhut Sanyasi's) mind and intellect never become restless and agitated, and therefore I need not engage myself in special sessions of Samadhi to tame them. [Samadhi is a trance-like state obtained during the higher stages of

meditation when the mind is completely annihilated and controlled, making the spiritual aspirant oblivious of the body and the surrounding world.]

It is only when the mind is eclipsed and tainted by the dark shadow cast by various faults and imperfections associated with this mundane material world characterised by uncountable delusions, and is buffeted by various misconceptions that arise out of ignorance that it becomes darkened and corrupted, unstable and agitated. It is only then that one needs to practice Samadhi to cleanse it of his taints and make it regain its original poise and calmness along with its pristine purity and high level of wisdom. [The word 'Samadhi' here would mean training the mind to be consistent and constantly stable, to become calm and poised and remain non-involved with the sense perceptions of the body. This would calm it down and remove the cause of it getting tainted or deluded by the numerous faults originating in the artificial world of material sense objects. Being free from being constantly nagged at by these perceptions and the charms of the world and the desires of the sense organs for gratification, the mind would have the energy and time left to ponder on nobler things of life, delve into the mysteries and secrets of creation, and contemplate about the great import of the spiritual truths as expounded and enunciated by the scriptures.]

I am experiencing this profound calmness, equilibrium, peace and stability of the mind and intellect on a regular basis; so where is there any special need to sit in meditative postures and engage in Samadhi to achieve this end? Is there anything different from what I am experiencing now that can be obtained or experienced during Samadhi? [So why should I do it? In other words, special sessions of meditation and Samadhi are not needed by me as I have already achieved the spiritual high that is the aim of meditation and Samadhi.] (23).

24-25. I (the Avadhut Sanyasi) have done regularly what I was supposed to do according to the mandate of the various scriptures, and I have also got regularly what I was supposed to get (as a result of my deeds and efforts). Therefore, why should I do anything ordained or prescribed by the scriptures, traditions or any other authority? That is why I do not conform to them, and do nothing.

I do not have any aspirations and desires, nor do I expect anything. So I do not lose sleep over anything; I accept whatever comes my way in the normal course of life and respond normally according to the event (24-25).

26. Even if I (the Avadhut Sanyasi) behave and act according to the sanction of the scriptures it is because I wish to set a visible example to be followed by other ordinary people, so what is the harm in my doing so. [In other words, I am not contradicting myself when I act according to the traditional norms of behaviour inspite of my firmly asserting that I am free to do what I wish to do. Though I am at liberty to act strangely and at variance to established norms, but I prefer not to do so because less enlightened people would construe it in the wrong light and cite my example to justify their own pervert and reckless demeanours and conducts; they would act wrongly and then cite my example to justify their misdemeanors though they are no match for the level of spiritual enlightenment and maturity that I have. I do not wish to set a wrong example for this ignorant and deluded world and push it down further in the drain of evil behaviour and pretensions.] (26).

27-28. The body might remain engaged in offering formal worship to Gods, praying to them, performing religious rites, cleaning itself by washing and bathing (performing ablution), or in studying and learning the scriptures or other bodies of

knowledge, the faculty of speech might remain engaged in repeating the ethereal Mantra called OM and reciting the Upanishads [27], the mind might remain constantly engaged in remembering Lord Vishnu or it might even remain submerged in the thoughts of the supreme Brahm and enjoy the extreme bliss obtained by this remembrance—but I must say that none of these bothers me in the least as I am a mere witness and a neutral observer of all that the body does, without getting involved in any of the activities of the body.

I (the Avadhut Sanyasi) do none of these things nor do I instruct or advise others to do anything of any sort [28]. (27-28).

29. I (the Avadhut Sanyasi) am fully contented and fulfilled. I have achieved and acquired whatever there was to be achieved and acquired. My mind is firmly convinced of this fact; it is the irrefutable truth (29).

30. I (the Avadhut Sanyasi) am blessed and most fortunate. Indeed, I am blessed and most fortunate! It is because I have come to know, in a natural way (i.e. without any strenuous study of the scriptures and hard practices of Yoga or Tapa—severe forms of meditation and observance of austerity and penance respectively), my inherently and truly eternal, imperishable and infinite form that is the universally pure consciousness known as the Atma.

I am certainly blessed and most fortunate as this realisation (of my ‘true self’ as being the self-illuminated and pure conscious Atma which is a manifestation of the supreme cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm) provides me with the extreme bliss and ecstasy that comes with Brahm-realisation. It clearly illuminates my inner being with the light of enlightenment and fills me with its accompanying bliss and ecstasy that is nothing but ethereally divine in nature. [In other words, when I have come to know what my true identity is, I feel absolutely exhilarated at this knowledge, and it bestows upon me the blessedness that comes with self-realisation and obtaining the elixir of divinity and eternity. I feel absolutely overjoyed at having the acquaintance of something as astoundingly magnificent, as profoundly grand and as majestically divine as the supreme Brahm. This glorious illumination of realisation removes all traces of darkness arising out of ignorance and delusions that might have lingered on in some corner of my inner being, i.e. in my heart and mind, thereby giving me the much sought-after light of enlightenment. I indeed feel most fortunate and blessed!] (30).

31. I (the Avadhut Sanyasi) am blessed and most fortunate. Indeed, I am blessed and most fortunate! It is because I do not see the miseries and sorrows of this mortal and perishable world in the least. [That is, now I do not see death and decay anywhere, I do not see misery and sorrow anywhere as now I am able to see the eternal and imperishable Brahm everywhere. In other words, my perception of the world had undergone a sea change for the better. Whereas earlier I had seen unhappiness and distress as reigning everywhere and found no happiness and contentedness in anything, now I feel fully contented and blissful with no trace of discomfort and unhappiness of the earlier times. I perceive the world in wonder and awe as a magnificent creation of the supreme craftsman and maverick creator known as Brahm, and marvel at his stupendous abilities, astounding wisdom, expert craftsmanship and creative skills that he has moulded such a vast creation from virtually nothing to start with and in such a way that no two units of it are exactly alike. I look at the positive aspect of the world and see the body as the only chance to break free from the cycle of

birth and death, instead of as bondage and a cumbersome burden on my soul. This is because as a human I can study the scriptures and decide for myself about my destiny as compared to my earlier lives where this option and opportunity was not available to me. I have got a golden opportunity not only to find liberation and deliverance for myself but I can also show others who are less fortunate the way for it. I can serve the supreme Lord in his myriad forms as the numerous creatures of this world, and I need not worship him separately to please him.]

I am blessed and most fortunate. Indeed, I am blessed and most fortunate! It is because my ignorance and delusions had been completely eliminated for good a long time ago. [That is, although my ‘true self’, the pure conscious Atma, was inherently wise, erudite and enlightened, I was not aware of it, and therefore I had been thinking that I need to acquire knowledge and become wise. But now I have discovered the truth about my eternally wise heritage and the fact that the Atma is never unwise and ignorant. It was only out of delusions and the evil effects of Maya or illusions created about the ‘truth’ that I had felt that I was ignorant and unwise. Now, having acquired the divine insight into the reality, I have woken up to the ‘reality and truth’ of the Atma, and therefore all my misconceptions and misgivings about it are dispelled. I have realised who I truly am.] (31).

32. I (the Avadhut Sanyasi) am blessed and most fortunate. Indeed, I am blessed and most fortunate! It is because I have nothing more to do as there is nothing left for me to do. I am fulfilled and contented.

I am blessed and most fortunate. Indeed, I am blessed and most fortunate! It is because whatever I wished to have or acquire or gain access to has already been done. Nothing remains to be had or acquired or accessed now as it is already with me. I am absolutely contented, satisfied, fulfilled and accomplished (32).

33. I (the Avadhut Sanyasi) am blessed and most fortunate. Indeed, I am blessed and most fortunate! It is because there is nothing to compare with the degree of contentedness and fulfillment that I enjoy now.

I am indeed blessed and most fortunate. I repeat and assert that I am indeed blessed and most fortunate! (33).

34. Oh Auspiciousness and Righteousness (collectively called ‘Punya’)! [Here, the good virtues of ‘auspiciousness’ and ‘righteousness’ have been personified.] You have borne ripe fruits for me and have fully rewarded me in a perpetual manner for being faithful to you by pursuing the virtues of auspiciousness and righteousness diligently in my life. How fortunate and blessed are we¹! (34).

[Note—¹Here the use of the plural pronoun ‘we’ instead of the singular ‘I’ indicates that the Avadhut wishes to say that all ascetics who have realised the ‘truth’ as he has done are blessed and fortunate.]

35. Oh Gyan (truthful knowledge of the reality; the virtues of wisdom, erudition, sagacity and enlightenment personified)! Oh Sukha (the divine sense of pleasure and happiness obtained by self and Brahm realisation personified)! Oh Scriptures! [Here, ‘scriptures’ have also been personified.] Oh Guru (moral preceptor, teacher and spiritual guide)! [I thank you all for my eclectic and blessed state of self-realisation and enlightenment. It is because of your grace, blessings and patronage that this has been made possible for me.]’ (35).

36. In this way, a person who studies this Upanishad becomes spiritually accomplished, fulfilled and contented. Even those who are sinful and have committed grave offences like drinking wine and getting intoxicated, stealing gold, killing Brahmins (or for that matter any living being unnecessarily and unprovoked), and generally does things not warranted and not worthy of doing, are forgiven and absolved of their horrendous sins and misdeeds by studying and understanding the tenets and principles of this Upanishad¹.

In fact, a man becomes holy and pure by merely reciting and regularly reading this scripture. [This is because regular and deep study of this Upanishad would automatically mould the character of the man, inculcate auspicious and noble virtues in him, and generally help him to develop deep insight into what is righteous, auspicious, noble and truthful for his soul, and what is not. He would voluntarily inculcate these virtues in a normal way even without any external prodding or inducements of any kind. Then he can choose the path most suited for him and voluntarily pursue it. After all, this is the end result of study of the scriptures, for what is the use of studying anything if one does not implement its teaching in his practical life and gain from this knowledge. It would be a waste of time, energy and effort if this is not achieved.]

‘OM’ representing the supreme transcendental Brahm is the only Truth—verily, this is the essential teaching of this Upanishad. Amen! (36).

[Note—¹This blanket amnesty should not be construed as a license for being pervert and sinful in the hope of first enjoying the vices and then be pardoned for them. Actually, this edict is meant for sincere persons who had been unwittingly trapped in the quagmire of sins and now wish to atone for their misdeeds at any cost. Their regret is sincere and their desire for repentance is equally sincere. Such persons should be given a chance for redemption, for every man can err, and the wise one is he who wakes up at the earliest and reaches his destination in time. Evidently, such pardon is an opportunity for undoing the wrong, and is given once. It is not that one goes on committing sins and each time read this Upanishad or for that matter any other religious text in the false hope that his earlier sins would be forgiven; nothing is more absurd than this. ‘Reading’ means reading with understanding, and not simply perfunctory and obligatory recitation of the verses in a mechanical way like a parrot. So, when one reads anything with understanding and concentration he would be influenced by what he reads, especially when he is in search for a way out for his moral and spiritual ailments. He would eagerly grasp each tenet of the scriptures and faithfully observe their teachings as the last straw caught hold by a desperate man about to drown in the heaving ocean of miseries and sorrows. Who would like to burn his fingers over and over again if he has felt the pain and agony of getting burnt once and has found a remedy that can not only alleviate his sufferings but restore the damaged organ to its original form?

Likewise, this amnesty is given in the scriptures as a merciful benediction and graceful gesture meant for sincere spiritual aspirants who wish to relent and mend their ways. It helps them to redeem their souls and proves that though the scriptures prescribe strict punishment for sins and misdeeds, they are intrinsically gracious and merciful because they are embodiments of the Supreme Being himself.]

-----Shanti Paath-----

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Chapter 25

Kath-rudra Upanishad/Kathrudro-panishad

This Upanishad is also called 'Kanth-rudra Upanishad'. In this Upanishad, the esoteric and enigmatic but most eclectic and divine knowledge pertaining to the transcendental Supreme Being known as Brahm is being discussed. It is one of the eclectic Upanishads which are revealed ones as they were taught by one or the other of the Trinity Gods; in this particular case it is Prajapati Brahma, the great patriarch of creation, when he was approached by the Gods with a request to preach them the great knowledge pertaining to the supreme Divinity known as Brahm. This knowledge is called 'Brahm Vidya' and it is closely related to the knowledge of the Atma, the pure consciousness.

During the unfolding of the teaching, Prajapati elucidates about the life of Sanyas and how to be initiated into it. Sanyas is the eclectic way of life marked by total renunciation and detachment from this world of sense objects and its illusionary charms which not only trap the creature in their strong snare but are perishable and transient at the same time and therefore cannot give eternity and long-term happiness. Any involvement with them keeps the creature permanently trapped in the cycle of birth and death and their accompanying chain of uncountable and indescribable horrors. So if one were to really benefit from acquiring the truthful knowledge of Brahm and the Atma, and consequentially expect liberation and deliverance from the fetters of ignorance and delusions that tie him down to this world as well as hope to find emancipation and salvation for his soul then it is expected from him that he would follow the correct path in order to reach his spiritual destination. And this path is the path of Sanyas marked by profound renunciation obtained as a result of becoming aware of the reality and truth behind the façade of falsehood and deception.

Verse nos. 1-3 describe the due process of accepting the vows of Sanyas, and verse nos. 4-11 enumerate the various codes that are to be strictly observed once one accepts these vows. The verses following elucidate upon the metaphysical concepts pertaining to Brahm and its related matters such as the origin of the basic ingredients that would eventually unfold this world both at the subtle level as well as at the grosser level. In this context, this Upanishad goes on to describe about the supreme Atma (the pure cosmic Consciousness) known as the Pratyagatma or Brahm, and its various forms called the Panch Atmas in relation to the Panch Koshas (the five sheaths that surround the pure conscious self of the creature). The genesis of creation is described in esoteric metaphysical terms, and in this context the various other concepts are also explained, such as the concept of Maya (delusions leading to misconceptions), Agyan (ignorance), Bhuts (primary elements), and the grand and quintessential nature of Brahm who is non-dual and the overriding supreme Authority in the entire creation and central to its existence as the 'consciousness' known as the Atma. It is this Atma representing Brahm that is revealed in the form of the individual living being called the Jiva. It is the only touchstone against which the truthfulness of everything in existence is to be judged.

-----Shanti Paath-----

Please refer to appendix no. 1 for the meaning of this Shanti Paath.

1. Once upon a time, all the Gods went to Prajapati Brahma (the first creator who had created this visible world and is the oldest and the senior most of the Trinity Gods) and said—‘Oh Lord! Please preach us Brahm Vidya (i.e. the eclectic and enigmatic knowledge of the supreme transcendental Brahm, the divine Being from whom the rest of creation has emerged and in whom it would collapse at the time of its end)’.

Prajapati replied— (1).

2. [This verse is a very abrupt introduction of the subject. The Gods had asked to be taught about Brahm Vidya, and so ordinarily Brahma should have introduced them to the subject by telling them what it is all about. Instead, he tells them how to become a Sanyasi—i.e. how to renounce the attractions and charms of this material world and the urge to satisfy the desire of the sense organs for self gratification. This was a disguised way of chiding them for their ignorance and sternly warning them that if they really and sincerely wish to acquire this divine eclectic knowledge then they should first purify themselves like a Sanyasi who is wise person who has renounced all his worldly attractions and has realised the futility of their pursuit; he has realised that the ‘truth and reality’ is something different than what is visibly seen and taken for granted; and that this path requires exemplary sacrifice and self-control. The Gods unfortunately do not fit the bill inspite of their exalted stature for they have been depicted as being engrossed in enjoying the majesty and grandeur of heaven, of protecting their turf from encroachment from other peers, of deeply involved in carrying out their respective responsibilities of taking care of the world endlessly because they think that they are immortal, as being proud of the mystical powers and authority that they have and the sway that they have in this world, of depending upon humans for their sustenance in the way of offerings made to them during fire sacrifices done by men, of being partisan and favourably biases towards their devotees who worship them and even going to the extent of getting adverse if such worshipping is not done, of expecting praise and honour instead of remaining neutral and humble, and such other negative traits that are not to be expected from someone who is mentally and emotionally ready to acquire the grand knowledge of Brahm. Therefore, Brahma tells them indirectly that if they really wish to know about Brahm, they ought to first inculcate the auspicious virtues possessed by a true Sanyasi by following the correct path led by such men so as to become eligible for this knowledge, and it is only then that they would benefit from it.

It ought to be noted that all the major Gods are regarded as presiding over one or the other sense organs of the body, and therefore they are always engaged in self-gratification as is revealed by these organs. At the macro level they are depicted as powerful Lords who control certain specific aspects or forces of Nature, and hence their grace and benevolence is needed if one were to find peace and happiness. For instance, the Sun God is needed for light, heat and energy as well as for the proper occurrence of seasons and the cycle of day and night. So his benevolence is needed by humans, and therefore people appease the Gods to keep them in good humour.

Besides this, the Gods are deemed to be ‘immortal’ only in a relative manner as compared to humans, for they have their own life cycle measured in celestial terms. So they would also die or end. But the Atma that is the truthful identity of all that ‘lives’ is universal and uniform, non-dual and all-pervading, eternal and everlasting. It is the same in the humans and the Gods, so fundamentally there is no difference between them. That is why a ‘self-realised’ man is regarded as being equivalent to or

even more exalted than the Gods who are indulgent, engrossed in enjoying the comforts of heaven and pride of their exalted stature, expecting worship to be made to them and being partisan towards those who do so.

Primarily the aim of these beginning verses dealing with Sanyas is to tell the Gods that if one is sincerely interested in knowing about Brahm, he should prepare himself for it by following certain codes of conduct, both external and internal, much like one has to wear a formal prescribed uniform to school or college and observe certain codes of discipline even if it is to maintain decorum of the hallowed institution of knowledge. These codes of conduct in the realm of spiritualism are called the vows of Sanyas, a life of strict spiritual vows and total devotion for one's spiritual path. This is possible only when one is careful not to fall prey to worldly temptations and avoid its numerous pitfalls. Theoretical knowledge of Brahm can be available in the scriptures but it is no good unless it is implemented in practical life; if freedom is not achieved and emancipation of the soul not obtained, if eternal peace and beatitude is not acquired then what is the use of spending long hours in fruitless study of the Vedas and other scriptures?]

'The aspirant should shave off the hair on his head along with the Shikha (the tuft of hair on the cranium of Hindus). He should summon his son and say to him—'Oh Son! You are (a personification of) Brahma (the creator), Yagya (fire sacrifice), Vashatkaar (special fire sacrifices meant to honour specific Gods and are done with specific Mantras or mystical formulae and words especially dedicated to that particular deity), OM (the divine Mantra of Brahm and regarded as the subtle sound manifestation of Brahm), Swaha (the word pronounced at the time of making offerings into the sacred fire and meant for the Gods), Swadha (the word pronounced at the time of making offerings to the dead ancestors), Dhata (progenitor, preserver, sustainer, caretaker and nourisher of creation, an epithet usually applied to the Trinity gods consisting of Brahm, Vishnu and Shiva), and Vidhata (one who determines destiny and lays down the laws for the creation)'¹.

When the father is finished saying this, the son should accept the teaching of the father by affirming as follows—'Yes, I am indeed Brahma, Yagya, Vashatkaar, OM, Swaha, Swadha, Dhata, and Vidhata as well as Twasta (Vishnu, Shiva, Prajapati Brahma, Vishwakarma who is the architect of gods, the eleventh Aditya or Sun God) and Pratistha (one who is firmly established in fame and reputation; to stand on one's own strength and have firmness while standing)'².

When the seeker of Brahm finally embarks on his spiritual journey symbolically represented by taking to the path of Sanyas, he should not shed tears, or lament and in anyway get emotional if the family members such as the son and the wife try to follow him from behind. If he weeps, it would be ruinous for his off springs. [This is because it indicates that he is still attached with his family and has worldly ties. This would be tantamount to being forced to accept the vows of Sanyas against his wills, and such a life is equivalent to a life of slavery because he would never find emotional and mental peace. He would always be longing for his son, family and the comforts of home. Such a man is not eligible and authorized to take the vows of Sanyas. Probably he was frustrated with the family and its burden, or was unhappy with the son and wife that he decided to take to Sanyas, and if this is the case then the curse would fall on them for forcing him out of the house, albeit in the guise of acceptance of Sanyas. So it is more under coercion of circumstances than out of natural free will and natural renunciation and detachment for the artificial world and its material comforts that such a man has become a Sanyasi, and any kind of

compulsion is not conducive to spiritual enhancement and achievement of peace. If this is not the case, then the weeping and lamenting indicates that the family members are not allowing him to take to Sanyas and he is going against their wishes. He probably has a young son who is not ready or mature enough to accept the family's burden. In such a case it would be sinful act to fail to carry out one's responsibilities and make others suffer for one's own gain for that would be a selfish action. Such Sanyasis cannot hope to find peace and liberation for which they have taken to the path of Sanyas in the first place. Further, weeping family members and the aspirant show that they are emotionally and sentimentally attached to each other, and therefore the family would make efforts to maintain contact with him and tag him along one way or the other. This would kill the very purpose of taking to Sanyas, for the person would be naturally affected when the family visits him and narrates its own litany of woes and problems. Sanyas envisages complete breaking off all tethers pertaining to this world and earlier life, and assuming a new personality with complete acceptance of a new life of Sanyas where the only entity that matters is Brahm and the Atma. This tenet would be violated if the links with the family are maintained.]

On the contrary, if his kith and kin go around him (i.e. circumambulate him) respectfully and return to their household without any sense or sign of grief or regret, the aspirant becomes eligible to have an access to the abode of Gods in the heaven³ (2).

[Note—¹Refer Kaushitaki Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 11, 15 of Rig Veda tradition. The procedure outlined here is followed by a householder who enters the life of Vaanprastha which precedes Sanyas and is closely related to it. Vaanprastha is the initial stage and the first step towards a full-fledged life as a Sanasi. The word literally means 'heading for the forest', but it is not to be taken in its too literal meaning in its practical application as is evident from verse no. 3 below which asserts that if going to the forest is not practically feasible, then he can live in a hermitage. So the idea is to renounce the attachment with the world symbolised by cutting off one's ties with the family.

During this transition, the experienced and wise father wishes to tell his son the fundamental essence and truth of what he has learned from life, and this he does by telling him that he is none but Brahm and its divine various virtues personified. The son is enlightened by the father as a parting gift and blessing before he moves out of the house by means of the eclectic statements narrated above in this verse. It is to inculcate self-confidence in the son and warn him to be careful not to let the family name and the father down by doing anything that is unholy and demeaning to his exalted stature. He must obey his father. Indeed, the best gift that a loving father can give his son is not worldly riches which are nevertheless perishable and transient but a secret code that would unlock the eternal treasury of happiness and auspiciousness for him and his progeny.

²The son accepts his father's advise by accepting to uphold the family's noble tradition and carry it forward to the best of his ability. By accepting that he is Brahma he agrees that he would act like the family's head now onwards and treat everyone compassionately and with great equanimity like the great patriarch of creation. He would also inculcate wisdom and follow the noble path of righteousness and auspiciousness according to his exalted position as the head of the family like Brahma is for the rest of the creation. He would set an example for others in his family to follow.

Similarly, by accepting the word Yagya, Vashatkar and Swaha he assures his father that he would continue to do fire sacrifices and other religious duties along with offering oblations to the Gods as had been done by him. By accepting the words Swadha he assures him that he would continue to offer libations and respects to the spirit of his dead ancestors. By accepting the Mantra OM he indicates that he would

do Japa and perform other religious sacraments and duties in the noblest of family's tradition while using this Mantra as a medium. It also means that he would not be misled by so many doctrines and philosophies offering numerous Mantras, but stick to this divine Mantra which relates directly to the supreme Brahman. By accepting the words Dhata and Vidhata he agrees to willingly take care of his dependants and others in the extended family, and be judicious in his dealings and judgments. By accepting to be Twasta he undertakes to play the role of the Trinity Gods as well as the celestial architect Vishwakarma to create, sustain and develop the family in a well-planned and systematic manner. By accepting the word Pratistha he assures his father that he would do everything to ensure that his and the family's dignity, respect and stature in the society are upheld and enhanced; he would never do anything to undermine what his father had so assiduously and laboriously built and cultivated over a long time.

The utterances of the father and the reply of the son are symbolic of the fact that the wise father is indirectly telling his son that the latter is not an ordinary man but an exalted being like the Trinity Gods, and the mantle of taking care of the world is now falling upon him and so he ought to be exceedingly careful and diligent. He wishes to tell him that now that he, the father, has decided to move out of the house, the son is expected to take up this responsibility not only of the household but of the rich legacy of wisdom and erudition, of righteousness and auspiciousness that his family is so famed for by being careful in all his deeds and actions, in all his thoughts and behaviours, and ensure that they are up to the bench-mark set by the scriptures and other senior members of this own family in the past; he must ensure that they are according to the laws laid down in the scriptures and never violate them under any provocation or temptation. The son is expected to guard against falling prey to temptations and mind his own self, keeping in mind always the promise that he is making to his father at the time of the latter's final departure from the house—that he is indeed an exalted soul as exemplified by the fact that he has accepted being a personification of great Gods, holy sacraments such as offerings made to the sacred fire, divine Mantras etc. It also ordains the son to keep the family tradition of observing religious sacraments and doing religious duties that were earlier being done by his father going on as usual by performing fire sacrifices, offering oblations and libations to Gods and dead ancestors, repeat Mantras and generally lead a holy and pious life conducive to spiritual upliftment of the soul so that when the right time comes the son would also follow the footsteps of his father by passing the baton to the next generation and taking the vows of Sanyas himself.

The father inspires the son to lead an honourable and dignified life marked by righteousness and auspiciousness as well as an exemplary religious life in consonance with the tenets of the scriptures. The son is expected to carry forward the noble tradition established by his forefathers and which is being handed down to him by his own father now. The assertions mentioned in this verse build confidence in him about himself and his noble lineage.

³This is ordained to create an auspicious atmosphere of cheerfulness and happiness, because this is not the time to grieve, weep and lament but to celebrate as the man is attaining some stature which is higher than the mundane, he is progressing to a higher level of life and gaining success in the much sought-after field of spiritual elevation and getting ready for his spiritual liberation and deliverance instead of falling down from a high exalted stature and getting trapped in the endless cycle of miseries and pains, so there is no ground for regrets and causes for lamentations. He is doing the scripturally sanctioned and traditionally most honourable and auspicious deed by taking to the vows of Sanyas towards the fag end of life. In fact, it is time to rejoice and celebrate that at least one soul in the family has stepped on the much-acclaimed correct and auspicious path of enlightenment and Brahman-realisation, and the good effects of this man's actions would bring good fortune on the entire clan and family. Such a man lends his family great respect and privilege in the society and

therefore no untoward events must be allowed to happen that would mar this solemn and august moment. Weeping and lamentations only go to destroy the solemnity and grace of the auspicious moment, and are not at all suitable for it.]

3. A person should follow the sanctified way of leading life which has been divided into four segments by ancient tradition and scriptures.

In the beginning he should lead a life of Brahmacharya as prescribed in the Vedas and Shastras (i.e. a celibate life of self control and discipline as sanctioned by the scriptures when he spends his time in studies and inculcates values and skills that prepare him to face the rough and tumble of life as an adult with confidence, and which enables him to stand on his own two feet and generally not only to fend for himself but also to take care of his dependants).

Then he should enter the next phase of life of a Grihastha when he marries and produces children to carry forward the lineage of the family. It is expected of him that he would inculcate noble values and virtues in his off spring in accordance to the sanction of the scriptures. During this phase, he performs religious duties such as doing fire sacrifices, observing sacraments and doing other auspicious deeds.

Then he can take the vows of Sanyas (i.e. a life of renunciation and withdrawal from active participation in mundane worldly affairs, and instead spending time in meditation and contemplation and generally preparing oneself for the final exit from the world) by seeking voluntary permission from his kith and kin (who are expected not to deny him this privilege).

Having entered this phase of life as a Sanyasi (one who has taken the stern vows of Sanyas), he should proceed to a secluded place such as a forest. There he should do fire sacrifice for twelve nights (i.e. twelve consecutive days) by offering milk to the sacred fire as oblation and survive on milk during this period of twelve nights or days.

After this period, he should offer the sweetened pudding prepared over the fire in three mud pots and kept aside for the Trinity Gods, i.e. Lord Prajapati Brahma, Lord Vishnu and Lord Tirnetra (or the one who holds a trident, i.e. Shiva) to the sacred fire meant to be accepted by the universal Fire God known as Vaishwanar. [That is, now onwards the Sanyasi recognises these three Gods in the form of the eternal and universal fire element that is present everywhere in a latent form and ready to leap into life when required. This fire element is the metaphor for the stupendous energy, dynamism and potentials of the supreme Brahm because without dynamism, activity and heat in the form of warmth no life is ever possible in this world. In fact, the Sanyasi now worships the Trinity Gods in the form of this Fire called Vaishwanar.]

He should now offer to the sacred fire his wooden pots that were earlier being used by him for various functions during the course of doing fire sacrifices in his previous life as householder. [That is, at the time of taking Sanyas, he should put the wooden pots in the pit of the fire finally lit to bear witness to his taking to the life of Sanyas. This is the last time he is lighting this fire as he is no longer required to do the external form of the fire sacrifice as ordained in this verse below. Henceforth, he is expected to perform an internal form of fire sacrifice.]

Similarly, the pots made of earth are offered to (submerged in) any body of water such as a river or a pond, and those made of metals and other elements (such as gold, brass or copper) are donated to his Guru (who is his moral preceptor and teacher).

At the time of making this gift to the Guru, he should say as follows—‘You should not go far from me, while I would also stay close to you’. [This is to ensure that the teacher and disciple stay in close proximity with each other, a necessity for the disciple because he would need the guidance of the teacher every step of the way in his spiritual path in which he is still a novice. There is another interpretation of this statement. The Guru had enlightened the aspirant about the spiritual Truths and the futility of pursuing this artificial world, he had taught him what the scriptures say and what the correct path to be followed is if he wished to find liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death and its attendant problems. The Guru has unraveled to him the great secrets of metaphysics and spiritualism which had inspired the man to take this path of Sanyas in the first place. So he owes his new-found freedom from the fetters that shackle non-initiated persons to this world only due to this Guru. It was the Guru who had wisened him to the facts relating to his ‘true self’, i.e. the Atma, and the fact that this Atma is the same in the teacher as it is in the disciple. So, this statement ‘we shall be close to each other’ is an affirmation of this teaching. The aspirant wishes to tell the Guru that they would always be close to each other because the Atma which is the same in the Guru as well as in the aspirant is an eternally ethereal spirit that is inherently omnipresent and all-pervading. Wherever the aspirant wishes, the Guru would be there to help him and guide him. Physically going away from the house and village would not be a limiting factor if their Atmas wish to have a communion. Besides this factor, he wishes to indicate to the learned Guru that though he has broken off all ties with the family and the rest of the world, he would ever be obliged to him for showing him the correct path and help him overcome his initial reluctance and misgivings about the life of Sanyas; he would never forget the Guru. He also acknowledges the fact that contact with the Guru is not the same as contact with the rest of the family and the world—for the former is prohibited for a Sanyasi in the scriptures as it creates emotional fetters while contact with an enlightened and wise Guru is always welcome as he would only serve to speed up the aspirant’s progress instead of creating obstacles.]

Some scriptures prescribe that the Sanyasi should pick up a fistful of ash that is lying near the Arani, the wooden drill used to light a sacrificial fire, from the three types of holy fires, viz. Garhyapatya, Dakshinaagni and Aahavaniya¹ that he had performed as a householder earlier, and gulp it down (in a symbolic gesture to indicate that all these divine fires would henceforth reside in his inner self, and therefore he no longer need to worship them externally).

Then he should cut off his Shikha (the tuft of hair on his head on the cranium) and hairs, take off his sacred thread and saying the divine Mantra ‘OM Bhu Swaha’, he should offer them to the water body which is near at hand. [The meaning of this Mantra is ‘OM salutations! I am offering these entities to the Earth’.]

After that he should tread fearlessly upon the auspicious and noble path shown by other great men who had braved hunger by fasting, and who had overcome the fear of water by entering water bodies such as rivers and lakes etc. (to take bath, for example) as well as the fear of fire (by desisting from doing the formal fire sacrifices in order to appease the Fire God and keep the latter in good humour as well as symbolically establishing these sacred fires inside his own self as narrated above in this verse). [In other words, a Sanyasi should learn to overcome the temptations induced by hunger; this ensures that he does not eat non-eatable food and indulges in eating. This self-control helps him to maintain optimum health because he cannot afford the luxury of falling sick and becoming fat and lethargic by overeating. This also helps him to maintain his self-respect and the dignity of his exalted stature

because food is the great factor which leads to a man's fall; he would go to any lengths to satisfy his hunger and the urges of his taste buds. Overcoming the fear of water is essential because now he does not have the luxury of a bathroom or ready water to drink; he would have to enter a water-body such as a river or lake to fetch water for his daily needs. Further, he needs to harden himself against the vagaries of nature such as the damp rainy seasons when he might not have any shelter. Overcoming the fear of fire prepares him to bear the heat and scorch of the sun and the hot seasons besides the need to cook food which he might get as alms during his begging sojourns. He might have to light a fire while in the forest to ward off wild animals also. In short, these directions are intended to prepare him for the rough and harsh life ahead. He cannot afford the luxury of a pampered life he was accustomed while he was a householder.]

He should make the great exit as a Sanyasi either by become a wandering mendicant who never stays in one place, or if that is not practicably feasible or advisable then he should proceed to take an abode in the hermitage of an aged Sanyasi. [This option is intended for those whose health or age or other limitations such as physical deformities etc. do not permit wandering. It also proves that the vows of Sanyas are not intended to unduly punish and torment the person, for then they would be against the very reason why a man takes to Sanyas, i.e. to find peace and freedom from the worries of the world so that he can spend quality time to meditate and contemplate upon the great Truths pronounced by the scriptures, and attain the final liberation and deliverance for his soul as propounded by them. If he is subjected to untold miseries and agonies which are beyond his tolerance limits, he might begin to have second thoughts and would be tempted to fall back to his earlier ways of a householder life. Making life too unbearable for him would defeat the very purpose for which a life of sufferance and hardship is intended—which is to make him do Tapa or observe austerity and perform penances so as to atone for his past misdeeds and sins, and purify his soul so that it is ready to enter the life of exemplary purity, piety and holiness. Tapa is like putting gold in fire to remove all the impurities in it and cleanse it. A Sanyasi is expected to be free from all sorts of worldly taints and blemishes, and the hard life is intended for his purpose. But at the same time he should be at peace with himself because only a man who is himself calm and peaceful can effuse these divine for others to benefit from. An unhappy man or one who is tormented by physical discomfort would not be able to concentrate his mind and attention on meditation and contemplation which a Sanyasi is expected to do full time. He would be more pre-occupied with his physical bodily problems and discomfort to find time for nobler pursuits of the spirit. That is why even in Yoga it is prescribed that if one is not able to follow the rigid Aasans (sitting postures) normally prescribed for meditation, he is allowed to sit in the posture which is comfortable for him, and it is called the 'Sukha Aasan', the sitting posture in which he finds comfort.]

Whatever he eats with milk and water is like his evening fire sacrifice. Similarly, whatever he eats as breakfast is like the doing of the morning fire sacrifice as far as he is concerned. The food that he eats on the dark moon night is his Darsha Yagya (the fire sacrifice done in the day following the night when the first moon is sighted; the word 'Darsha' means to 'see'), and the food that he eats on the full moon night is his Purna-masi Yagya (the fire sacrifice done on the full moon day). [This is because he has symbolically established the sacred fires inside his own self as described earlier in this verse. There is a Upanishad called the Pran Agnihotra Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition which elaborately describes this internal fire sacrifice and asserts that this is the best form of doing it. From the

practical view point also this is the best way to do a fire sacrifice for a Sanyasi because once he leaves the house he is ordained to remain alone and carry nothing with him as his possession, so it becomes almost impossible for him to gather the necessary items for performing a fire sacrifice and observing the formal rituals associated with it on a daily basis. His age is catching up with him, he becomes weak physically, and he might not find the right location and environment during his wanderings for such formalities as doing a fire sacrifice.]

The shaving of the hair, beard and mustache as well as trimming of the nails that he gets done in the spring season is like the Agnishtom Yaga (a fire sacrifice when oblations are given to the sacred fire)² (3).

[Note—¹The sacred fires have been described in a number of Upanishads of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition such as the Pran Agnihotra Upanishad, verse nos. 18-19; the Garbha Upanishad, in its paragraph no. 5, and Kathvalli or Katho-panishad, Canto 1, Valli 1, verse no. 13-18 as Agni Vidya.

The three main sacred fires according to the Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 4, sections 10 to 13 are the following—

The Garhyapatya fire—[Refer Chandogya Upanishad, 2/24/3-6, 4/11/1-2, 4/17/4.] This is the householder's fire. A householder has land and farm representing 'earth' in which he grows food. This food is grown with the help of the light of the Sun, and it is cooked in the fire of the fire-place in the house. Hence, the Garhyapatya fire, or the householder's fire, is intrinsically present and is implied in these 4 entities. It is an integral part of these four. The earth has the 'fire element' because without heat and warmth, no seed would germinate and no life can survive on this earth. The food has fire present inherently in it because it is the energy inherent in food which helps to energise the creature that eats it. The presence of heat in the sun does not need to be explained because it is very evident.

The fire was the central piece of all religious life in early times of the Vedic period when a fire sacrifice was deemed to be the best religious activity that a righteous man can expect to do. In this context, the Garhyapatya fire is the main fire lit during such formal fire sacrifices. The fire pit was either square-shaped or rounded. In the context of the fire sacrifice, it is was used for the purpose of daily rituals, cooking or warming the offerings, heating of the vessels, to perform circumambulation, to act as a main cauldron or reservoir of the sacred fire which was to be kept perpetually burning throughout the life of the householder once it was lit.

The Dakshinagni fire—[Refer Chandogya Upanishad, 2/24/7-10, 4/13/1-2, 4/17/5.] This holy fire is a witness to making of charities when some water is poured as libation to the Gods. It signifies that the Gods are offered water to drink. To give water to the thirsty is the greatest for of charity. Therefore, this fire is symbolically present in water, and when it is poured, it signifies that the heat produced by sins committed by the person has been doused. Charities and donations make a man famous and renowned, hence the allusion to directions of the earth. His glory shines like the bright moon and he is called a star among human beings. He is the most exalted amongst his peers and compatriots even as the moon is most prominent amongst the stars in the sky.

Like in the case of the Garhyapatya fire, the fire that was lit in the main sacrificial shed or site just near the main fire pit but to the south of it and where donations and charities were made was called Dakshinagni fire. The fire pit for this fire was semi-circular or bow-shaped.

The Ahawaniya fire—[Refer Chandogya Upanishad, 2/24/11-16, 4/14/1-2, 4/17/6.] The Ahawaniya fire is lit during the fire sacrifices to respectfully invoke Gods, and invite them to come and participate in the sacrifice and accept offerings made to them. The word 'Aavaahan' in Sanskrit means to invite, invoke, to pray respectfully with the intention of welcoming. Since one uses one's mouth for these purposes, the fire in the form of the strength, energy and vigour of the spoken word

and the power of speech residing in the mouth is called Ahawaniya fire. This fire was lit to invoke the Gods, and the Gods live in the heaven; hence the reference to the sky, heavens and electric. Since Pran is the best form of the vital winds, the allusion means that the Gods are the most exalted forms that exist in creation. The 'electric' is a metaphor for immense strength, potent and power, which of course the fire possesses. This inherent quality of Electric that it possess most stupendous powers and strength is likened to the presence of Brahm in it even as the great power and strength present in a man is due to the Atma or Pran present in him. Even as a man is useless without the presence of Pran in him, the Electric would lose its importance if there was no Brahm present in it which gives it its punch and strength.

The Garbha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its paragraph no. 5 describes the location of the three main fires as follows—the 'Ahavaniya' fire resides in the mouth, the 'Garhyapatya' fire lives in the abdomen, and the 'Dakshinagni' has its abode in the heart.

In ancient times it was an established belief and tradition that the way to attain heaven was through the path of the fire sacrifice. The fire sacrifice was in effect a method to harness the spiritual energy inherent in the all pervading fire element which would sufficiently empower the person performing the fire sacrifice to achieve his goal. The sacrificial pit and the heat generated from it reminds one of the modern day nuclear reactors. Even as the strength and energy and powers of the atom can be harnessed for beneficial or ruinous effects through the nuclear reactor, depending upon the temperament and mental setup of the person who masters the science of atomic energy, the fire sacrifice could be similarly used either for auspicious purposes such as attaining eternal peace and tranquility for the tormented soul, or for attaining worldly glory and conquest. Harnessing of nuclear energy requires expertise, knowledge and skills not easy to master and not accessible to all. Building and operating a nuclear facility also is a daunting and elaborate job. Similarly, the ancient fire sacrifices required special skills and expertise, and it was not simply lighting any odd evening village community bonfire to the merriment of all those who sit around it to gossip about the day's events.

From this perspective of doing a fire sacrifice in order to attain spiritual eternity and liberation, the 'units' of the special knowledge that Yam described to Nachiketa in verse no. 15 of Kathavalli Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition probably pertain to the steps to be followed in the construction of the fire pit—such as the type of bricks used, the number of bricks to be used, the geometrical design of the sacrificial pit, the type of wood to be used in the ceremony, the Mantras to be chanted, and other such finer details which must be diligently and strictly followed if any spiritual benefit is to be derived from the entire exercise. So, the sacrificial fire pit is like an oven in which the fuel of wood is added and the science of Mantras is used to order to generate immense energy that can empower the patron performing the fire sacrifice with stupendous potentials.

On the other hand, from the metaphysical perspective of harnessing the stupendous energy latent in the eternally burning fire element, Yam must have explained to Nachiketa the different forms of 'fire' as a manifestation of the supreme transcendental Brahm's astounding energy, potentials, powers and strength. The visible symbol of the eternal fire is the sun in the sky and the energy inherently present in the body of all living beings. It is a well known fact that no life can ever exist without heat and energy of the fire element. In Chandogya Upanishad of the Sam Veda tradition (Canto 4, Sub-cantos 5 and 7) it has been stated that Brahm is characterised by light and illumination (as opposed to darkness) which are the characteristic virtues of the fire element. The entire Canto 3 is dedicated to the praise of the Sun God as the essence of life, and Sun is the celestial pitcher of fire element which burns eternally inside it.

The 'fire' has immense importance in metaphysics and it is a symbol of life and consciousness. Without 'fire' everything is deemed to be dead and gone.

According to some texts, the fire element has the following three legendary forms—viz. the ‘Agni’, which is the terrestrial fire on earth represented by the word Bhu, the ‘Jatvedas’, which is the fire of the sky represented by the word Bhuvaha, and ‘Vaishwanar’, which is the fire of the heavens represented by the word Swaha (Brihaddevtakaa, 1/67). The term appears in the Rig Veda approx. sixty times and is more often than not synonymous with both life as well as the fire element.

The Jatveda fire has been explained by Yam, the death God, to Nachiketa in Kathvalli or Katho-panishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 2, Valli 1, verse no. 8. It represents the Sun God. The same Upanishad, in its Canto 1, Valli 1, verse no. 7 describes the Vaishwanar Agni, i.e. the universal Fire represented by the Fire God.

The Garbha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its paragraph no. 5 describes the following three types of fires—Gyanagni, Darshanagni and Jatharaagni.

The Brahm Vidya Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 69-69 ½ describe that the fire element is inherently present in the three letters of the divine Mantra OM and three locations in the body of the spiritual aspirant. This assumes great significance in the context of Sanyas for now the aspirant is expected to simply repeat the Mantra OM and he is deemed to be doing the fire sacrifice.

²It would be noted that a Sanyasi is expected to get over the rituals of formalities and instead become informal in his approach to a pious life. Remaining bogged down in rituals and formal religious activities would not give him the liberty and time to pursue the things of natural interest to him even in this late phase of life. He is given the freedom to do what he wishes to do in the twilight days of life after having spent a lifetime burdened by so many dos and don'ts. He can now pursue subjects close to his heart. Of course it does not mean that he is given the liberty to become sinful and reckless now or live out his wild fantasies that he just could not afford to indulge in earlier; not at all. Obviously, he will not do this as he has already abandoned all attachments with the material world and death is staring him in his face.]

4. Once a spiritual aspirant takes the vows of Sanyas, he should not establish the sacred fire for the purpose of any religious rite. [Refer verse no. 3 where it is explicitly stated that he establishes these fires inside himself in a symbolic manner by gulping down the ash of the sacrificial pit.]

He should do Japa (repetition) of the eclectic Mantras pertaining to the exalted state of self-realisation, such as the Mantra ‘Mritunjaya-maawaham’ (i.e. ‘I have conquered death’).

‘Let all be blessed with auspiciousness and grace’—thinking in these noble terms he should spend all his time in contemplating upon his Atma, the pure consciousness that is the essence and truth of his existence. [That is, he wishes good of all and has no animosity and ill-will with anyone. Instead of worrying about overcoming his enemies and settling scores with them, he prays for the welfare and good of all living beings. This ensures that he can roam around fearlessly even amongst his earlier opponents, and get due respect in the society. In the fag end of his life when he has embarked on the path of God, it is but natural of him to think and behave in this way.]

He should roam around like a liberated man who exults in his prized and much awaited freedom, and expresses his rejoice by raising his hands skywards¹ as he walks on the auspicious path of spiritual liberation and deliverance, a path free from all worldly delusions, deceits and misconceptions, a path free from all agonies and worries, a path that has no shackles that can ever bind him to this life of birth and death again, and which would finally lead him to emancipation and salvation.

He has no permanent dwelling or address (because now the entire world is his abode as he is now free to live wherever he wants under the vast canopy of the sky as his roof).

He should accept nothing else except food obtained by begging. He should be constantly on the move, not staying at one place for any length of time. But to avoid even inadvertent killing of innocent creatures (such as worm and insects) that mushroom during the rainy season, he should stop his wanderings during this period.

There are certain Shlokas (verses of the scriptures) in the context of the way of life that is expected to be lived by a Sanyasi (and they are cited in the following verses) (4).

[Note—¹The raising of the hands upwards have other connotations as well—it implies that he has nothing secret to hide and is as open as the vast open sky. It also means that now he has surrendered himself to the supreme Lord and the latter is his only sustainer, protector and bearer; he relies upon the Lord. Therefore he has nothing to fear from anything or anyone in this world.]

5-6. A true Sanyasi is expected to discard all possessions and all external signs of his religious leanings such as the Kundika (a small earthen pot usually carried by mendicants), Chamas (a spoon-like long-handled ladle used to make offerings to the fire sacrifice), Shikya (the latticed sling-bag), the tripod (made of sticks tied at one end and used for holding his personal belongings while he attends to nature's call and his daily ablutions besides being of use during formal fire sacrifices and other rites to hold sacrificial material), foot wears, Kantha (a coarse bedding made of old tattered pieces of cloth sewn together), Kopin and its covering cloth (the loin-cloth and the long seamless piece of cloth worn around the waist that covers the lower part of the body) [5], the Pavitri (the brush made of Kush grass and used to sprinkle water as a purification rite), the clothes used to cover the body after a bath while the old clothes are spread out to dry, the clothes used to cover the upper part of the body (such as a shawl or an overcoat or gown or apron or something to wrap the upper part of the body), and the sacred thread called Yagyopavit (worn across the chest by Hindus).

Besides the above, he is also expected to stop spending his time in studying the Vedas. [A bit of precaution is needed here as this dictum is fraught with the danger of misinterpretation. It does not imply any kind of insult to or insinuation of the Vedas but just stresses the point that it is expected of him now that he begins to implement what he has learnt from the scriptures throughout his life. He has reached a mature age with death staring on his face and therefore he does not have much time left to delve into thick books. He should rather utilise this precious little time that he has left before death overtakes him in meditating and witnessing the bliss derived by contemplation upon his Atma, and remain carefree for the remaining part of his life instead of straining his neck and eyes and mind over thick tomes of scriptures. There is a practical aspect also to this—in this old age his eye sight is failing, and since he is expected to be always on the move and carry no possessions it is impossible for him to read and study books and scriptures while adhering to this nomadic lifestyle typical of a wandering friar or a mendicant. Even if he stays at a hermitage as a resident monk, it's prudent and wise for him to spend time in meditation and contemplation peacefully in seclusion. This would not only rejuvenate his worn-out body and soul but would be conducive to his all-round peace and tranquility. Should he wish to spend time on hearing what the scriptures say, he would get ample opportunity in a monastery where regular discourses are held on spiritual matters. So he should spend his spare time peacefully, contemplating and meditating.] [6] (5-6).

7-8. He should perform his daily ablutions and the regular chores of attending to nature's call etc. by using clean fresh water (obtained from any fresh water source such as a well, river, stream, lake or pond). This water is also useful for his drinking purposes. [That is, he should not store water and carry it with him in a flask or other container.]

He should take rest and find a temporary shelter either on the banks of a river or in a temple.

He should lead a moderate life, neither resting too much and becoming lazy nor over-straining himself to the point of getting fatigued and worn out.

He should maintain an exemplary level of indifference, equilibrium and equanimity by neither feeling happy or excited when someone praises him nor feeling annoyed, agitated and angry when someone insults him or speaks ill of him. He never curses or abuses his opponents and detractors (7-8).

9-11. A Sanyasi should be careful not to be indolent and lazy or indulgent in and attached to anything or anybody whatsoever. He should observe the laws of Brahmacharya (a celibate way of life marked by abstinence, continence, self restraint and control over the sense organs accompanied by observance of penance and austerity).

Wise and erudite people have said that 'intercourse' is of eight types—viz. (1) having a desire to watch women, (2) touch them, (3) play with them, (4) talk with them in general terms by being near to them or keeping contact with them to enable conversation, (5) discussing secret matters having sexual overtones, (6) desiring or yearning to have sexual contact with them, (7) the physical attempt to establish conjugal relationships with them, and (8) the actual sexual activity when physical intercourse and the act of making love to them is done. A true and honest Sanyasi should abhor the idea and banish such thoughts from his mind altogether.

Therefore, Brahmacharya is to be understood in its broader ramifications which would include abstaining from any of the above eight types of deemed intercourses¹. A Sanyasi who is desirous of Moksha (i.e. who seeks spiritual liberation and deliverance; who wishes to have emancipation and salvation of the soul and its permanent freedom from all bondages pertaining to this world and its endless cycle of birth and death; who wants freedom from worldly snares and delusory attractions) should be very careful from these temptations while observing the tenets of Brahmacharya (9-11).

[Note—¹There is another way of interpreting the words 'Brahmacharya' and 'intercourse' from the spiritual perspective. In this interpretation we replace the word 'woman' with the phrase 'world and the charms of its sense objects', and the word 'intercourse' with the phrase 'interaction with and attractions for these charms', and the rest of the meaning fall into place automatically. The word 'Brahmacharya' would now include self-restraint of the sense organs so that they are not attracted by their respective objects in this world and become prey of their snares. It would mean exemplary non-indulgence and non-involvement at all levels such as mental, intellectual, sub-conscious, physical, emotional and sentimental. This holistic and all-round Brahmacharya is really what is intended here for a Sanyasi; it is more important for him than merely non-indulgence in sex because for one he might not be inclined to indulge in sexual subjects but very much occupied with worldly matters which he had left behind when he took the vows of Sanyas. What good is it then in taking to Sanyas if his mind is pre-occupied with worldly matters, because it is the mind that is the harbinger of all troubles as well as the one which can become either

the provider of liberation and deliverance to a man or the one which ensnares and makes him bonded to his endless desires, expectations, hopes and aspirations?]

12. [The following verse enumerates some of the divine virtues of the supreme transcendental Brahm.]

The entire living world with all its inhabitants finds its support and succour, its protection and sustenance in the supreme creator and bearer of creation (known as the supreme transcendental Brahm) who illuminates the entire realm of creation with his own light (i.e. who injects his own consciousness into this creation so as to enable the latter to become alive and energized), who is eternally self-illuminated with a brilliant light which is eternal and inherent in him, who is the only witness for the whole world (because he oversees the world in its past, its present and its future shapes and forms; because he knows that aspect of creation which is not known to anyone else; because nothing is hidden from him as he can see even behind curtains for the simple reason that if anything exists it is definitely a manifestation of the same non-dual Brahm in that particular form), who is immaculate and pure consciousness in the form of the Atma or soul of living creatures, and who is a treasure of wisdom, erudition, knowledge and enlightenment characteristic of the Atma present in all creatures as their fundamental and basic truthful identity (12).

13. A man cannot find access to the transcendental Supreme Being by means of doing deeds (such as various religious rites and rituals) himself or by the help of sons doing things on his behalf¹, or by any other means whatsoever. Rather, he can have access to the supreme Brahm by experiencing and witnessing the latter personally by the due diligent process and guidance provided for the purpose in the scriptures (13).

[Note—¹In other words, spiritual emancipation and salvation is not obtainable by merely doing various religious sacrifices and deeds such as making donations and charities alone in this mortal and material world in the hope that they are the only means of obtaining this ultimate goal in life. How they are done is of paramount importance. This verse should not be construed as prohibiting one from doing deeds, or that even auspicious and righteous deeds are useless. The intention is not that at all. One must be careful how the deed is done, and for this he has to consult the scriptures which have repeatedly emphasised that the main problem with deeds is that they compulsorily produce results because of the principle of action and reaction. So the trick lies in escaping the results of the deeds done. This is possible if one is wise and enlightened enough to understand that the Atma which is his 'true self' does not do any deed and they are done by the gross body. Therefore the Atma should remain detached and unattached from both the deed and its reward, both good and bad. If this happens, it is as good as not doing deeds. There is a variation to this philosophy of doing deeds that do not create entanglements—and it is to do them selflessly and as an offering to the supreme Lord, or leaving the results for the Lord. Even as the servant cannot be accused for any doing anything if he diligently carries out the order of his master, the Atma cannot be accused of doing anything if it is a party to the decision making process. For this to happen, a wise man just deals with the day to day happenings as and when they present themselves before him, and once done he forgets about them. This is only possible if his mind is lost in deep meditation and contemplation for then it would not even register the actual physical event in the first place so there would be no scope of after effects on the sub-conscious.

The son sometimes does religious deeds such as making charities, offering oblations to the sacred fire and libations to the spirits of dead ancestors in the hope and belief that the soul of his father would find salvation and emancipation by these auspicious acts. This verse is a clear warning that it is a misconception and would not lead to the good of a person's soul. It is like the case of someone else taking medicine

on behalf of some particular individual or of some other person eating food on his behalf. It is not only absurd and ridiculous but incredulous to the extreme to even imagine that the benefit would be got by the individual on whose behalf the other person is taking medicines or eating or drinking food items. Likewise, in matters of soul too one's own efforts would benefit him, and sons or anybody else cannot do it for him. In other words, this verse declares that each individual should be careful about his own conduct and should not be misled to believe that his misdeeds can be undone any good deed done by others. His welfare is in his own hands. Refer Avadhut Upanishad, verse no. 6 in this context.]

14. [A self-realised person who has witnessed the glory of Brahm begins to understand the stupendous divinity of his Atma, the pure consciousness, along with the underlying secret of how the visible creation has been unfolded from the invisible Atma.]

That Brahm which is an embodiment of Satya (quintessential eternal Truth), Gyan (quintessential eternal knowledge) and Anand (eternal bliss, ecstasy, happiness and contentedness of the spirit) is non-dual, indivisible, one and the only divine entity in this creation. It is, at the same time, all-pervading, immanent and omnipresent in this world which is known and characterised by such qualities as Maya (delusions, illusions, deceits and falsehoods) and Agyan (ignorance and all that is the opposite of Gyan). This world is like a Guha (a dark labyrinthine cave which is secretive and most foreboding; it traps anyone who enters it and it is almost impossible to get out of it)¹ (14).

[Note--¹That is, though Brahm has divine qualities and is an embodiment of truth, knowledge and their attendant happiness and bliss, but the irony and paradox of creation is that when this same Brahm created this visible world and then entered it to take up residence in it and to become a uniform part of its own creation, it assumed or appeared to assume the characteristics of this world which are markedly different from its unique natural qualities that are eclectic, divine, holy and glorious. In the form of this visible world, Brahm began to exhibit qualities of delusions, ignorance and darkness. Brahm appeared to be mired by them and trapped in their natural snare though it (Brahm) is eternally illuminated and free from all fetters. Brahm, which is essentially non-dual, now begins to show duality—there is the visible world in which both the animate and inanimate things live side by side, a world which is good as well as bad, a world which is said to be a personification of Brahm and therefore deemed to be true but is also proclaimed by the scriptures as being false and illusive, a world which is illuminated by the conscious Atma but is called a dark 'cave' as in this present verse. When it is said that the entire creation is a manifestation of the same Brahm, then the existence of this dual nature creates a great degree of perplexity, doubt and confusion about the true nature of Brahm. This is the great paradox about Brahm.

Verse no. 16 below clearly states that Brahm is merely a witness to all Maya and Agyan, implying that Brahm is not itself Maya and Agyan. These two words Maya and Agyan refer to the negative qualities characterised by delusions, ignorance, darkness, doubts and confusions. This world is compared to a cave or a Guha precisely for this reason. It is so dark and confusing that the real thing remains unseen from view. In spite of one being wide awake and having a lighted torch in hand, the dark interiors of a cave create a horrifying panorama of ghosts and phantoms so much so that even one's own shadow magnified on the walls or the floor appear to be a huge awesome phantom lurking in the dark, ready to pounce and kill. Even a lighted candle would not remove this all-enveloping veil of darkness, but create more horrors than removing them as its light highlights the grotesque contours of the cave's interiors which are never very aesthetic in appearance at any time in the first place.

These contours and shapes raise the horrifying specter of ghosts and phantoms. No exit is visible, and the further one goes inside the more he gets lost. In other words, the more one gets engrossed in this world, the more one indulges in it, the more difficult it is to get out of it.

When one begins to analyse this world with a cool head, nothing in it is found to be attractive and real in the true sense; everything is transient and perishable; everything gives agony in the long run. It is like a snare in which it is easy to get in but impossible to get out from just like it is easy to get inside the dark corridors of a labyrinthine cave but impossible to come out of it.]

15. Since the supreme Brahm is so mysterious, enigmatic and esoteric, it can be known only by Vidya (or truthful knowledge laced with high degree of deep insight, wisdom, erudition and enlightenment marked by the skilled ability to analyse available evidence intelligently and interpret things in the correct perspective because what is observed may vary widely from one situation to another, for what is physically and visibly seen may not be the actual truth but just an apparent thing like the appearance of water in a desert mirage which is physically seen but is only an optical illusion).

A wise person who becomes acquainted with this divine and eclectic Brahm as revealed in his vast and fathomless manifestation of the endless Vyom (sky; space element), i.e. one who understands that Brahm has certain magnificent cosmic qualities that are very much similar to the ones depicted by the sky¹, is not only regarded as the most exalted Brahmin (a wise one who knows the esoteric secrets of Brahm) but also acquires the abilities to fulfill all his desires, wishes and aspirations in this world² (15).

[Note—¹The sky possesses such qualities as being vast, endless, infinite, measureless, fathomless, colourless, untainted, untouchable in the sense that it cannot be felt and held, all-incorporating, all-pervading, all-encompassing etc. These are but some of the divine virtues of Brahm. Besides this fact, the sky element is the most subtle manifestation of Brahm because it is in the sky that the next element, the wind, and followed by the fire, water and earth elements took shape in the steps leading to the creation of the visible world. The sky is regarded as the nearest analogue of Brahm, followed by sound which is represented by the ethereal sound OM.

²In other words, when a wise and enlightened person realises the fact that Brahm is not a physical entity as the earth or anything existing on it that can be weighed, felt and measured in known terms, or that is gross and limited by physical parameters of shape and size, but is rather an entity as measureless, fathomless, infinite, eternal, indefinable, incomprehensible and indescribable as the sky—not only the sky as seen from the earth but including even the deepest and remotest space of this universe which is not even known let alone being visible—is deemed to have obtained that high degree of metaphysical wisdom and enlightenment that nothing remains inaccessible to him any longer because nothing can be out of reach of someone who is sufficiently intelligent and wise to know the unknown. Further, such a Brahm-realised man would know the ‘real’ truth behind the ‘apparent’ truth of the façade of this visible world, and therefore would never yearn for worldly things in the first place because he knows them to be illusive, perishable, impermanent and transient by nature besides being the cause of all spiritual bondages and unhappiness. He would only desire the divine things in life, and from the metaphysical and spiritual perspective such things relate only to the truthful Atma and the way to find its liberation from the remnants of delusions that has tethered it to this world of artificiality and deception. A wise and self-realised man would never desire material comforts and pleasures of the senses because he knows that they are both deluding and ensnaring by nature. Instead, he would desire to find access to the truth and

reality that is permanent and the real thing. He then discovers that it is the pure consciousness known as the Atma that is the only spiritually correct thing to access and strive for. This Atma is an ethereal and divine entity which is beyond the purview of physical limitations that all worldly things are subjected to. He discovers that this Atma is his 'real and truthful self' as opposed to the gross body, and that this Atma is an all-pervading, immanent and indivisible entity. Therefore, it is safe to assume that he can gain access to anything that he wants because nothing is inaccessible to the Atma as it is a spirit and can go anywhere it wishes. Besides this, he becomes so fulfilled upon self-realisation that he wants nothing more of the world, and therefore his chances of asking for mundane things are non-existent.

Since this eclectic state is possible by doing natural Yoga, i.e. by doing meditation and contemplation in a natural way and with sincerity without any compulsion, he would gain certain mystical powers known as Siddhis which would automatically make everything reachable by him or accessible to him; they would come automatically to him as a natural accoutrement of success in Yoga. So he need not go and search for them elsewhere. This fact has been stated in all Yoga Upanishads, the most recent ones being Yogtattva and Yogshikha.]

16. The supreme Brahm is also known as 'Pratyagatmaa', i.e. the transcendental supreme Atma which is the universal Consciousness known as the cosmic Soul that is all-pervading, all-encompassing, all-incorporating, omnipotent and omniscient by nature, and which is merely a witness to this world of Maya and Agyan (delusions and ignorance). [That is, the universal Soul known as Brahm or the Pratyagatmaa is not characterised by Maya or Agyan, but is a neutral observer of everything that exists. This is important because since Brahm is the supreme Lord of creation, he has to remain neutral, non-partisan, non-committal and non-biased in order to judge this creation properly and dispassionately.]

A wise and self-realised person who understands the truth and essence of the eclectic statement 'I am a personification of Brahm' indeed becomes one like Brahm. [Since the truthful identity of every man is his soul or Atma which is the consciousness living in his body, it follows that the man who has realised his 'true self' has realised that this Atma is Brahm in a miniature form. This is because Brahm is the universal Atma at the cosmic level, while the individual person's Atma is the counterpart of this cosmic Atma residing in his individual body. Both are fundamentally the same just like a drop of water is basically the same entity whether it is in a restricted or limited form as the water in a cup or spoon, or in its limitless and fathomless form as the vast ocean.] (16).

17. [This verse and the ones following it describe the genesis of creation with a metaphysical perspective.]

From this indivisible, immutable and non-dual universal Consciousness existing in the form of the almighty and omnipotent Brahm were created the different Bhuts with their individual Atmas. This is the subtlest and the most sublime level of creation. It is was like imagining the presence of a snake in a harmless length of rope and then giving effect to this imagination and henceforth calling this 'rope' as 'a snake' in a world of make-belief¹.

Hence, the immutable, indivisible, universally uniform and invisible sky element that represented Brahm was imagined to be divided into five subtle forms. The first manifestation of this segregation appeared in the form of the 'sound' and the perception that hears that sound, i.e. the sense of hearing² (17).

[Note—¹In this instance, Brahm is like the ‘rope’ while the various characteristics attributed to it are like the ‘snake’. Brahm is a neutral entity like the rope; it has both the negative and the positive qualities hidden in its bosom which cancel each other out to make Brahm neutral. But when these qualities begin to polarize even in their minutest of fraction, in the subtlest dimension of space and for the smallest fraction of time, some characters specific to these qualities and the given circumstances begin to appear, thereby destroying Brahm’s neutrality. Gradually over time and as the process of evolution of creation progresses, these minor qualities become major and stand on their own feet, acquiring their individuality and personality. But since they had their origin in Brahm and since Brahm is the vital factor in their existence, it is said that Brahm has these qualities, attributes or characters in it.

For instance, all the five primary elements called Bhuts, such as sky, air, fire, water and earth, have their origin in one single Brahm. But as they grow they acquire their own independent set of qualities which are very different from Brahm and even from each other. For example, water is inherently cool and soothing while fire is scorching and hot. So to say that Brahm is cool like water or hot like fire would obviously be wrong. The great paradox is that these two apparently inimical entities do exist together in Brahm. For proof one can see one’s own body—the fluid part of it such as blood, mucous, urine and digestive and other juices in the body are water personified, while the inherent warmth of the body and even of the blood is a manifestation of the fire element.

Another example would make the point more clear. All types of trees, fruits and flowers have come from the same earth, but can anyone imagine what the earth would look like by seeing them, or for that matter how can the same earth produce such a vast species of members of the plant kingdom? Both the sky and air are said to be very subtle so much so that none of them can be caught or seen, but there is a vital difference between them. The sky does not move and cannot be felt, while the air moves and can be felt when it blows against the skin as wind.

In the case of the rope and snake cited in this verse, both appear alike from their external looks, but only out of ignorance is one treated as the other. A rope is harmless and even if one gets scared stiff thinking it to be a vicious snake it wouldn’t change the factual situation. Similarly, if one neglects a snake and catches hold of it as one does a rope, the snake would surely bite the man; he would not spare him on the pretext of his ignorance. So, to think that Brahm is corrupted like the world and impose this accusation on the former would not change Brahm’s innately immaculate and pristine pure nature. Likewise to think that the world is true because it is Brahm manifested in that form would not change the deluding and corrupted nature of this world. So a wise man analyses each thing in its own right before arriving at any conclusion. External appearances and ignorance of the truth more often than not create real horrendous consequences like the creation of ghosts and blood sucking phantoms out of mere shadows in a dark room!

²Primarily it refers to the creation of the five ‘Tanmatras’, or the five subtle sense perceptions, from the same consciousness that had these senses naturally but not in a segregated and compartmentalized form. These five Tanmatras are the senses of hearing, feeling and touch, seeing, smelling and tasting. All these were the properties of the consciousness even earlier, but they were not treated separately but as a composite character of consciousness. That is, if there is consciousness in anything, it must show these five primary characteristics—i.e. it would hear, see, smell, taste and feel. As creation evolved, these five Tanmatras evolved and acquired their own status as individual entities; they were segregated into having separate and independent existence as is proved by the fact that a person might not be able to see but can taste, hear, smell and feel the sense of touch, he might be dumb and deaf but feel, taste and see things. Once this illusionary separation was done, once the basically immutable and indivisible Atma was deemed to exhibit these characteristics in separate manner

rather than as its composite character, the rest of the illusions followed in quick succession.

This and the following verses basically emphasis the point that all the different aspect of creation which an ignorant man recognises are basically different aspects of the same non-dual and indivisible entity. To cite an example, an ordinary man may treat water in an ocean, in a lake, in a river or a cup or a spoon as separate water bodies, but a wise and truly erudite man would see no difference between them. He would treat all forms of water as 'water' irrespective of the shape the water takes in different places it is found or the different vessels in which it is kept.

To take another example, an ordinary man would say that the water of the stream flowing down the mountain is mineral water, the ocean water is salty, the lake water is sweet, the river water is turbid and polluted, and the well water is too hard to drink because of dissolved salts in it etc. But for a chemist this is not the case, for a water molecule, in its true and real form, consists of two atoms of Hydrogen and one atom of Oxygen and contain no extraneous elements if it is to be called 'water'. Therefore, to say that the water is 'mineral, salty, sweet, sour, polluted and turbid' is a misnomer and misleading about the truth of water. Similarly, the pure consciousness in the form of the Atma is universally the same and shows all the signs of life, but in ignorance it is believed to exhibit these conscious signs separately in distinct organs which are assigned specific functions.]

18. Next in the progression of evolvement of the visible creation came into the being the second element called the wind or the air element from the first element called the sky element¹, and this second element (wind or air) resulted in the creation of the perception of touch².

Thereafter, from the air or the wind element came into being the fire, the water and the earth elements successively in that order³ (18).

[Note--¹The wind or air is the second subtle primary element created, and since it evolved from the sky element it had the characteristics very similar to its parent, the sky. That is, the wind exhibited characters of being invisible, all-pervading, all-encompassing, omnipresence, vast and infinite very much like the sky element. The only obvious discernible difference was its ability to show signs of movement or activity which the sky lacked. The wind was the first revelation of Brahm's stupendous physical prowess and strong arm as proved by the fact that violent storms, tornadoes and hurricanes cause so widespread havoc that no other force of Nature can replicate. The wind can even blow out and overcome the next fierce manifestation of Brahm, i.e. the fire element. It is the wind element which infused 'life' called the Pran into the otherwise basically gross, lifeless and inane body of the creature and makes it alive and active, infusing it with such stupendous abilities that a petite-looking individual is able to build huge structures and magnificent edifices which hold everyone in a spell-binding awe. A body is able to get up, move and perform all the activities because of this wind element inherently present inside it as its Pran.

It ought to be noted here that a hierarchy is followed here—at the top is the sky element, next comes the wind element, then would follow the fire, the water and the earth element. The entity placed at a higher level would naturally have an authority a notch higher as compared to the one placed a rung below it. That is why the sky can overcome even the wind element as proved by the fact that a wild storm might blow for hours in one corner of the sky but as its progresses ahead its violence and punch dissipates gradually so much so that when it finally reaches some other part of the sky it gets completely humbled, tamed and docile; it loses its ferocity and punch.

²The sense of touch exhibited by the wind is for everyone to witness when one feels the wind rustling against and caressing one's face and ruffling one's hair when one stands facing its flow even with eyes, ears and nose closed. Even a slight movement of air can be felt. The sense perception of 'touch' was first felt when this

air came into being because prior to that the sky could not introduce this sense as it had no movement. So, the perception of touch has its genesis in the wind or air element.

³Modern science has established that this world as we know it today was primarily a vast body of gases rotating violently. There was cosmic debris strewn all around as a left-over of the Big Bang, and it swirled along with the accompanying gases. The forces of gravity, the centripetal and centrifugal forces, and other such natural forces of physics came into play simultaneously resulting in the formation of planets and other cosmic bodies. The entire process of turning, shaking and churning took place in the vast bowl of the sky which acted as the crucible of creation, and as time progressed the elements separated from one another according to their density and grossness, with the denser amongst them settling at the bottom and the lighter ones rising to the top. All had their existence in the sky, and since they rotated round and round violently, this circular motion created the 'wind' element in the cosmos. This peculiar origin of the wind element in circular motion of the primordial gel of creation is indicated even today when we observe that wind rotates in a circular motion in whirlwinds, cyclonic storms and twisters or tornadoes which move ahead while rotating rapidly. This is the basic characteristic feature of the wind element—movement, circular as well as lateral and frontal.

This violent churning, random collision, the resultant abrasions, implosions and explosions etc. that might have taken place in the distant past created formidable friction and generated immense amount of heat and energy which resulted in the creation of the 'fire element'. As time passed, the rapidity and violence of movement abated, resulting in a chilling and cooling effect which was followed by condensation, and thus the 'water element' was created.

The 'fire element' was inherent in this creation as the driving force that enabled the entire process to proceed ahead. The friction created between various elements which were being roughed-up against each other in the process of creation created heat and light. Since energy does not vanish but only changes its form, the kinetic energy of rotation transformed into heat energy and light energy, and together this energy in its various connotations took up its habitat as the latent 'fire element' in the elements that came into being. These elements trapped this fire element inside their pores much like sponge traps water. When this sponge is squeezed, the water spurts out. Likewise, when the elements are subjected to pressure and external exertion, fire springs out. This is why when coal, gunpowder and other inflammable elements such as gases or petroleum products are subjected to external agitation such as heat or pressure, the fire element trapped inside them jumps out either as visible fire or as an explosion.

Further solidification was a natural progression as cooling progressed and the violent revolutions and rotations slowed down, and the heavier elements settled down at the lower end of the cosmic bowl and hardened. Thus was created the 'earth element'.

This pyramidal structure is evident even today in the heaviest and grossest of earth being at the lowest rung of the world and forming its base upon which the entire world rests. The next element, which is subtler than it, is the water element which floats on its surface as the vast ocean and sea, and drenches every corner of earth. The next element, the fire element, is dry and finds its place on land. Its subtlety is evident when its flame rises up instead of moving in a horizontal direction in the way the water moves. The water has an innate tendency to move in a horizontal direction instead of the vertical direction like the fire element. The third element, i.e. the air is above the surface of the earth, indicating that it is lighter than the earlier three elements. This air element is immeasurable and subtle; it can be compared with smoke which fills the entire space available, and has a natural tendency to move not only upwards but in all the directions available to it. Like the smoke, the air cannot be caught hold of. Finally we have the sky element which is so subtle and sublime that it

fills the entire void of the vast bowl of creation as far as it stretches, even to those corners of this creation where the wind and air elements cannot go. That is why the far reaches of the cosmos do not have ‘wind or air’ as we understand these two terms to mean. The sky cannot be known and measured; its dimensions and outlines are not known because of its subtlety and sublimity.]

19. [This verse no. 19 describes the subtlest and most sublime form that the Atma takes at the macrocosmic level of creation, while verse no. 20 describes its more grosser form at this level. The verses that follow, i.e. verse nos. 21-26, deal with the microcosmic counterpart of this Atma at various levels of grossness or subtlety in relation to the individual creature.]

The Supreme Being (Brahm) who is also known by the name of Shiva used these five elementary entities to mould the rest of the universe or cosmos from them. [In other words, these five elements, viz. sky, air, fire, water and earth, were used as the building block or bricks and mortar from which the entire edifice of creation was crafted by the master craftsman called Shiva. The uniformity and non-duality between Shiva and Brahm has been expounded in Krishna Yajur Veda’s Dakshin Murti or Dakshin Mukhi Upanishad, and Skanda Upanishad, verse nos. 9, 13.] (19).

20. *In the fathomless bowls of this universe, the animate creation consisting of different forms of life such as the Devas (gods), Danavas (non-gods; the demons), Yakshas (mythological semi-Gods who are employed by Kuber, the treasurer of the Gods, to guard his treasury and keep his gardens), Kinnars (heavenly dancers and singers who are also a kind of semi-god), human beings, animals, birds and other creatures of the living kingdom are actually different manifestations of the same universal Atma. This Atma had to assume one or the other of these distinct forms depending upon the deeds done by it in its previous form¹ (20).

[Note—¹In the beginning obviously there was only one type of life—i.e. there was universal brotherhood and amity. Then arose jealousy and ill-will amongst the various units of this life, leading to hatred and animosity. People become selfish and did deeds not for the general welfare and upliftment of the society as a whole but to satisfy their own desires and gratify their own sense organs. Each individual made his own decisions; he did deeds that he thought fit and took actions that he thought would serve his self-interest, overlooking in the process what was proper, auspicious, righteous, and sanctioned by the scriptures. This is the basic foundation upon which this verse rests. There was so much variations in deeds and actions, and hence obviously in their results, that the generations that came after the initial phases of creation mutated beyond recognition, transforming what was a homogenous society into a varied and multifarious one with so much variation that no two units looked alike and even had any resemblance to the parent Brahm from which everything has emerged. This created a mind boggling array of characters, natures and temperaments, and equal number of countless individuals depicting uniqueness characteristic to them.

*This verse can be interpreted as follows also—In the beginning there was only one universal cosmic Consciousness known as the Atma that was supreme, and it was known as the transcendental Brahm. In due course of time, this Atma lost its neutrality because it wished to do something. Nothing can be physically done if one remains inactive and neutral. In terms of modern chemistry and physics, if the medium is neutral and has to retain its neutrality and homogeneity, then no reaction and change can take place in it. This is because any reaction is bound to change the character of this medium. So as long as the Atma would remain non-interested, non-active, immobile, neutral, renounced and dispassionate, it would not do anything.

Since it wished to do something, it had to break this taboo and indulge in some activity, and therefore its neutrality and non-duality got corrupted. This is because it had to make choices; it had to decide between given options. So it became partisan and biased; it saw one option as good and the other as not so good. For instance, a sleeping man is absolutely neutral and unbiased towards any thing in this world, but when he wakes up he begins to differentiate between this and that depending upon what is good to his self-interest. Looking differently and citing this same example, a sleeping man does nothing, but if he wishes to do anything he would have to wake up and show some movement of his limbs, because simply keeping still and hoping that some work would be done is a most stupid idea.

As soon as he loses his neutrality and begins to depend upon his sense organs in order to relate to this world of deed and actions, the organs get to have the better of him and exploit his dependence upon them. They decide what he likes and what he does not. For instance, the nose has the innate inclinations to smell sweet fragrances, so it would prevail upon the mind and the man in turn to go towards those things that smell sweet and away from smells that are pungent or repugnant and repulsive for the nose. Thus the man begins to exhibit partisan attitudes; his equanimity and neutrality are lost. This simple example is applicable to the cosmic Consciousness called the Atma or Brahm.

Thus, when the inherently neutral Brahm decided to create this creation, it had to assume different roles. In other words, the same Atma assumed different forms as demons, gods, humans, birds and all other forms of living beings in this creation. Each of these units highlighted the predominance of one or the other chief characteristics of Brahm. The uniqueness in these characteristics was caused by the combination and proportion of the three Gunas such as Sata, Raja and Tama which determine the nature and temperament of any individual.

Once this chain-reaction got started, it became unstoppable, and the original immaculate and non-dual Atma got mutated beyond recognition. One simple and single action or deed produced its own result or reward or fruit, and when this was tasted by the Atma it got inadvertently sucked in a bog of deeds and results from which it could not extricate itself for generation after generation. The Atma hopped from one deed and its consequences to another like a bird flying from one branch of a tree to perch on another. Each perch was littered with the bird's droppings.

All the forms listed in this verse, viz. gods, semi-gods, demons, humans, animals, birds etc. showcase the many forms in which the same Atma has manifested—at the highest level as the Gods, and at the lowest level as the birds. And to extend this logic further, to more lower level as worms, insects, single-celled living organisms such as amoeba and bacteria etc., or further still as immobile life in the form of the members of the plant kingdom. All of them have the same Atma residing in them as their 'true self' but with a different set of coverings surrounding this Atma in the form of their physical bodies which helps to distinguish the Atma as a God, a semi-god, a demon, a human, an animal, a bird etc.

Therefore, a wise man is he who does not look at the outer covering of the Atma to recognise the individual Jiva or the living being, but in the entity that is hidden or wrapped inside this outer covering called the body. It is this body that has got so many names as a god, a semi-god, a demon, a human, an animal, a bird etc.]

21. [Verse nos. 21-26 describe the Panch Koshas and Panch Atmas.*]

The gross body made up of bones and veins etc. of all living beings called Jivas is therefore the result of the deeds done by them. [That is, the Atma, which is the true identity of the individual, assumes a particular physical form, i.e. assumes a particular gross body, depending upon the deeds done by it in its previous life.]¹

Thus, the gross body of the creature is the Anna Maye Kosh or the food sheath² of the Atma. That is, the pure consciousness has assumed this gross body

which is formed and sustained by the food eaten by the individual. When the consciousness reveals itself in this sheath, it is known as the 'Anna Maye Atma', or the consciousness that depends upon food for its survival and which has a gross physical structure much like the gross form in which food exists in creation (as vegetables, cereals, fruits and other eatables)³ (21).

[Note—*Why the five Koshas are called the Panch Atma have been explained in note to verse no. 23 below.

The five Koshas have been described in other Upanishad also. Some of them are (i) Rig Veda—Mudagal Upanishad, Canto 4, verse 5; (ii) Shukla Yajur Veda—Paingalo-panishad, Canto 2, verse no. 4; and (iii) Krishna Yajur Veda—Taittiriya Upanishad, Valli 2, Anuvak 3-6; Sarwasaar Upanishad, verse no. 5.

¹This concept has been explained in verse no. 20 above. Besides this, the Adhyatma Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition describes the concept of doing deeds and its effect on the spiritual liberation or bondage of the creature in fine detail in its verse nos. 49-60. The 'Karma Chakra' or the giant wheel of deeds and their consequences has been described in the Shwetashwatar Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 6, verse no. 3. The three Paths followed by a creature according to the deeds done by him are referred to in Shwetashwatar Upanishad, 4/7. The Varaaha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 2, verse no. 48 describes how one can become free from the fetters created by 'deeds'. The Niralambo-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 11-12 describes the concept of Karma. The Sarwasaar Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 6 describes the concept of how and why the creature becomes the doer of deeds

These concepts and the fact that a creature's destiny depends upon the deeds done by him have been elaborately described elsewhere also in (i) Rig Veda's Kaushitaki Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 1; (ii) Shukla Yajur Veda's Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, 3/1/3, 3/2/11-12, 3/9/28, 4/3/12, 33, 36, 5/10-5/11, 6/1/1-6, 6/2/2,14-16, etc.; Adhyatma Upanishad, verse nos. 57-58, 66; (iii) Sam Veda's Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 5, Section 3-10; Canto 7, Section 21; (iv) Krishna Yajur Veda's Taittiriyo-panishad, Valli 2, Anuvak 6; Katho-panishad, Canto 1, Valli 1, verse no. 20, and the whole of Canto 1, Valli 2 right up to Canto 2, Valli 3; Skanda Upanishad, verse no. 7.

What happens to ignorant people after death is explained in Brihad Aranyak 4/4/1. The Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 2, verse nos. 23-26 defines what constitutes of true 'Karma Yoga'. The Mandal Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, 2/4/2-3 describes the philosophy of Deeds.

²The Atma lives surrounded by five sheaths, called the 'Panch Koshas'. These Koshas form the composite structure recognised as the body of the creature or Jiva. The Atma is the 'true self' of the individual Jiva, while these Koshas are the covering sheaths which enclose the Atma and form its habitat during its sojourn in this life. They wrap the Atma and form its outer recognizable form. These Koshas are what give the Atma its visible and recognizable form in this world—such as Godhead, a demon, a human, an animal and a bird. Therefore we can compare the Jiva or his true self the Atma as the glittering gem gifted wrapped in a five-layered cloth which is so magnificently wonderful and fascinatingly unique that more often than not it outshines the glory of the principal entity for which they were meant. In other words, one is so awe-struck by the external body that he forgets to even un-wrap the package and peer in to look what is hidden inside.

The outermost is called the food sheath or Anna Maye Kosh. The rest of the Koshas are enumerated in the following verses.

³This is an obvious observation because no one has seen the sublime, subtle and invisible 'consciousness' as having an existence except in the form of the signs of life shown by the gross physical body which is sustained by the food eaten by the individual. Thus for all practical purposes, this consciousness, which is perceived in

the form of the external form of the body, is recognised as being synonymous with it, i.e. as the Anna Maye Atma in line with the body being called the Anna Maye Kosh because of its dependence on food.]

22. Inside this Anna Maye Kosh is another sheath called the 'Pran Maye Kosh' or the vital wind sheath. This is the second form in which the consciousness known as the Atma is recognised. Thus, the consciousness that lives inside the gross body in a more subtle form as the vital life-sustaining winds is recognised as the 'Pran Maye Atma' in honour of these winds, and also because the Atma and the Pran are both synonymous with each other as far as the life of the individual is concerned as he cannot live without the either of them¹.

Next in this progression comes the 'Mano Maye Atma' or the consciousness that has revealed itself as the Mana or the subtle mind of the individual. This pertains to the Mano Maye Kosh or the mind sheath. This form of the consciousness is subtler than the Pran Maye Atma². (22).

[Note—¹Like its predecessor the Anna Maye Atma, the consciousness that flows inside the body and is represented by the vital winds such as Pran, Apaana, Vyan, Samaan and Udaan etc. is known as the Pran Maye Atma, named as such because the vital life sustaining winds are collectively called 'Pran'.

²The Mana is the subtle mind of the creature and the consciousness that drives the mind and keeps it active and enabled to carry on with its magnificent duties is the Atma consciousness known as Mano Maye Atma.]

23. The fourth form that the consciousness takes is called the 'Vigyan Maye Atma' because it pertains to the intellect sheath called the Vigyan Maye Kosh or the intellect sheath. This is subtler than the Mano Maye Atma and lives surrounded by the latter.

Subtler than all the other forms of conscious existence of the individual is known as the 'Anand Maye Atma' which pertains to the Anand Maye Kosh or the bliss sheath. This is the innermost layer that surrounds the pure consciousness and is like the transparent veil covering the lighted lamp because it radiates the natural character of the Atma present inside it. Its natural characteristic is to be eternally blissful, contented and happy (23).

[Note—¹It would be noted that the structure that has unfolded is like a circle within a circle. The outer and the first circle is the Anna Maye Atma pertaining to the Anna Maye Kosh or the food sheath, followed by the second inner circle called the Pran Maye Atma pertaining to the Pran Maye Kosh or the vital wind sheath inside which is the third circle of Mano Maye Atma pertaining to the Mano Maye Kosh or the mental sheath, then comes the fourth circle of Vigyan Maye Atma pertaining to the Vigyan Maye Kosh or the intellect sheath, and finally the fifth one known as the Anand Maye Atma pertaining to the Anand Maye Kosh or the bliss sheath. These sheaths are called 'Atma' because they reflect consciousness and life in its various vibrant hues. For instance, the external Kosha called the Pran Maye Kosh which forms the basis of all organs of senses such as those related to perception and those to action have any value and significance for the creature only as long as they have 'life and consciousness' pulsating in each of its pore, cell and tissue. Otherwise they would be worthless and as good as being non-existent. What good and of use is a body which cannot see, hear, taste, feel and smell, or one which cannot move, hold anything, expel waste products from the inside, regenerate and procreate, and generally make life happy and livable for the Jiva—or in brief a body which has no consciousness in it? Since 'life' in all its connotations is synonymous with 'consciousness' or Atma, this Kosha which depends upon food to survive is called the Anna Maye Atma. And this is also the reason why food is equivalent to 'life' or Pran vis-à-vis a Jiva; food is the Atma of all living beings. They just cannot survive without food. The food is

necessary for very survival of all life forms because it provides the outer covering that not only provides the necessary energy and strength but acts as a protective covering for the Atma. This is also the reason why the type of food eaten by a creature helps to classify him—such as non-vegetarians and vegetarians; such as carnivorous, herbivorous and omnivorous; such as civilized eaters or savage cannibals etc.

This logic can be extended to cover all the other four remaining sheaths. For instance, the Pran Maye Kosh is called the Pran Maye Atma because the signs of life and vitality that the vital winds present inside the body depict are a reflection of the presence of the consciousness in the body itself, for otherwise the same wind that is also present outside the body does not show any signs of life-sustaining qualities as the one present inside the body. This innate wind element of creation exhibits astounding ability to sustain life and performs miraculous duties of regulating so many functions of the body that life without wind is unthinkable. Had there been no consciousness in the body, the same wind would be worthless and wouldn't be able to sustain and make the body alive as is proved by the fact a dead body from which the Atma has left shows no signs of life and activity in spite of the wind element remaining in it. Thus the wind element that derives its life-sustaining abilities due to the presence of the Atma is named after it as the Pran Maye Atma. It is actually the virtues of the Atma reflected in the wind element called the Pran. Both the Pran and the Atma are therefore treated as being synonymous.

Next is the Mano Maye Atma. The mind is the center that is the power-house of the living being; without the mind the creature would not receive any information from the outside world, cannot relate to it and cannot do anything whatsoever. The mind regulates all its functions. This is a clear indication of the mind being a manifestation of the Atma's grand virtues. If there was no consciousness in the body, such as the case of a dead body in which the physical organ called the brain is still present in the head, the mind would not be able to think. The subtle and sublime entity that enables the mind and the subtle heart to think and have emotions is the Atma present inside the body, and therefore the grand virtues and characters of the Atma that are reflected in the form of the creature's Mana is called the Mano Maye Atma.

The Vigyan Maye Atma would then be the virtues of the Atma as reflected by the magnificent potentials and powers as depicted by the intellect present in the creature. The ability of the creature to research and analyse, to ponder and think deeply, to discriminate between the good and the bad etc. are manifestations of the stupendous abilities of the Atma, and therefore that unit or Kosha of the body that carries these functions is called the Vigyan Maye Atma.

Finally, there is the Anand Maye Kosh which encloses the Atma itself. This sheath that encloses the Atma acquires the latter's grand virtues of eternal blissfulness, contentedness and happiness because of its very close proximity to it. When a wise and enlightened Jiva comes in contact with this sheath he finds only one predominant character, and that is of eternal and undiluted 'Anand' or the state of blessedness marked by beatitude and felicity. He then realises that the closest sheath (the Anand Maye Kosh) is a reflection of these eclectic and sublime virtues of the Atma, and therefore it has been named the Anand Maye Atma.

The concept of the same Atma having various life-forms extending from one Kosha or one-celled organism to five Koshas or five-celled organism can be understood in the following manner also. The Jivas or living creatures in the living world have been classified into five broad categories and their respective forms are as follows:—(i) Udbhij—these are those life forms that are born from seeds, such as members of the plant kingdom. These have only one Kalaa or aspect of the Atma called Anna Maye Kosh or Kalaa. In other words, they depend on food and become food for others higher up in the evolutionary ladder. (ii) Swedaj—they are those which are born from dampness and sweat, such as fungi, algae, bacteria, germs,

mosquito, lice, flies etc. They have two Kalaas, viz. Anna Maye and Pran Maye. That is, they are formed from food, they live for food and they die as food. Besides this, they also exhibit signs of life, e.g. the mosquito and lice have life like any other member of the animal kingdom. (iii) Andaj—they are placed higher up in the evolutionary ladder, and are born from eggs, whether inside the mother's womb or outside. Such birds as pigeon, sparrow, parrot, peacock etc. come under this category. They have three Kalaas which are Anna Maye, Pran Maye and Mano-maye. The last Kalaa refers to the fact that such creatures have a mind and heart which enables them to think, albeit in a primitive level. (iv) Jaruyuj—these are the creatures that are born as embryo that develops inside the mother's womb. Under this class come the animals such as horses, cows, dogs, elephants etc. They have four Kalaas, such as Anna Maye, Pran Maye, Mano-maye and Vigyan Maye. (v) The last Kalaa refers to their ability to have a higher level of thinking ability called intelligence. The human being comes under this last category with the added benefit of having five Kalaas. Besides the four Kalaas mentioned above in other creatures of this category, the man has the fifth one and it called the Anand Maye Kosh. It is only possessed by a man and not by other creatures in the sense that the man can realise the true meaning of the terms 'bliss and happiness that is eternal and substantial' by the virtue of his attaining higher level of intelligence and his ability to delve into the secrets of the concept of truth itself and then realising that kind of happiness and bliss that is not superficial and which is not limited to enjoyment of the sensual pleasures of the body and the material comforts of the world, but which has a holistic and all-inclusive dimension that incorporates the spirit or the soul.]

24. These different forms of the Atma enumerated above are just for the purpose of study and each depends upon the other in the order mentioned above—viz. the outer Anna Maye Atma is filled from the inside and is sustained by the Pran Maye Atma. Likewise, the Pran Maye Atma is filled by the Mano Maye Atma from the inside and is sustained by it (24).

25. The Mano Maye Atma is filled with the Vigyan Maye Atma from the inside and is sustained by it, and likewise the latter is filled by the Anand Maye Atma and sustained by it from the inside¹ (25).

[Note—¹This concept can be understood by a simple example of the earth. The earth's body consists of layers after layers of rocks and other structural materials of varying density and strength, with each inner layer forming a base and support for its immediate outer layer, and this progression continues till we reach the outer surface of the earth which would obviously collapse if the earth were not supported by these inner rings that form the different strata of the earth's structure. It is like the case of a hollow ball which cannot survive any external pressure and beating as compared to a solid ball which would not collapse despite it being punched and hammered or pressed in from the outside.

That is, the inner-most core of this ball-like structure consists of the Anand Maye Kosh and the consciousness that gives it its life is called the Anand Maye Atma. This central core is surrounded by the Vigyan Maye Kosh and the consciousness that lends it its vitality and life is called the Vigyan Maye Atma. This applies to the other layers also—viz. the Mano Maye Atma corresponding to the Mano Maye Kosh surrounds this Vigyan Maye Atma and is surrounded by the Pran Maye Atma pertaining to the Pran Maye Kosh; and finally the Anna Maye Atma pertaining to the Anna Maye Kosh sits comfortably upon this Pran Maye Kosh.

This verse implies that all the forms of the Atma as enumerated in these verses are basically the same consciousness performing different functions in these individual forms and therefore there is no difference between them. The different layers envisaged are hypothetical entities delineated for the purposes of

understanding of how the creation works but refer to the same consciousness that prevails throughout the entire being of the individual. No one form of the Atma can be sheared off from the other if the individual is expected to survive as a living individual entity. For example, it is impractical to extract the mind and let the intellect function, or to shear off the external covering of the body called the Anna Maye Kosh and expect the other parts of the body to live and survive. Each unit depends upon the other.

The body of the creature has been crafted by the supreme creator most intelligently and wisely. His expertise in craftsmanship and his prudence is evident when we examine what precautions he took to protect the Atma or the 'true self' of the creature. In order to protect the subtle Atma which is the most delicate and sublime entity in creation from being harmed, he protected it with a five-tier security mechanism consisting of these five Koshas. Even if one protective ring got somehow damaged, the Atma would still have the other rings for its protection. For instance, even if the eye fails, the consciousness is not much affected because the other organs gear up to replace this shortfall and become more alert, active and diligent. Even if the body is paralyzed and unable to move, all the internal organs work smoothly to protect life in it. A mad man whose mind is not under control or is malfunctioning can still survive and live a long life just like a stupid fool who has no intellect and its wisdom. Again, even though the man is most unhappy and disgusted in life indicating the absence of a properly-tuned Anand Maye Kosha, he would still live on and on showing that the Atma is protected by the other sheaths in the absence of cooperation from the Anand Maye Kosh which has malfunctioned.

In this context it is pertinent to note that a wise and enlightened man in terms of metaphysics is one who is 'self realised', i.e. who has 'realised' his 'true self' by his own efforts. In other words, he has acquainted himself with the truthful entity known as the Atma or pure consciousness living in a house having these five structural walls called the Koshas. The world erroneously recognises the body consisting of these five Koshas as the gentleman concerned, but it is a grave misconception, because the house cannot be the same as its inhabitant. Here the inhabitant is the Atma, and the house is the five-layered body.]

26. The Anand Maye Atma representing the bliss sheath surrounds the innermost core called the pure consciousness or the Atma representing the supreme Brahm that is an all-pervading and universal entity residing in the bosom of all the living beings as their inner self or inner being. There is no other thing present inside this Brahm, and so the latter is deemed to be the ultimate core of all that exists. It is like the hidden and mysterious power present inside a seed that enables it to create a tree virtually from nothing (26).

[Note—The individual creature derives its physical form and shape with the help of the Anna Maye Kosh or the external gross body; its energy, vitality, stamina and strength from the Pran Maye Kosh or the vital winds which pump in air and fresh energy into the body and drains out toxic waste from it and generally help the various organs of the body to perform their respective duties; its desires and wishes and aspirations from the Mano Maye Kosh or the mental sheath because it is the mind that makes all hopes and desires besides creating this world of material objects and the need to enjoy them; its higher level of intellectual achievements through the Vigyan Maye Kosh or the intellect sheath, and its ultimate bliss through the Anand Maye Kosh or the bliss sheath. Since these functions are manifestations of the various aspects of creation, they are called the different forms of the same Atma because all that lives is nothing but the Atma. The different names assigned to the Atma are only because it performs different functions.]

27-28. The transcendental non-dual supreme Brahm which is unique in itself and embodies the virtues of Gyan and Satya (eclectic knowledge and the absolute truth) is the basic shelter and support of the entire creation, and is the provider of succour and solace to all. Brahm is the essence and the ultimate truth of everything that exists. When a living being who has a gross body that is mortal and perishable obtains access to the eternal essence and truth that is imperishable and eternal [27], he experiences an overwhelming surge of the grand eclectic emotions of happiness and joys all around him; his entire being is filled with contentedness and bliss¹. Where else can one find an equivalent sense of extreme happiness and joy, carefreeness and contentedness, ecstasy and bliss that are eternal and imperishable as the one obtained by becoming acquainted with and having access to the supreme treasury of these virtues in the form of Brahm²?

So when the wise and enlightened creature realises that the source of this eternal happiness and bliss known as Brahm resides in his own bosom as his own Atma, he is overcome with eternal peace and tranquility along with bliss and happiness³ [28] (27-28).

[Note—¹This is because the creature now has realised that it has a guardian angel in the form of this Brahm to support and afford protection to it in the face of all sorts of fear and consternations arising out of worldly delusions such as the fear of death and harm to the body from others. This is based on the fundamental premise that the living being has realised that his true 'self' is an entity known as the conscious Atma residing inside his gross body, and that this Atma is a personified Brahm with all the divine eclectic virtues lauded in and extolled by the scriptures. So, with this divine and noble personality so close to one's self, there should be no cause of any depression, distress and a sense of loss. Further, this Atma is as imperishable as Brahm, and therefore there is no fear of death. The Atma has no enemies, so there is no reason of fearing anybody. And so on and so forth.

²This world is perishable and transient, it is false and illusionary like the water in the desert mirage—so how can one expect to find eternal happiness and contentedness in such a world? On the other hand, Brahm has the opposite qualities as those possessed by this world, so naturally when one gains access to such a magnificent, eclectic and glorious fount of happiness and bliss that is eternal and profound he is bound to get hold of the treasury that he was yearning for so long.

³He realises that the gem that provides eternal happiness, peace and bliss that he had been searching for so long everywhere in this world is discovered to be present inside his own self like the case when a man searches the entire haystack for a piece of gold that is lying in his breast pocket. He was so stupid and naïve that he had spent a lifetime in searching it outside. This discovery leads him to exult spontaneously in an overwhelming surge of ecstasy for he has made a discovery of a lifetime. He has uncovered the gem called the Atma.]

29. Which living creature can ever hope to live and show any signs of life and activity without the presence of this consciousness residing inside him as his Atma that represents Brahm¹? The supreme Brahm in the form of the pure consciousness pervading throughout the entire being of the living organism is perceived by the intelligent man's mind by due process of analytical deductions of all available evidence and making intelligent conclusions (29).

[Note--¹This is proved by the fact that as soon as the Atma leaves the body at the time of death, the creature is not even able to move an eyelid or even a finger. All activities that were done by his body were actually being done by the consciousness present in this body, the consciousness that is given different names such as Anna Maye Atma, Pran Maye Atma etc. as described in verse nos. 21-26 above.]

30-31. The supreme transcendental conscious Being known as Brahm who pervades uniformly in all the living beings as their own individual consciousness, and also as the individual's Atma known to exhibit such eclectic virtues as bliss and contentedness and which resides in each individual's inner self in the form of his 'truthful identity and his true self', is the entity that provides constant and eternal peace and tranquility to all the living creatures who are otherwise engulfed by miseries and sorrows in this world¹.

A person is deemed to be a 'Maha Yati' (i.e. an acclaimed ascetic who is spiritually enlightened as well as Brahm-realised and self-realised) if he is able to be acquainted with (i.e. if he has realised the truth of) this supreme Divinity known as Brahm possessing such grand virtues as being invisible and having no attributes, being most astounding and magnificent, being most enigmatic, esoteric and mysterious, being immutable and indivisible, and being non-dual and unique in all respects.

This divine Brahm is unconnected to and beyond the reach of all the taints and evils that swirl in this mundane and artificial world. It is separate from and unaffected by the influences of time and circumstance as well as the activities of the individual creature in which it lives as the latter's Atma².

The Brahm is an embodiment of Truth; it is Truth personified. It is the supreme state of existence where there is no tinge of fear and consternation. It is the most refined elixir of existence called Amrit which is marked by eternity and imperishability. It is auspicious, holy and divine (30-31).

[Note--¹In other words, the only source from where the tormented soul of the creature can expect to find any form of solace and succour for its self, the only source that can act as a beacon of hope and reassurance for this tormented and suffering soul, the only point which can supply the balm of peace and tranquility to the scorched and agonized soul— is the one point known as Brahm. This Brahm is the eternal fount of bliss and happiness, and fortunately it is not inaccessible for anyone as it lives inside the body of all living beings in the form of the individual's own Atma. This is the ultimate spiritual Truth which, when realised and firmly convinced of, gives eternal happiness and peace to the soul of the creature. This is what is known as Brahm Vidya. On the contrary, if the creature tries to find happiness and comfort in this material world of delusions and falsehoods, it would only trade one misery for another for the simple reason that a source of misery cannot give anything other than misery.

²In other words, the creature's Atma representing Brahm is not tainted even if the creature is deemed to be sinful. The reason for this assertion is not far to seek. The deeds that taint any person are done by the gross body, and the thoughts that taint him are the function of the subtle mind—the pure consciousness known as the Atma or soul which is not only a personification of Brahm but also the true identity of the individual is not at all involved in this scenario, as it is only an observer that prefers to remain neutral. Now as long as this observer remains neutral, nothing can taint him, but if unfortunately he allows himself to get involved in things that he is expected only to observe neutrally then of course he would be regarded as a participant and therefore a partner to all the consequences, whether good or bad, that follow in the wake of the deeds done by the body or the thoughts swirling around in the mind. In the latter case there can be no escape from punishment as every action has a reaction. So the same Atma can be untainted on the one hand and become tainted on the other hand. What decides this factor? The answer lies in 'self realisation, wisdom and enlightenment'. A wise person would not allow himself to play fools with muck representing delusions and material sense objects of the world and thereby get spoilt and tarnished for ever as opposed to an ignorant or deluded

person who would rather enjoy the current pleasures proffered by this material world with the thought 'who bothers for tomorrow or who has seen the future'. The former person would be the one whose Atma is deemed to be non-involved in this world, while the latter person is the one who has voluntarily entered the slush and allows his Atma to enter the cycle of sufferings and miseries associated with this world.

The Atma is in fact neither the gross body consisting of the sense organs of perception and action nor the subtle body consisting of the mind and intellect. It is not even the causal body but a resident in it. Obviously a resident is not the gross structure of the dwelling in which he lives; both of them are independent of each other though very and intricately related to each other. For instance, a palace is identified with a king or an emperor, and with no other ordinary citizen of the kingdom. So when one refers to the 'palace' he means the king or the emperor and not the building called the palace. For example, we usually say that an order was issued by the 'palace' and not the 'king', but this implies that the order has come from the gentleman residing in this palace and not from the brick and mortar structure called the palace!]

32-35. It is only as long as a person doubts this Brahm and determines, under delusions and ignorance, that the creation having three aspects or parts is distinct from the supreme transcendental Divinity whose virtues are enumerated herein above, is he afraid of death and its attendant miseries. Brahm whose non-dual and immaculate nature has been described herein above is not a separate entity from the one who has revealed itself in the form of these three worlds¹. There is no doubt about it.

[In other words, as long as the deluded person sees this world of three facets or phases as being a separate entity from Brahm, as long as he sees 'duality' in this world and thinks that Brahm is to be found somewhere else which is not included in this world, it is only till then that he fears death or destruction. The reason is Brahm has revealed itself in the form of whatever that exists, and nothing exists that is out of the Brahm's purview. So if this is the case then whatever that exists should basically be viewed as having the fundamental characteristics of the principal from which it is made, i.e. Brahm, and therefore must also possess the same characteristics as possessed by Brahm, such as being fearless and blissful. With this eclectic and grand perception of the world and existence, the person would have no fear from anything, including death.]

Every living entity, right from the miniscule one-celled organism to the colossus and all pervading supreme Lord known as Vishnu, experiences and witnesses the presence of this blissful Brahm residing in the Anand Maye Kosh (i.e. in the bliss sheath) inside their own self directly in proportion to their level of wisdom and degree of self-realisation. [It follows that Vishnu enjoys perpetual bliss because he is very enlightened as opposed to the fallen creature who remains engrossed in this material world and surrounded by its grief-ridden delusions which restricts his access to the eternal fount of bliss present inside his own self.] [32-33½].

A wise and enlightened self-realised Brahmin (i.e. any wise person) who has renounced the comforts and pleasures of this physical material world of sense objects that is transient, mortal and delusory as well as the other world in the heaven (where he goes after his death to enjoy the benefits of a noble life, only to come back to this mortal world of miseries once the good effects of his deeds wear off) is able to experience this divine fount of eternal bliss and eclectic happiness sprouting out from his Anand Maye Kosh (the bliss sheath). He therefore remains in a state of perpetual ecstasy and unfettered joy. [That is, once a person experiences the nectar-like bliss obtained by contemplation upon the inner self where the Brahm resides in the form of

the consciousness known as the Atma, the spiritual aspirant would no longer seek peace and happiness outside in this world. It is deemed and natural to expect from him that he would have realised that the greatest of happiness and joys that he derives from this world are very transient and perishable as compared to the one obtained by experiencing and witnessing the divine glory of the eternal Atma through self-realisation and spiritual pursuits. This is because the happiness, joy and bliss that come with attaining access to the Atma are as eternal, non-perishable and infinite as the Atma itself; if the source is pure, uncorrupted and holy then its product would be equally and assuredly pure, uncorrupt and holy.]

The sense of perpetual bliss and joyous abandon is available to him in the form of his own blissful 'self', i.e. as his own pure conscious Atma which is his truthful and enlightened self. It is not available externally anywhere [34-34½].

This experience is most eclectic and divine, and is in consonance with the exalted state of existence which is equivalent to being one with the supreme Brahm. It is so mysterious and enigmatic that words and speech cannot confine them in their embrace. That is, it cannot be described in words and expressed in speech no matter how erudite, skilled and expert a person is with them [35]. (32-35).

[Note—¹The word 'Tri' used in the first part of verse no. 32 means 'three', while the word 'Parichedda' means 'separation, determination, section, chapter, reference, paragraph, part' and the word 'Vivarjitam' has a negation effect, meaning 'not applied to, to bar, to restrict, to stop'. The meaning of the first half of the verse becomes clear—'the Brahm has a divine form as described in preceding verses and it is not to be restrictively viewed in the context of the Tri world—such as what is seen in the form of the terrestrial, the celestial and the nether world, or as the world that was in the past, that is in the present and would be in the future. This universally immaculate Brahm should not be viewed through the tainted glass of the three Gunas, viz. the Sata Guna, the Raja Guna and the Tama Guna. It is transcendental and supreme in the truest sense.]

36. The transcendental state is so exalted and mystical as well as self-sufficient and self-supporting that it does not require any props to support it and advertise its exalted existence and divine glories. So when the speech tries to extol its virtues in the hope of basking in the glory of being part of the process of establishing the greatness of something that is already great and the divinity of something that is already divine, it is defeated and put to shame. It comes back in humiliation because it fails miserably in its attempt to describe the transcendental state so much so that its reputation of being able to describe everything and anything is severely damaged.

That transcendental entity which is the essence and a fount of supreme spiritual bliss, ecstasy and joy that is beyond the purview of all definitions and descriptions, say how can it be accessed by faculty of speech and its medium of expression in the form of words. [That is, the bliss and exhilaration experienced upon witnessing the Atma and the presence of Divinity effusing out from it is so overwhelming that words, whether written or spoken, are not competent enough to express it.] (36).

37. The Mana (mind) of the creature that yearns for peace and tranquility besides seeking some source of happiness and bliss tries to search it out in the external world by constantly roaming here and there for it (like a vagabond rummaging for food to satisfy his hunger and searching for drink to quench his thirst). It uses the instruments available to it—such as the gross body consisting of the sense organs of perception like the ears, the tongue and eyes etc. along with their respective functions such as

hearing pleasant sound, tasting pleasant things and seeing pleasant sights, as well as the sense organs of action such as the hands and legs that the creature uses to the best of his ability in his search of that illusive fount of eternal happiness and peace.

These gross organs have a limited field of action, a limited reach and a limited mandate under which they have to function. [For example, the eye cannot taste as this is the exclusive domain of the tongue, and the tongue cannot see for this is the function of the eye.]

So the creature's mind fails in its attempts to find the eternal fount that would give it complete, wholesome and all-inclusive eternal happiness and bliss. This is because whatever happiness and joys that the mind (creature) gets in this attempt by searching for it in this physical world accessible by the sense organs are all temporary and illusionary. None of the things of this material world give it its much desired happiness and peace, let alone eternal bliss and ecstasy. It is then that it turns inwards to seek it inside the Anand Maye Kosh and finds the elixir hidden there, the elixir for which it had been fruitlessly wandering in this world and stumbling here and there at random. [This is the state of 'self-realisation' when the creature transcends the physical and reaches the supernatural ethereal state which does not have any physical boundaries for the simple reason that the 'spirit' is a very subtle entity and not subjected to the physical limitations imposed by things which are gross and dense like the various sense organs of the body.] (37).

38-40. The gross organs of the equally gross body are not competent at all to access something that is extremely sublime, subtle and ethereal.

Hence, a self-realised, wise and enlightened aspirant who has become acquainted with the eclectic truth of Brahm and is convinced that this Brahm with the divine virtues of being, inter alia, non-dual and beyond the scope of doubts and debates, being blissful and a fount of eternal happiness and peace, being without any describable attributes and qualities, and being Truth and eternal Consciousness personified [38] is none else but the aspirant himself, then such an aspirant has nothing to fear from anything anywhere.

That is, when the enlightened spiritual aspirant becomes self-realised about his true 'self', when he is firmly convinced that he is a personification of the supreme Brahm himself, he would not have to search peace and bliss outside of his own self in this external world. He would find everything worth finding inside his own self. [This is because he would have discovered that the fount of bliss, happiness and peace that he had been searching in this world for time immemorial is present inside his own self as his Atma or pure consciousness, he feels fully contented and filled with an overwhelming surge of ecstasy and unexpected spiritual calmness. He would not have to fear losing this bliss, happiness and peace because it arises from the Atma which is sublime, eternal, imperishable and infinite, and this Atma is his own 'self'. It is completely different from the world where he had been searching for these virtues because the world is mortal, transient and gross.] [38-38½].

In this way, any diligent and self-controlled person who has established full restraint over his self and the body is able to obtain access to the divine and eclectic fount of eternal bliss that comes with Brahm-realisation by witnessing his own Atma residing in his own bosom by relying upon the spiritual guidance provided to him by his Guru (moral preceptor and spiritual guide). Such a self-realised man is no longer deluded, and neither is he any longer tormented by deeds, whether good or bad. [That is, once a wise person has realised that the much sought-after peace and happiness and its attendant bliss is to be found inside his own 'self' in the existence of the pure

conscious Atma, and not in the external world accessed by the sense organs, he would no longer seek the help of the body and its organs to obtain it in the world outside by doing various deeds and taking so many actions. This implies that he would no longer be mentally and emotionally involved in doing deeds and taking actions actively in order to seek happiness and joy in this material world. With the need of doing deeds and taking actions becoming redundant, there would be no cause of good or bad deeds being done consciously and willingly, and therefore there would be no cause of any accumulation of good or bad results which the man would have to enjoy or suffer from according to the principle of action and reaction. This would automatically absolve him of the consequences of deeds, and he would find liberation from the fetters that deeds create upon his Atma. The entire chain becomes extinct.]

The sub-conscious mind is the entity that perceives this world of material objects, while this material world of sense objects and enduring delusions is the entity that creates all sorts of torments and miseries to the soul of the creature, trapping it in an endless cycle of sorrows and delusions. In other words, it is due to the interplay of the mind and the charming objects of the world that the soul of the creature is eternally subjected to immense grief and torments. So when the wise creature is able to distance his mind from this world by inculcating spiritual wisdom in it and making it taste the nectar-like bliss that is obtained by contemplation upon the inner self, the mind would automatically divert its efforts away from the world and turn them inwards. Once this happens, the external world would cease to exist, because it was the mind that had created attraction for the world in the first place. With the cessation of the world, the need for doing deeds in it would also vanish¹ [39-40]. (38-40).

[Note—¹An example would illustrate the point. It is the eye that sees pleasant things and then creates a desire to obtain them. Then the man makes efforts to go to that place and obtain that object which the eyes had made him aware of. For this he will do so many things and go even beyond decent limits in order to satisfy his lust for that attractive object. However, if the eye is closed then the desire would automatically not arise in the first place, and therefore the whole chain is broken even before it takes shape. This is what is meant in this verse—i.e. with the mind vanquished and turned inwards, the creature is able to taste the real elixir of bliss and happiness because all his extrovert actions would become extinct.]

41. It is proclaimed and affirmed by the Vedas and the Upanishads that this divine entity (known as Brahm) is present in the form of the Atma (the pure consciousness; the soul) of all the living beings. The Supreme Being who has revealed himself as the cosmic Consciousness known as the universal Atma that resides in all the creatures as their individual Atma as well is a personification of purity, divinity and immaculacy (41).

42. This Supreme Being (known as Brahm and cosmic Consciousness) has certain eclectic and unique qualities. For instance, it is said that he is an eternal 'Pramaataa'—i.e. the one who knows everything; the one who is all-knowing and omniscient; the one who is a literal great grandfather of the entire creation. He is both the 'Pramaan' as well as the 'Prameya'—i.e. he is the proof of the existence of this world because the latter shows signs of life and consciousness so typical of Brahm along with the fact that the world is a visible manifestation of the invisible and attributeless Brahm. This Brahm is the ultimate touchstone of truth and reality against which the truthfulness or falsehood of the rest of creation is judged. At the same time, he is known by inference and knowledge of the existence of divine qualities in this world with its stupendous variety and astounding magnificence. Had this world not

been in existence, if anyone had no knowledge of the world and the cause of its existence, one would have been unaware of the existence of Brahm. In fact, this world illuminates and highlights the existence of Brahm complete with all its stupendous glories, authority, powers and magnificence, while Brahm too highlights and illuminates this world in the sense that if there was no Brahm with its accompanying consciousness and inherent virtues such as those of wisdom, erudition and knowledge, this world would not have had any existence in the first place. And even if it did, no one would have had the necessary mental development and the ability to recognise this world and its astounding array of charms and fascinations in the way it is now known to exist. If one is not aware of something, or if one is not aware of its value and importance, then it is as good as being non-existent and worthless. So we can safely say that there is a sort of symbiotic relationship between the existence of this world and that of the supreme transcendental Brahm.

In other words, Brahm is the fruit of this world and this world is the fruit of Brahm. That is, it is only due to the existence of this visible gross world in which the creature lives that he tries to find out and research about the cause of this visible world coming into being, and he comes to the conclusion that some divine entity, however mysterious, esoteric, indefinable, subtle and imperceptible it may be, does exist that not only controls everything in this world but is also responsible for it coming into being in the first place. So by going backwards and applying logic and common sense to what is visible and apparent he can deduce about something that is not visible but is nevertheless an absolutely certainty in as much as without the latter the former cannot be. So he concludes that this world had its origin in an entity that is supreme and transcendental, that cannot be known by worldly yardsticks and measurements. Thus, the proof of the existence of Brahm lies in the knowledge of existence of the world (and its analysis in an intelligent manner, thereby necessitating the importance of such eclectic virtues as wisdom, erudition, sagacity, ability to analyse and discriminate, the ability to separate the grain from the chaff, and this in turn would need proper and correct knowledge of the Truth).

This world has come into existence because Brahm decided that it should come into existence. Had Brahm did not wish so, there would have been no chance of setting into motion of this wonderful wheel of creation. Not only that, but once this happened Brahm entered his own creation and took up residence in it in an imperceptible manner as its soul or pure consciousness. This he did to ensure that the creation was 'injected with a vibrant life, consciousness and vitality'. Otherwise, the creation would have been there in the form of the visible world, but it would have been lifeless and gross like rocks and mountains or barren stretches of desert on earth. There would not have been life with its full dole of colour and vibrancy in the form of countless species of plants and animals. Thus we conclude that this world is the fruit of Brahm. In other words, this visible and vibrant world with its thriving life-forms is like the reward or fruit of Brahm's labour; it is the result of Brahm's initiative.

So we conclude that it's a symbiotic relationship between Brahm and the world—for without 'consciousness' the world would be dead and worthless, and without this magnificent world coming into existence the stupendous cosmic powers Brahm would have remained unknown. Thus, the symbiotic relationship between Brahm and world is established beyond doubt.

But since this world is visible and exhibits characteristics quite the opposite of those ascribed to Brahm, it is believed that these two—i.e. Brahm and world—are separate and distinct entities; that they are dual entities. But essentially this is not the true case, for this world is nothing but a manifestation of Brahm, and the latter is

invisibly present inside it in a diffused and all-pervading manner as the essence of existence in the form of the universal Atma or soul without which the world would lose its value and significance (42).

[Note—The relationship between Brahm and this existential world can be understood with two simple examples. One, it is like the relationship between light and a lighted lamp—if there is light (world) then surely there must be a lamp (Brahm) from which this light emanates. And two, it is like the relationship between the seed and the tree—if there is a tree (world) then there has to be a seed (Brahm) because without the seed the tree cannot come into existence.]

43. The divine entity that is transcendental and immaculate Consciousness and enlightenment personified cannot be affected or influenced by delusions and ignorance called Maya. At the same time, it remains free from the limitations that are inherent to all things that have a form and name that ignorance and delusions create in this world. [This world is a manifestation of the cosmic Consciousness called Brahm, both at the macrocosmic level of creation as well as at the microcosmic level as the individual creature. Everything that exists has a form, no matter how gross or subtle it might be. Similarly, each form is assigned a particular name by which it is recognised. These are like artificial limitations and parameters imposed on an entity that is innately not limited and bounded. For instance, we have so many names for water, such as ocean, sea, lagoon, lake, pond, well, river, puddle etc., but the element known as ‘water’ is much beyond these limited descriptions. No one form can describe ‘water’ in its entirety; at the most each name describes one of the numerous qualities of water. Likewise, Brahm has revealed itself as countless creatures with as many forms and names, but none of them define Brahm even by a fraction. At the most, they only depict one of its countless and infinite glories.]

Since everything in existence is created by the supreme Lord known as Ishwar, it follows that this Maya is also a creation of Ishwar. But being the Lord of Maya, the Ishwar keeps the latter under leash and subservient to him. Though this is true but still Maya would not desist from showing its maverick tricks as proved by the fact that the inherently detached and untainted Brahm, the supreme transcendental Being which has no attributes and names, comes to be known as an ‘Ishwar’ when associated by Maya. [Technically, the word Ishwar refers to the sum total of all the causal bodies in creation when considered at the macrocosmic level. The very fact of ‘having a body, causal or otherwise’ shows that Maya has influenced Brahm. The fact that this Brahm in association with Maya created the rest of the creation is clearly reflected in the word ‘causal body’ of Brahm known as Ishwar—i.e. the body which is the ‘cause’ of the rest of the things.]

Extending this logic further, when the originally enlightened Brahm allowed itself to be accompanied by Maya, the latter cast its dark shadow of ignorance on the former and this resulted in what is known as ‘Agyan’ to come into existence. Being under the influence of this Agyan—ignorance of its truthful divine nature and supreme stature—Brahm became a Jiva, i.e. it became an ordinary living being who is oblivious of his exalted lineage, and who remains engrossed in an endless cycle of delusions and ignorance (43).

44. Since Brahm is related to the inner self of this Jiva in the form of the latter’s pure conscious Atma which is characterised by inherent wisdom and enlightenment, it is known as ‘Pramaataa’—one who is inherently all-knowing and omniscient.

Since the mind and intellect can analyse and come to the conclusion of its (Brahm’s) existence by studying the scriptures and dissecting all available evidence, it

can help the Jiva (living being) to experience and witness the presence of Brahm in his own bosom as the pure conscious Atma by the process of meditation and contemplation. This is known as Pramaan—to prove something as the quintessential and irrefutable truth by intelligent deduction, application of logic and critical analyses in spite of the fact that it cannot be visibly verified and proved in material terms or any other method known for proving things in this gross world. Witnessing of the Atma in one's own inner self as a fount of eternal bliss and happiness is an unequivocal, inviolable and irrefutable proof of its existence because of its first hand experience. Since this Atma is the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm residing in a microscopic form in the bosom of the individual, it follows that the existence of Brahm is also proved by first hand deduction. The mind and intellect obviously plays a crucial role in this spiritual endeavour.

The mind and its sub-conscious have come to the conclusion that such a divine entity (known as Brahm, Atma or cosmic Consciousness) does exist, but it is so esoteric, mysterious, enigmatic, subtle and sublime that it only be 'self realised' but not described to others in words (such as by preaching and giving long discourses)¹ (44).

[Note—¹In other words, when the creature becomes self-realised, i.e. when he has witnessed the presence of the conscious Atma in his own inner self, he is very sure of its existence, but when he is asked to describe it to others he fails to do so. It is like one tasting a sweet dish and being asked to describe its taste; dictionary is unable to define or narrate how he actually felt and how the dish actually tasted. The only way is to taste it by eating it oneself. But it must be remembered that it is the mind that has made the man to know about this sweet dish, make efforts to get it, eat it, enjoy the taste and then have save this information as a memory of its divine sweetness for future reference. The mind would then tell the man automatically as if upon cue if the thing that he eats is as sweet as the one he had enjoyed so much earlier. It is the mind where all information is received, sorted out and analyzed. In short, the mind and the sub-conscious play a very crucial role in the man's ability of tasting and enjoying the sweetness of the sweet dish. But the irony of the situation is that if the same mind is asked to describe this sweetness or the taste of the dish it fails to do so though it also controls the faculties of speech, sight, smell and touch. Likewise, the truthfulness and divinity of the Atma and Brahm can be witnessed and be convinced of but not narrated or described to others. One can show the path to be followed to witness the Atma and Brahm, such as doing Yoga and other spiritual paths, but they cannot be put on a platter and presented.]

45. As long as that pure conscious divine entity known as Brahm is being searched, it is known as Prameya—one that can be known by inference and evidence. But once it is known, it becomes a fruit of this search, the 'Phal' (45).

46. Therefore it is ordained that a wise and self-realised spiritual person should be convinced of the divinity and immaculate truth about his pure conscious Atma which is his true 'self' by firmly believing in the statement 'I am free from all epithets and attributes'. [These epithets and attributes are related to the gross body which is not the Atma.] This sets him free from bondages of ignorance and delusions, i.e. makes him Mukta or spiritually liberated.

In this way, he who knows the essence of things and the reality of everything has access to the divine Truth and is able to achieve the exalted state of Brahm-realisation, a state that bestows upon him the stature equivalent to being one with Brahm (46).

47. I (Prajapati Brahma) have narrated the essential teaching of the Vedas in their truthful form (i.e. without distortions and imaginary interpolations).

The living being is bound to his deeds and it is due to them and their effects that he takes birth, dies or remains in a rudimentary form (as spirit of ancestors or as gods and semi-gods without finding final emancipation and salvation by becoming one with Brahm and losing his identity by merging it with Brahm).

Whatever is happening is a play of the Atma (pure consciousness personifying Brahm) and nothing else. Nothing exists except this Atma. Or, nothing exists except the Truth. Verily, this is the teaching of this Upanishad. Amen! (47).

-----Shanti Paath-----

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Chapter 26

Rudra Hridaya Upanishad

This Upanishad is very significant in the sense that it establishes the principle that Lord Vishnu the sustainer and protector of creation, and Lord Shiva the concluder of creation are one and the same entity. It further affirms that Brahma the creator and Shiva the concluder are also the same divine Supreme Being in his different roles. In other words, all the three gods of the Trinity, and for that matter all other forms of different Gods and Goddesses representing the various aspects of Divinity and forces of Nature are nothing but the same Supreme Being known as Brahm in each of those forms, and playing different roles in creation. Therefore, since the term 'Brahm' includes everything in existence, it naturally follows that even the seemingly opposing and inimical forces or aspects of creation such as the sun and the moon, the former signifying the boiling cauldron of fire that provides heat, energy and light to the creation while the latter is the soothing elixir which is cool and balm-like, also are Brahm personified; they represent a personified form of these two apparently virtues of the Supreme Being. And to extend this argument further, we can safely affirm that even the Jiva, the living being, is also Brahm in his basic and truthful form. This sets at rest once and for all the eternal dichotomy and the concept of duality that has existed from time immemorial about the separate existence of the Supreme Being from the rest of the creation.

The name of this Upanishad is derived by joining the two words 'Rudra' and 'Hridaya'. The word Rudra is one of the main names of Lord Shiva, and the word Hridaya means heart. Thus the composite word 'Rudra Hridaya' implies the Upanishad that teaches the fundamental principles behind the concept of Shiva. A close equivalence of this Upanishad is the Kalagni Upanishad which is Chapter 10, Dakshin Murti Upanishad which is Chapter 18, and Skand Upanishad which is Chapter 19 of this volume, and the Rudra Upanishad which is included as Appendix no. 2 of this volume.

It was expounded in the form of a dialogue between sages Veda Vyas, the legendary classifier of the four Vedas and narrator of the Purans and Mahabharat, and his son Shukdeo, the sage having the body of a parrot. When Shukdeo asked his father

who was the most exalted amongst the Gods, the answer was 'Rudra', i.e. Shiva. Thereafter, the magnificent knowledge that Rudra and Vishnu are one, the three forms of Rudra to indicate the Trinity Gods (Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva), its reflection in the three forms that the Atma symbolically assumes (as the Jiva, Parmatma and Atma), and the fact that one is spiritually liberated when one acquires this supreme transcendental knowledge is elucidated in detail.

The Upanishad extols the greatness of the tenet of 'non-duality' and uniformity of creation expounded upon and espoused in the philosophy of Advaitya Vedanta. It stresses that true overcoming of spiritual torments and sorrows is possible only by having respect for, firm faith in and allegiance to the eclectic 'truth' as propounded by this philosophy of oneness of the 'soul' called the Atma of the individual creature with the supreme Brahm who is the transcendental Atma of this creation. This conviction would at one go remove all artificial dichotomies and delusory perceptions that cause so much consternation and perplexities for the soul, thereby giving it eternal rest and peace.

Verse nos. 1-9 is an exposition on the oneness of all forms that the Supreme Lord had taken in order to carry on with the varying needs and demands of this creation which is his own creation; verse nos. 10-12 describe the three hypothetical forms in which the Atma has been classified for the purpose of understanding, while its divine nature has been outlined in verse nos. 31-33. The two classes in which knowledge or Gyan has been divided are described in verse nos. 28-30, while verse nos. 46-52 are expositions on the non-dual nature of the ultimate Truth. The metaphor of the tree is used in verse no. 13 to describe the world, of two birds sitting upon the same tree to describe the relationship between the Jiva (living being) and Ishwar (the supreme Lord) in verse nos. 41-45, and of the bow and the arrow to narrate how the Atma can reach Brahm in verse nos. 38-39. Finally, verse nos. 16-24 is in the form of a prayer that comes out spontaneously from the heart of a self-realised and Brahm-realised spiritual aspirant who has discovered the ultimate Truth so much lauded and expounded by the Upanishads.

For this world torn asunder by countless opinions and numerous philosophies creating endless confusions and consternations in the mind of a spiritual aspirant, this Upanishad comes a bright ray of sunshine that would remove all sorts of dichotomies and differences, and therefore it has great moral and spiritual value.

-----Shanti Paath-----

Please see Appendix no. 1 for the meaning of this Shanti Paath.

1. Rudra Hridaya, Yogkundali, Bhasma Jabal, Rudraaksha Jabal and Ganapati Upanishads are the five scriptures that delve into the metaphysical essence of the concept of OM. They are like the five great Mantras (spiritual formulas) used for doing the great sacrifice represented by an effort to acquire knowledge of Brahm, the supreme transcendental divine Truth in creation. They personify the great sayings of the Vedas. [That is, what these five Upanishads teach is the basic tenet of the Vedas. They are essentially directed at espousing the non-dual and supreme nature of Brahm and its unequivocal truthfulness, transcendence and quintessential divinity.]

Sage Shukdeo¹ bowed his head before his revered father, the great sage and seer Veda Vyas², and requested him—'Oh Lord! Which is the one God so much

talked about in the Vedas and extolled by them as the Supreme Being? Who is that God in whom all the other Gods are deemed to have their existence? (1).

[Note—¹*Shukdeo* was the son of the legendary seer and renowned sage Veda Vyas. He was highly respected and was born of the celestial maiden named Ghrataachi when she had taken the form of a parrot, called Shuka in Sanskrit, to produce Shukdeo. He had his education under the expert guidance of his father Veda Vyas (refer Maho-panishad of Sam Veda, Canto 2, verse nos. 1-20, and the entire Rudra Hridaya Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition which is presently being narrated). He was fortunate enough to have as his wise Guru (moral preceptor and teacher) the legendary king Janak, the father of Sita of the Ramayan fame and the most self-realised and enlightened king of his time (refer Maho-panishad of Sam Veda, Canto 2, verse nos. 28-77) and Lord Shiva himself (refer Shuka Rahasya Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda which was preached by Lord Shiva to Shukdeo). His self restraint was so profound that the celestial Apsara, the dancing damsel of the court of Indra, the king of Gods, failed to trap him in her honey-trap of lust and passions. Shukdeo learnt the epic Bhagvata Mahapurana from his father and then narrated it to Parikshit at the culmination of the Dwapar Yug (the third era of the four-era celestial cycle of mythology) and the beginning of the present era called Kali Yug. In an incident narrated in Maho-panishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 21-27 it is described how sage Shukdeo had to wait for twenty-one days before king Janak granted him an audience to test his self control over anger, ego and self-pride of being a son of an enlightened father of the stature of sage Veda Vyas as well as his sincerity and steadfastness of purpose which are important virtues that must be present in a student of spiritualism and important criterion by which his eligibility as a disciple can be judged.

The Tejobindu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda describes him as a truly Brahman-realised sage along with sage Sankaadi in its Canto 1, verse no. 47.

Shukdeo learnt the epic Bhagvata Mahapurana from his father and then narrated it to Parikshit at the culmination of the Dwapar Yug (the third era of the four-era celestial cycle of Hindu mythology) and the beginning of the present era called Kali Yug (which is the last of the four-Yug cycle).

²Sage *Veda Vyas* was the son of sage Paraashar and Satyavati, a fisherwoman. Since he had dark complexion, he was also called Krishna, and since he was born on an island, he was called Dvaipayana. Hence his other name was Krishna Dvaipayana. Veda Vyas gathered all the Mantras of the hitherto undivided Vedas, edited them and grouped them according to the use to which they were put during fire sacrifices. This added another epithet to his name—viz. ‘Vyas’, the one who knew the Vedas like the back of his hands and was therefore able to classify and divide them into four distinct texts as they now exist; the one who is the best preacher of the subject and made it easy for dissemination and teaching purposes. He had also penned the epic Mahabharat, the eighteen Purans and the eighteen sub-Purans. It is said that Ganesh, the most revered and wise son of Shiva who has the head of an elephant, was the scribe who wrote down the dictation of Mahabharat as Veda Vyas narrated it non-stop, a job which is not a child’s play. It is also believed that inspite of remaining a chaste saint for life, he had begot the three legendary figures of Mahabharat, viz. Dhritraashtra, Pandu and Vidur, from the wives of Vichitravirya at the behest of his mother Satyavati. He gave divine sight to Sanjay, the charioteer who narrated the on going famous battle of the Mahabharat to Dhritraashtra who was blind. Being a contemporary sage of the Mahabharat period, he knew almost all the persons of this great epic.]

2. Please tell me also who that one God is by worshipping whom I would have worshipped all the other Gods, and they would be pleased with me?’

When Shukdeo asked this question, his father (Veda Vyas) replied—(2).

3. [The following verses are an exposition on the basic truth of the principle of ‘non-duality’ or Advaitya Vedanta—that all the different forms of Gods and Goddesses, and for that matter ‘all that exists’, are essentially the same Supreme Being known as Brahm revealed or manifested in all these individual forms in order to fulfill the varying needs and different functions of creation. The Gods cited here are the primary Gods in creation, such as Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, Shiva or Rudra the concluder, the Sun God and the Moon God who represent the warmth and energy giving Fire God (verse no. 3) and Vishnu the protector of life and its sustainer (verse no. 4) respectively. The remarkable thing is that these Gods are not independent Godheads, but interchangeable and synonymous with each other as would be evident when one reads the verses, especially verse nos. 3-24.

The Goddesses represent the dynamism of Brahm and his stupendous creative powers, and they are principally two—viz. (a) Uma (verse no. 4, 9) or Bhagwati (verse no. 8) who is depicted as the divine Mother and the consort or counterpart of Shiva or Rudra because he is deemed to be the supreme Father and Lord of creation, and (b) Laxmi who symbolises the necessary wealth that is needed to sustain the creation created by the Supreme Being in the form of the Viraat Purush who is also known as Vishnu. It ought to be noted that there appears to be a bit of confusion in the maze of names and epithets, and so each verse is accompanied by notes to explain the concepts. Perhaps, this was purposely created in order to warn and tell the spiritual aspirant not to be confused by so many names of the same Principal that appear in the scriptures, but understand that they all refer to the same non-dual entity known as Brahm that is supreme and transcendental.]

‘All the Gods are incorporated in the divine form of Lord Rudra (a form of Shiva) and they are different manifestations of this one Lord known as Rudra. In other words, Rudra personifies all the divine virtues in creation represented or symbolised by all the Gods independently and jointly.

On the right of Rudra¹ are established the three Gods such as Surya² (the Sun God), Brahma (the creator of visible creation as well as of the Vedas), and the three forms of Agni³ (the Fire God; the three sacred fires)². [There is great significance in this statement. Brahma the creator, the Sun God and the Fire God are all metaphors for and harbingers of life and creation; they stand as symbols of vitality and life-infusing energy. Brahma is personified Supreme Being (Brahm) as the grandfather and patriarch of visible creation who not only created the creatures but all the knowledge and codes needed for proper regulation of this creation even for time in infinite future. The Sun is an evident source of the basic requirements of life such as light, heat and warmth; the Sun regulates the seasons and the year as well as the cycle of day and night. Its importance can be fathomed from the fact that plant photosynthesis depends directly upon its light and heat, and all forms of life depend on plants, directly or indirectly, for food without which life would be extinct. We know that one primary reason why the dinosaurs vanished from earth is the blocking out of sunlight due to dust that was raised when a meteor hit earth long time ago. Not only this, the very existence of earth depends upon the Sun because it keeps the earth from spinning out of control and getting lost in the bottomless void of the cosmos by its gravitational pull which helps the earth to remain firmly tethered to its position without any other thing to support its position in an empty void of space. Similarly, ‘Fire’ is an important aspect of life—it provides the necessary heat and warmth without which no life is imaginable on earth. The fire is present inherently in the earth

itself, and it is the fire that helps the earth to harbour life in all its myriad variations. That the 'fire' and 'life' are synonymous with each other is proved when a man dies and his body becomes cold. As long as this body is warm, it is deemed that vestiges of life remain in it and when it becomes 'dead cold' it is a clear sign that the man has died. Fire is needed to cook food, to digest this food, to produce food, to keep the body warm, and so on and so forth that its importance need not be emphasized at length. In fact, these three godheads—Brahma, Sun and Fire—are the symbolic Trinity Gods who bring about the existence of creation into effect.] (3).

[Note—¹Lord Shiva has eleven forms called *Rudras*. For details, see note no. 2 of verse no. 7 of the Ekaakshar Upanishad which is Chapter 22 of this volume.

Lord Shiva is considered to be the most enlightened of the Trinity Gods, and is therefore called *Maheshwar*. He always remains in a meditative posture, always contemplating and meditating on the supreme Soul and the Truth. But still he shows anger and mercilessness, because one of his tasks is to punish the evil and sinful ones by ruthlessly slaying them in order to protect the good and righteous souls in the creation. Further, when his meditation and peace is disturbed he also becomes angry. He remains aloof and disinterested in the world, because he is very wise and enlightened, and he stays in the form of an ascetic. Ordinary people think that he is proud, arrogant and haughty because he does not give a damn to worldly formalities and niceties of behaviour. Shiva's failure to conform to set norms of proper and sane conduct makes him look most odd God. The word 'Rudra' is used as a metaphor for anger, wrath, vehemence and cussedness.

One of the other names of Rudra is *Kalagni-Rudra* which literally means Lord Shiva, the concluder, in his most ferocious form which is like the fire of dooms-day. Shiva is the greatest ascetic, a great renunciate, most auspicious and regarded as an enlightened God. So his invocation helps the spiritual seeker to burn all his worldly delusions and taints arising out of ignorance and attachments to falsehoods. This paves the path for his ultimate liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death. Lord Shiva is the designated Authority that controls death and destruction, not only of the gross physical world and its visible objects but also metaphorically of all the evil tendencies, all the blemishes and faults that are characteristic of this deluding world and which usually cover the soul of the creature like a layer of thick scum floating on the surface of the otherwise crystal-clear waters of the mountain lake.

The Rudraaksha beads (seeds of the tree *eleocarpus ganitrus*) with five faces or surfaces used in rosaries and necklaces are also called Kalagni-rudra beads because these are very much liked by Lord Shiva.

Refer 'Rudraaksha Jabal Upanishad' of the Sam Veda tradition, and 'Kalagni Rudra Upanishad' of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.

²The entire Akchu Upanishad is dedicated to the Sun God. It is Chapter 23 of this volume.

³The three fires referred to here are the following—(a) 'Garhyapatya' fire—i.e. the fire of the household hearth; the main fire of the formal fire sacrifice; the fire that every householder is supposed to keep alive and worship regularly and from which the first spark is taken for the rituals associated with religious ceremonies), (b) 'Dakshinagni' fire—i.e. the fire used as a witness to making charities or any other religious festivity; the fire lit at the site of a sacrificial fire ritual, near its south end, and (c) 'Ahawaniya' fire—i.e. the fire lit to invoke the Gods during a ritualistic sacrifice.]

4. To the left of him (Rudra) are established the three divine entities such as Goddess Uma (the divine consort of Shiva, also known by her more famous name of Parvati), Lord Vishnu (the sustainer and protector of creation) and Som (the Moon God). [Earlier verse no. had narrated what was to the 'right of Rudra'. Now this verse

describes what is to his 'left'. In other words, Rudra is in the center, and these Trinity divinities are to his right and left just like we have the right and the left hands on either sides of the torso. This is to say that these Trinity Gods help Rudra to carry out his functions of creation, sustenance and conclusion of creation. Uma is a Goddess personifying the dynamic power and energy of Brahm, in this case personified as Rudra or Shiva, to actually implement his decision to create and then not only carry it out effectively but exercise effective control over the vast creation which would have become unmanageable had Brahm not exercised his overall controlling and veto powers. She represents the female aspect of creation, and therefore is called the cosmic Mother. In this role she is depicted as the divine consort of Shiva because the latter is Brahm, the cosmic Father, personified. Once the creation was conceived in Uma's womb and later on when it emerged in the form of the visible world as we know it now necessitated an arrangement for its perpetual sustenance, nourishment and protection. This Brahm did in his manifestation as Vishnu. Som literally is the soothing elixir of life and eternity—and it is appropriate to use this as an epithet for Vishnu in his role as the sustainer and protector of creation. There is another way of looking at the concept of 'Som'. Since the latter is also the drink drunk during fire sacrifices and by the Gods as it provides bliss and ecstasy, and its physical form resembles the viscous fluid responsible for creation, i.e. the male semen, it is likened to these feelings during the course of sexual intercourse when the male semen is implanted in the female sexual organ as a necessary part of the process of creation. Since Vishnu is also the Viraat Purush from whom the entire creation is said to have come into existence, and he had done the cosmic fire sacrifice in order to set this chain reaction in motion, the epithet of Som for Vishnu is most apt.]

Uma is Lord Vishnu¹, and Vishnu is Som², the Moon God. [That is, all these three are the different manifestations of the same Divinity revealed in different forms according to the needs of the circumstance in creation as described above.] (4).

[Note—¹Lord *Vishnu* stands for the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic gross body of the supreme Brahm from whom the rest of the creation emerged. Since Brahm is neutral and does not do anything, so when he decided to initiate the process of creation he used his inherent power, authority and energy to kick-start the process. This 'dynamic energy, strength, vitality, power and stamina' of Brahm manifested itself in the form of Shakti known as Prakriti. The latter revealed itself in a grosser form as Uma or Parvati, the divine consort of Shiva when the Viraat Purush assumed the form of the Trinity Gods. Therefore by extension, the divine husband of Uma, i.e. Shiva, is Vishnu by another name. *Uma* is the dynamic principle of Brahm in the latter's manifestation as Vishnu.

²*Moon God* is said to be the custodian of Amrit, the elixir of eternal life drunk by gods. More importantly, this elixir represents the primary life-infusing vital fluid (semen) that was used by Brahm to implant his spark (sperm) in the womb of Prakriti (Mother Nature) to initiate the process of creation. In other words, this Moon God was symbolically a personification of Vishnu's vital life-infusing and life-sustaining abilities in the form of the white cosmic semen. That is also why the moon is white like the semen.

The Moon God is known as 'Chandrama' in Sanskrit, and he appears first in the Rig Veda, 10/85/19). He is the patron God of night. His origin is in the Mana (heart and mind; the emotions and thoughts) of the Parmatma or the supreme Lord (the Viraat Purush or Vishnu) (Yajur Veda, 31/12; Taiteriyā Brahman, 3/10/8/5). His existence depends upon the Sun God. On the dark night, he is supposed to enter the Sun (Aiteriyā Brahman, 8/28). Chandrama is synonymous with Som, the divine elixir and sanctified drink drunk during the religious sacrifices as it gives its drinker peace and a long life (Kaushatiki Brahman, 16/5; Aiteriyā Brahman, 7/11). He is the

controller of seasons and months; he always changes so appear to be like a new born everyday. He gives peace and long life to the 'Stota', the chanter of hymns as prayers (Rig Veda, 10/85/19).

Chandra or the Moon Gods appears in the Vedas as follows-- Rig Veda—10/85/19; Yajur Veda—1/28; Atharva Veda—6/78/1-2; 19/1.

The Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition describes this Moon as being as the symbolic form of the water element. The moon is said to be the celestial pitcher of Amrit, the elixir of eternity and bliss that is drunk by the Gods. In the human body, it is represented by the Eda Naadi passing through the left nostrils and which is used during do Pranayam. [Refer Canto 1, verse 166.] It is also present as the crescent moon, the Ardha Chandrakar Chakra, which is said to be the shape of the water element of which the patron deity is Vishnu, the sustainer of creation, and located from the knee to the hip region. [Refer Canto 1, verse 176 and Canto 5, verse no. 13.] At other places it describes the symbolic importance of creating a union of the moon and sun as metaphor for the union of the creature with the supreme Brahm. [Refer Canto 1, verse nos. 56 and 68 for instance.] In the context of Pranayam it is used to indicate the bliss obtained by the ascetic. [Refer Canto 1, verse nos. 120, 127.]

Canto 1, verse no. 133 of this Upanishad describes the great Mantra 'So-a-ham' and asserts that the moon stands for the letter 'sa' of this Mantra. Other instances where moon appears in Yogshikha Upanishad are Canto 1, verse nos. 133, 146, 176, Canto 3, verse no. 11, and Canto 6, verse no. 4.]

5. To bow before Govind (one of the numerous names of Vishnu) and pay obeisance to him is equivalent to bowing before Lord Shiva and paying obeisance to the latter (because they are both the same Divinity personified). Those who worship Vishnu (who rides the Gurud, the legendary heron of eagle) with devotion and reverence are indeed worshipping and showing reverence to Lord Shiva who rides a bull (5).

6. Those who do not like the strange and unconventional form of Shiva as 'Virupaksha' that is very odd and inconsistent with the usually pleasant form of Vishnu, and therefore resent it and have aversion for it cannot hope to ever please Lord Janaardan (Vishnu, the compassionate Lord who is merciful towards his subjects, protects them and loves them). It is equivalent to having resentment for and aversion to Lord Janaardan himself¹.

Those who do not know the mysterious secrets of Rudra (Shiva) can never know the esoteric secrets of Keshav (Vishnu) as well; they are ignorant of who Vishnu actually is² (6).

[Note—¹This verse is a clear indication that both these Gods—Shiva and Vishnu—are to be treated alike and with the same degree of respect and honour. This proves the fact that this Upanishad aims at establishing harmony and goodwill between the worshippers of Vishnu and Shiva who were traditionally at odds with each other.

Shiva is called 'Virupaksha' because of his external appearances which are most odd and unconventional. He is depicted by the Purans as being naked, wearing only animal skin and having ash of the cremation ground smeared all over his body, has serpents wrapped all round him, eats intoxicating herbs and remains perpetually in an intoxicated state, lives in the cremation ground in the company of ghosts and phantoms, gets angry at the slightest provocation or pretext, etc. This external behaviour of the Lord is obviously at odds with that of Vishnu who is depicted in a flamboyant form with magnificent and colourful attire, fully decked up with priceless ornaments, having a charming demeanour, pleasant speech that offends none, good company, a regal abode in the heaven, and always sporting an enchanting and

benevolent smile captivating the heart of millions of his devotees as compared to the fear-instilling, grave and somber mood in which Shiva lives.

So this verse intends to enlighten the spiritual aspirant that he should not be misled by these and other such dichotomies and differences that exist in this creation, or the various forms in which the different godheads are depicted in the Purans and other texts, but peer underneath and see the reality and the truth that they represent. External appearance is no criterion to decide that one God is senior to the other, as this is necessary so that the concerned God can play his role in the cogwheel of creation perfectly. This wisdom, erudition and enlightenment would be called acquisition of 'true Gyan' or knowledge that is 'true' and 'enlightening' in the real sense.

The outwardly odd behaviour and fearful external appearance of Shiva which makes him 'Virupaksha' is misleading—for the simple reason that the Shiva is very enlightened and self-realised who has totally detached himself from worldly involvement and pleasures, and instead prefers to remain engrossed in meditation and contemplation. He has tasted the divine elixir of self-realisation and the peace that comes with meditation and contemplation, so is the least bothered by how he looks and what people think of him. He is an ascetic par-excellence. Hence he is always seen with closed or half-open eyes. His short temper is due to this trance-like state of his blissful inner self—for when his internal peace of meditation is disturbed by any kind of external disturbances, he gets extremely annoyed and exceedingly peeved. His staying in the cremation ground is indicative of his close acquaintance with or understanding of death which makes him totally aware of the perishable nature of life and the futility of pursuing it at the cost of liberation and deliverance of the soul. Since he constantly sees death in the face, no charms of this world can ever be sufficiently enticing as to trap him in its snare.

But does this mean that Vishnu is engrossed in enjoying this perishable world and is in any way less self-enlightened and divine than Shiva? Not the least; the Lord has to carry on with the function of sustenance and protection of this creation, and so has to adopt a posture that suits his job. He needs wealth and powers and authority to provide for the necessities of this creation, create prosperity for its future wellbeing, and maintain law and order in this creation. Shiva is only concerned with conclusion, so he can afford to maintain a distanced life style. That is also why Shiva is usually the patron God of ascetics and their like because they symbolise the last phase of life marked by total renunciation, spending time on meditation and contemplation, and generally preparing to face the ultimate truth that all material objects of this world are perishable and they have to be abandoned at the time of death. So a wise man should not hanker after them and get unduly perturbed and anxious for them at the internal level of his 'self'. At the most, they should be used to fulfill the obligations of existential life as and when they present themselves during the course of the soul's journey in this world, but not thought to be the truthful thing to be aimed at and achieved at any cost whatsoever. The world does not provide long-term bliss, peace and tranquility, and neither is it eternal and restful.

²Shiva stands for the last phase of life and is the manifestation of Brahm to bring about the conclusion of creation at the macro level, and of the individual in the form of the death of the body at the micro level of creation. What is the secret to be known? It is the fact that in spite of being the great God called 'Mahadev' who is most powerful and omnipotent, Shiva prefers to remain away from the limelight of creation. Iconographically, he has been depicted as being submerged in deep meditation and contemplation on his inner self. This indicates that he has learnt that true peace comes with realising the bliss emanating from the Atma, and not by remaining engrossed in the material world of sense objects which only create delusions and consternations. He is deemed to be the most enlightened God as indicated by the fact that he is the only one to have the activated 'third eye' of wisdom located in the middle of the forehead between the eyebrows. Shiva remains

submerged in the ecstasy and blissful state of Brahm realisation. Which brings us to the main point of this verse—that is, this Brahm upon whom Shiva meditates had manifested himself in the form of the Viraat Purush who is also known as Vishnu at the time of the first stages of creation. So Shiva is actually meditating upon Vishnu. This fact has been affirmed in the epic Ramayan where Lord Ram, an incarnation of Vishnu, calls the image of Shiva installed on the shores of the ocean before his departure for the conquest of Lanka and its demon king Ravana, as ‘Rameshawar’—literally meaning ‘the Lord of Ram’. It also means ‘One who’s Lord is Ram’. In other words, Ram as an incarnation of Vishnu is the Lord of Shiva, and vice versa.

Therefore, in the lexicon of metaphysics, Vishnu is the supreme Brahm upon whom Shiva meditates and remains engrossed in his memory. Shiva represents the extremely enlightened and dispassionate form of Brahm, whereas Vishnu stands for his more worldly manifestation that is engaged in affairs of creation and its maintenance. This Upanishad also asserts that the Jiva, the living being in his essential and truthful form as the Atma, the pure consciousness, is Ishwar or the supreme Lord personified—refer verse nos. 41-45 on the one hand, and on the other hand that this supreme Lord is no one else but Shiva—which is the basic theme around which this Upanishad is built. So, when it is said that Shiva meditates upon Vishnu it also implies that an enlightened man who has realised who he actually is worships the supreme Lord of creation known as Vishnu. It is easy for him to worship Vishnu than Shiva for one other reason. Vishnu had incarnated on several occasions and lived amongst humans, creating a legion of stories and worldly deeds that are well documented in the different Purans and Itihasas, such as the Bhagwat Maha Puran and the epic Ramayan that the ordinary man can read, find practical to follow and easy to relate to because they describe to him things and circumstances and the world with which he is very much acquainted and which is the one that is causing him all the problems in the first place.]

7. Rudra symbolises the ‘Beej’ or seed (represented by the sperm) which is the basic unit carrier of life, while Janaardan (Vishnu) stands for the cosmic womb in which this Beej is planted in order to develop the embryo of creation¹.

Rudra is Brahma the creator, and the latter is Fire God himself². [Refer verse no. 3 above.] (7).

[Note—¹That is why the Viraat Purush, the subtler form of Vishnu, is said to have done the initial fire sacrifice and implanted the spark of creation in his own self. The one and the same entity became known as the male Viraat Purush and the female Prakriti by a very subtle polarization of virtues. This is the primary form of asexual reproduction when the Viraat Purush produced the Prakriti out of his own self.

With this holistic view-point, it is easy to understand this verse. That aspect of Brahm which is neutral and totally oblivious of this world and remains self-contented is known as Shiva, while when it took up a dynamic form in order to initiate the process of creation it came to be known as Vishnu. Presently here, Shiva is regarded as the Viraat Purush, and Vishnu is regarded as Prakriti or Mother Nature. This is because the Viraat was the ‘cosmic Father’ who provided the sperm, the ‘vital spark of life’. The cosmic bowl where the creation was conceived was not a hollow devoid of the presence of the Viraat for the simple reason that whatever that existed was nothing but Brahm, and this Viraat Purush was Brahm’s gross macrocosmic body that was all-pervading and all-encompassing; nothing existed outside of it. Therefore, this so-called ‘cosmic womb’ was also the body of the Viraat Purush from which the sperm was produced. Hence, the Viraat acted as the cosmic Father as well as the cosmic Mother called Prakriti. Again, since Vishnu and Viraat Purush are the same entities, it follows that Vishnu and Prakriti are also the same. Since the Mother is responsible for nourishing the offspring with her milk after it’s born and with her own fluids when it was still in its formative stage in her womb, Vishnu is

called the Janaardana, the sustainer, nourisher and protector of creation, as opposed to Shiva. That is, Vishnu is a manifestation of Shiva for the purpose of sustenance and protection of creation.

²It has just been said in this verse that Rudra or Shiva is the cosmic Father of creation by providing the 'seed' or sperm of life. Since the function of creation is the duty of Brahma, it is now confirmed that Rudra is none else but Brahma, or Brahma is a manifestation of Rudra for the purpose of creation. An interesting thing is to be observed here—whereas traditionally Rudra is regarded as the God responsible for death, in this verse he is shown as being the cosmic father and creator. The 'sperm' inherently has the dynamism, the strength and the vital life-creating powers and energy required to initiate the process of creation, and since this is provided by Rudra it is obvious that he is the Father of the entire creation, including the Gods and Goddesses. That is why he is honoured with the title of 'Maheshwar', the great God—refer verse no. 9.

Now, 'fire' which stands for the eclectic virtues of light, heat, warmth, energy and vitality is the most important requirement for life in all its forms. Life, heat and warmth go hand in hand; one cannot separate the warmth and heat of fire from the earth and imagine it to be habitable by any stretch of imagination. This is proved by the fact that no life is sustainable in frigid conditions and sub-zero temperatures, while warm climate teems with life in all its colourful hues. Since Brahma has the mandate of creation, he is regarded as the personification of the Fire God. Or, by extension, Brahma and the Fire God are both manifestations of Rudra (Shiva) for the purpose of creation. In fact, the word 'Rudra' means the ferocious form of the otherwise calm, amiable and docile Shiva, and 'fire' is a metaphor for anger and ferocity, the qualities opposite of Shiva.

This verse, like many others in this magnificent Upanishad of Advaita Vedanta, is a remarkable exposition to prove the uniformity and non-duality of creation!]

8. Lord Rudra (Shiva) is manifested as both Lords Brahma the creator and Vishnu the sustainer and protector of creation. Besides this, the visible world overlooked by the Agni (the Fire God represented by the celestial sun) and the Som (the Moon God represented by the celestial moon) is also a manifestation of this same Rudra¹.

All the males of creation represent Rudra, while all the females symbolise Bhagwati (one of the many names of Uma or Parvati, the divine consort of Rudra or Shiva)² (8).

[Note—¹This is why Shiva is often referred to as 'Maheshwar', the Great God, essentially implying that he is senior to all the other Gods including the other two Gods of the Trinity, i.e. Brahma and Vishnu. It is like the case of an equilateral triangle having all the three sides equal and therefore all the angles also of equal degree, but to be a 'triangle' it must have an apex corner or point and two base corners or points. This 'apex' point is personified by Shiva, while the other two base corners are represented by Brahma and Vishnu. Further, since the entire visible creation is not only created and pervaded by Brahm, the Supreme Being, but also is considered as his visible revelation, it obviously follows that whatever there is in this world is Brahm and by extension Rudra or Shiva. Therefore, the sun and the moon are also within this sphere of definition of Brahm.

²Rudra is one of the dynamic forms of Shiva. The latter represents the Viraat Purush who is the male aspect of creation. From the Viraat was created the female counterpart called the Shakti. As the process of creation progressed, the Viraat Purush came to be known as Vishnu and Shakti as Bhagwati. The word 'Bhag' refers to the female genital where the male sperm fuses with the female egg to form the embryo. Hence, the form of the Lord that acted as the cosmic womb where the cosmic egg was conceived and nourished till it emerged as the visible creation was called Bhagwati—i.e. one who is possessed of the Bhag, one who is the Lord of the female as its rightful

husband and therefore has full right over the sexual process associated with her organs. In other words, the Supreme Being revealed in the form of the Trinity Gods is the unquestioned Lord of creation that has emerged from the cosmic womb represented by Mother Nature called Prakriti. Since Prakriti has the magnificent ability to bear such a vast creation in her bosom, she is also called Shakti, or the eclectic virtues of strength, energy and powers personified.

Earlier verse no. 7 has already stated that Rudra symbolises the cosmic sperm or 'Beej' representing the male aspect of creation while Vishnu stands for the cosmic womb or the female aspect of creation. It has been said elsewhere that at the time of creation, the Viraat Purush had assumed the form a man or male. Therefore, the Shakti aspect of creation revealed as the female. Hence, all males are manifestations of Rudra, and all females of Bhagwati. The basic idea in this verse is that one should not distinguish between any two humans as one being of a higher class and the other being of a lower class. The eclectic and well considered enlightened view is to treat all the creatures as one or the other forms of the same macrocosmic form of the supreme transcendental Lord who is the only truthful 'One' in creation and who is present in all the distinguishable forms in which we see this world at our microcosmic level. Refer notes to earlier verse nos. 3-8 also.]

9. Similarly, the entire creation—both the animate as well as the inanimate—is nothing but Rudra and Uma personified, a visible form of the invisible Rudra and Uma¹.

The entire visible world symbolises Uma (the active principle of Rudra and dynamic aspect of Brahm that is known as Prakriti), while the entire invisible world stands for Maheshwar (literally the 'great Lord' referring to the Viraat Purush who is the invisible macrocosmic manifestation of Brahm and represents the gross body of the creation as a whole; the passive aspect of the supreme transcendental Brahm) (9).

[Note--¹This indicates that the entire creation having a male component and a female component represents the two divine aspects of Brahm known as Rudra and Uma which correspond to Brahm's passive and active forms respectively.

The entire creation has come into being from the Viraat Purush. Had the Viraat Purush not undergone self-mutation to produce a male and a female and then cleaving to give them separate and independent existence, there would have been only one sex in creation, and we would not have separate male and female. Since the Viraat had metamorphosed himself as a male and a female in order to initiate and propagate creation in the very beginning of creation itself, we still have these two forms of creatures who continue with this basic function of creation even today. To ensure that his progeny did not abstain from this task of procreation, the Lord was so clever that he made this exercise of having sex as the most attractive of all deeds in this creation. A person who can overcome this 'natural instinct' is therefore regarded as a personified Shiva because he would be like Brahm himself who did not indulge in any sexual activity when he decided to create. So, does this mean that a self-restrained ascetic has any less powers than the man who exhibits his prowess by creating a new life in the form of his off spring? Not at all for the simple reason that all Yoga Upanishads emphasise that a self-realised ascetic acquires a number of mystical powers called the 'Siddhis' which empower him with such great powers that even the Gods are no match for him.]

10-11. The cosmic union of Uma (Shakti representing the active and dynamic aspect of the supreme Brahm and transcendental Divinity) and Shankar (Rudra or Shiva representing the passive aspect of the supreme Brahm and Divinity) creates Vishnu (the Viraat Purush—the macrocosmic and invisible gross body of Brahm from which the rest of creation unfolded)¹.

Therefore, those who bow to Vishnu with great reverence and worship him with great devotion are deemed to be knowledgeable about the three aspects of the Atma (the divine entity known as the universal Soul and the quintessential Consciousness of creation)—viz. the Atma, the Parmatma and the Antaraatma². This wisdom, erudition and enlightenment helps them to know the eclectic quintessential Truth of creation and the fundamental Reality behind all that exists, which in turn provides them with an opportunity to become self-realised and Brahm-realised. In other words, they find shelter in the supreme Atma which is the Truth representing their own self and the rest of the creation³ (10-11).

[Note—¹When the passive aspect of Brahm known as Shankar or Rudra decided to initiate the process of creation, he activated his own creative dynamic energy that was hitherto in a latent and dormant format, thereby enabling himself to do so. This activated dynamism of Rudra came to be known as Uma. The resultant off spring was the Viraat Purush. Hence, the Viraat Purush is the result of the symbolic union of the male aspect of Brahm as Shiva or Shankar or Rudra, and the female aspect as Uma.

²The three aspects of the Atma, the pure consciousness, mentioned here are as follows—(1) The word *Atma* refers to the divine cosmic entity that is pure consciousness and without which no existence is possible. The Atma is universal, uniform, all-pervading, all-encompassing, the ultimate Truth and Reality of creation, most divine, magnificent and glorious, pure and uncorrupt cosmic Consciousness. It is the soul and essence of existence; it is the base upon which everything is founded. In fact, what is non-Atma is considered as non-truth in creation. This Atma is transcendental and beyond the purview of time, space and definition. The glorious and eclectic virtues and divine nature of this Atma is the subject matter of a number of Upanishads. (2) At the macrocosmic level, this Atma is known as the supreme Atma or *Parmatma*. This refers to the superior macrocosmic version of the Atma that was revealed when Brahm decided to initiate the process of creation and manifested his own self as the all pervading and all encompassing Viraat Purush, or as the different Gods of the Trinity such as Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva or Rudra. This is the Parmatma or the supreme Atma or the supreme Lord at the macrocosmic level who is being referred to in this verse. (3) Finally, when the creation came into being, this supreme Consciousness represented by the Supreme Being known as Parmatma took up residence in the inner being of the individual creature as its Atma or soul. This aspect of the Atma was called *Antaraatma* as it resides in the inner self of the individual creature. This is the microcosmic aspect of the Atma known as the Parmatma at the macrocosmic level, and as the Atma in its primary and fundamental level that transcends all these known forms of creation. The term 'Atma' in its principal and elementary form is the Consciousness in its purest and most sublime form.

Therefore there is no fundamental difference between these three forms of the Atma just like there is no difference between the basic nature and identity of an entity known as 'water' whether it is in a cup, in an ocean or as invisible moisture which is uniformly distributed in the atmosphere but not visible to the naked eye. The water in the cup is like the individual Atma of the creature that is limited by the space of the cup representing the body of the creature, the water of the ocean is like the macrocosmic counterpart of this individual Atma because of its vastness and infinite dimensions, and the water molecule of the water vapour or moisture is the Atma in its microscopic and atomic form as the basic element called Consciousness.

³This wisdom is called 'self awareness and enlightenment'. It is the awareness of the ultimate Truth and Reality of creation. Once a wise man comes to know this truth, he would abhor all delusions and falsehoods pertaining to the gross body and the material world as if they were the spiritual plague.]

12. The Antaraatma is Brahma the creator, Parmatma is Maheshwar (literally the 'Great God' but meaning Shiva), and the universal and eternal Atma is Vishnu the sustainer and protector of creation (12).

[Note—The Antaraatma is the consciousness residing in the bosom of all living beings as their own individual Atma. It forms the core of the inner self, the individual creature in his true form. This can be roughly translated as the sub-conscious mind that directs the conscious mind to act. Since it is the mind that creates this world by its imaginative powers and then believes it to be true, it is said that the Antaraatma is the creator of the physical visible world, or is equivalent to Brahma who created this world by using his mind. This is because Brahma had the technical knowledge that was required for this process, and knowledge and its application is the function of the mind and intellect.

The Parmatma is of course the Supreme Being, the Lord of all that exists. Hence, he is 'the Great God' or Maheshwar. He remains in a passive state of meditation and perpetual contemplation as symbolised by Shiva.

Finally, Vishnu is the Atma because he symbolically represents the Viraat Purush and displays all the unique characteristic qualities of the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic invisible Lord of creation from whom the three visible Gods—viz. Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva—emerged. So therefore, Viraat is like the soul and the basis upon which the entire edifice of this creation is built, and who is at the very foundation of creation of these Trinity Gods.]

13. This creation as a whole is like a huge tree¹. The three parts of this creation are known as the three worlds (celestial, terrestrial and nether or subterranean), and they are like its outstretched branches. [Refer verse no. 41 also.]

The upper part of this cosmic tree is represented by Vishnu. Its middle part (trunk) is represented by Brahma. And its roots are represented by Maheshwar (Shiva symbolising the supreme Brahm)² (13).

[Note—¹The metaphor of the *tree* has been employed in Katho-panishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 2, Valli 3, verse no.1 also to describe the creation.

²The upper and outer branches of a tree spread out in the sun and their leaves absorb sunlight and carry on photosynthesis. The branches give shelter to so many forms of fauna and animal life—birds, flies, insects, centipedes and reptiles etc. (e.g. the caterpillar, snakes, squirrels, lizards etc.). This is a clear symbolism of the functions of *Vishnu* who is assigned the task of sustenance and giving protection to the creation.

The trunk and central branches stand for *Brahma* the creator because it is out of this central core that the outer branches and leaves and flowers emerge and spread out. In the case of the huge Banyan tree it is seen that these branches produce secondary trees by first touching the ground and then transforming this apparent prop into a stem or trunk of the second spread. It is symbolic way of how Brahma unfolded the creation and then let it spread out on its own and reproduce itself. The trunk of the tree is a link between the upper part bearing the leaves, fruits and flowers, and the root that anchors the whole structure to the ground and absorbs nourishment from the soil. The trunk helps the nourishment absorbed by the root to be taken and distributed equally to all the distant parts of a huge tree. In other words, Brahma the creator is that aspect of the supreme transcendental Brahm (the ultimate Absolute Truth and cosmic Consciousness) that helped to reveal the existence of the latter when he unfolded the multicoloured and multifarious vast creation which is so infinite, varied and unique that it defies all definition, narration and imagination.

The visible aspect of the world is like the unfolding of the upper part of the tree consisting of the stem, fruit, leaves and flowers, while the root is like the Viraat Purush from whom the entire creation evolved. The seed which is the 'basic cause' of the entire structure coming into existence, including the root, is like Brahm. At a

slightly grosser level of evolutionary ladder, the three Gods of the Trinity, i.e. Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva would represent the trunk, the root, the flowers and the fruits depending upon how one interprets this analogy. For instance, Brahma made this visible creation possible and laid down its foundation; hence he is like the trunk as well as the root. Vishnu sustains and takes care of the world; hence he is like the root which absorbs nourishment and the trunk which distributes this nourishment to all the parts of the tree. Shiva is like the leaves, flowers and fruits because they lend beauty to the tree, are its essence and auspicious reward, and produce the seed from the next tree would be born along with the sign of the tree's final years of its life-cycle.

Since it is the root that is at the foundation of the entire edifice, it can also be compared to Maheshwar—the great God who is the anchor of everything in existence. Had it not been for the root, the tree would not have come into existence in the first place. The root anchors the tree and prevents it getting uprooted in the fiercest of storms. The tree draws its basic nutrients from the ground through the root. Without the root, there would be no tree. Even if the tree is cut on its upper side but its roots remain intact, it would regenerate itself.]

14. Vishnu personifies the auspicious objective or aim of doing anything. Brahma represents the actual process of doing deeds or giving effect to one's plans. And Maheshwar stands for the cause behind anything that happens, or occurrence of any circumstance that requires action to be taken and deeds to be done (14).

[Note—*Vishnu* signifies that the aim of any deed should be righteousness and auspiciousness. This aim ensures that the deed is done in a righteous and auspicious manner and subsequently bears good results and fosters all round happiness and goodwill for the creature in life. When this does not happen, the creation suffers. This is why when unrighteousness represented by the evil forces of creation personified by Demons are in the ascendance, Vishnu incarnates himself as one or the other incarnations to slay these Demons and restore order and the virtues of righteousness and auspiciousness in creation.

Brahma is the godhead that actually took necessary actions to initiate the process of creation of the physical world once the Viraat Purush had decided to do so. Therefore, Brahma symbolises the virtues of implementing decisions and taking appropriate actions so one's dreams and aspirations can be fulfilled. Brahma also created the vast repositories of knowledge in the form of the Vedas, indicating that it is not only sufficient to do deeds but more importantly to do them in the correct manner.

Finally, *Shiva* stands for the end of life, the culmination of one's efforts and ensuring a good end. Obviously, no one would want to ruin one's future and die in sufferings, pains and agonies. So Shiva is the cause which would indirectly propel a person to do things righteously and with due diligence. Again, one can reach an end only when there is a beginning, for without a start there cannot be an end. Therefore, Shiva indirectly is the 'cause of the beginning' so there can be an ultimate 'end'. Shiva inspires a person to make an auspicious beginning immediately with the avowed aim of finding eternal peace and happiness for one's self.

Shiva is the patron God of ascetics, hermits and mendicants because he symbolises a high degree of self-realisation, renunciation, dispassion, wisdom and enlightenment. When a man becomes enlightened and self-realised, he sees the futility of pursuing this world and decides to renounce it by taking the vow of Sanyas, or the life of renunciation and detachment from the material world. This is literally a new beginning, a new life for him. It is a life of awakening and self-realisation which leads to liberation and deliverance as opposed to the earlier life of delusions and entrapments.

Shiva is the patron God of death implying the end of all delusions and bondages to this body and the material world, and the beginning of a new life spiritual freedom marked by self-realisation and enlightenment.]

15. Dharma (the virtues of righteousness, auspiciousness, probity and propriety) personifies Rudra. The Jagat (the world, both the animate and the inanimate) is a symbolic representation of Vishnu. And Gyan (knowledge, wisdom and erudition) stands for Brahma¹ (15).

[Note—¹Dharma is like *Rudra* because it is very strict and uncompromising in its discipline. If any violation is observed in the implementation of the virtues represented by Dharma, such as the good virtues of righteousness, auspiciousness, probity and propriety, then it would immediately get angry and cast death and destruction upon the perpetrators of evil and misdeed. It is uncompromising in this aspect even as death symbolised by Shiva is unrelenting in its job. Here Dharma is a personified form of all the good virtues of Rudra.

The living world is like *Vishnu* because it throbs and pulsates with vibrant and colourful life. It sustains itself in a perpetual manner if it is auspicious and righteous. Noble virtues are always at a premium and given due respect even today in this world, indicating that Vishnu is hidden in this world imperceptibly because the world would not accept the unrighteous and corrupt, and it treats with disdain everything not auspicious and according to the righteous code of conduct and ethics. The visible creation is self-sustaining. Once having come into existence, it moves ahead on its own steam. The father takes care of his son when he is young, and the son takes of the father when the latter grows old and infirm. The world creates its own resources, makes discoveries and innovations as and when the need arises, it builds, destroys and re-builds again in an endless cycle of creation, sustenance and destruction. This ability of the world to sustain itself is a personified virtue of Vishnu whose mandate is to support the creation on a perpetual basis.

Finally, since *Brahma* had created the Vedas, the repositories of all available knowledge needed for mankind, he is regarded as a personification of Gyan meaning knowledge, erudition, sagacity, wisdom and awareness of the truth.]

16. Therefore, a wise and enlightened man who repeats the great Mantra ‘Rudra Rudra’ and remembers the great Lord is symbolically worshipping all the Gods and repeating their Mantras. This helps him to overcome the evil effects of all sins and misdeeds (16).

[Note—In the view of what has been expounded in this Upanishad, the Mantra ‘Rudra-Rudra’ would deem to include the divine Mantras of all the Gods of the Trinity—i.e. Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. Much like OM which is the universal Mantra for the supreme transcendental Brahm, this Mantra ‘Rudra-Rudra’ is the universal Mantra for all the Gods combined.]

17. [Now the Mantras used in the process of invoking Rudra and offering worship to him are being described from verse no. 17 to 23.]

‘I repeatedly bow most reverentially to Lord Rudra representing the male aspect of creation (i.e. the Viraat Purush), and goddess Uma representing the female aspect of creation (i.e. Prakriti, Mother Nature)’ (17).

17½. ‘I repeatedly bow most reverentially to Lord Rudra representing Brahma the creator (symbolising divine knowledge because he had created the Vedas), and goddess Uma representing Vaani (speech, the dynamic aspect Brahma because his knowledge is expressed by speech and the spoken words)’ (17½).

18. 'I repeatedly bow most reverentially to Lord Rudra representing Vishnu the sustainer and protector of creation, and goddess Uma representing Laxmi, the goddess of material wealth (which is needed by Vishnu to carry on effectively his functions of sustenance and protection of this world)' (18).

18½. 'I repeatedly bow most reverentially to Lord Rudra representing Surya, the Sun God (symbolising the light of knowledge and enlightenment), and goddess Uma representing Chaaya (shadow, symbolising the darkness that prevails if something intervenes between the creature and the Truth)' (18½).

19. 'I repeatedly bow most reverentially to Lord Rudra representing Som, the Moon God (symbolising the most prominent and reassuring presence of the supreme Lord in the otherwise foreboding and dark world of ignorance and delusions represented by the background of the night sky), and goddess Uma representing the Stars (symbolising the presence of numerous Gods and Goddesses who are not able to eliminate the darkness of the night inspite of being so numerous in number, whereas the single moon representing one Brahm can do so)' (19).

19½. 'I repeatedly bow most reverentially to Lord Rudra representing Day (symbolising the divine light of self-realisation because one can see everything very clearly during the day time), and goddess Uma representing Night (because darkness of night symbolises Maya or delusions which is the other aspect of Brahm and has the opposite effect to that of the day which symbolises knowledge)' (19½).

[Note—Both the day and the night are the two aspects of the same Brahm. This verse is a clear indication of the fact that what appears to be 'dual' is actually the two sides of the same 'non-dual' entity. We can understand this phenomenon with the aid of a simple illustration. The earth rotates around its axis along with revolving round the sun. The former creates the day and the night, and the latter the seasons. Now, the appearance of day on a particular spot on the surface of the earth does not mean that it would undergo any fundamental change during the night, except for the absence of light and the lowering of temperature. No physical change has taken place on the surface of the earth; there is no change in its dimensions or constituents either in the day or in the night though the earth's contours appear to be different during the two phases. The same thing applies to the sky as well—the sky is always universally the same, but the day sky is very different from the night sky, and even during the course of the day it continuously changes its hues. The idea is that the external appearances are very misleading and not the real thing.

All the dichotomy and differences that appear in the world are due to delusions and ignorance of the reality and truth.]

20. 'I repeatedly bow most reverentially to Lord Rudra representing Yagya (a fire sacrifice or any other religious and auspicious activity done with sincerity and commitment as a noble activity), and goddess Uma representing Vedi (the altar on which the sacred fire is worshipped and sacrifices made)' (20).

20½. 'I repeatedly bow most reverentially to Lord Rudra representing Vahini¹ (the sacred fire element), and goddess Uma representing Swaha (the word pronounced at the time of making offerings to the fire; regarded as the wife of the Fire God)' (20½).

[Note—¹A related concept is the Vahini Yoga. The Vahini Yoga 'वह्नियोग' deals with the activation of the vital wind/air with the fire/energy of life. For it, various techniques, processes, postures and exercises have been prescribed in Yoga, the chief among them being the activation of the Kundalini by Pranayam. The 'fire' required to

heat and activates the 'Apan' wind and push it upwards comes from the 'Sun Chakra' or the 'Surya Chakra' (subtle energy center) located in the region of the navel. It is done by 'Surya Pranayam'. During this meditative practice, it is imagined that leaping flames are flaring up from the core of the sun symbolically residing in the navel of the Yogi, and these flames are virtually heating the Sushumna nerve (also called the pathway leading to Brahm) as well as the other vital winds present in the lungs, the heart, throat etc. By heating the lower end of the Sushumna nerve, which is akin to heating one end of a heating rod or coil, alongside the heating of the Kundalini and the Apan wind, the opening of this Sushumna nerve, which was up till now blocked, is unclogged and the subtle energy of the coiled Kundalini, which was hereto before trapped inside it, is released and pushed up by the Apan wind into the spinal cord through this Sushumna nerve where it rises up through this channel right up to the mind or the top of the head, mixing with it all other winds en-route, collecting all their impurities with it, much like the hot air above the surface of the earth developing into whirlwind and rising up into the atmosphere, taking up along with it the dust particles, dry leaves, twigs etc. as it goes up. This polluted wind is finally exhaled through the right and left nostrils during the process of Rechak. The rising of the Kundalini is similar to the rising of heated mercury in a thermometer. When the bulb is heated, the mercury shoots up. Here, when the Kundalini is heated, the energy trapped inside it rises up the Sushumna nerve.

Vahini Yoga is so-called because it stokes the latent fire energy lying dormant hitherto in the body of the spiritual aspirant by activating the vital winds, especially the warm Apan wind present in the lower end of the intestines, and utilizing its powerful force to stoke and activate the Kundalini, thereby heating it and releasing its subtle energy through the opening of its mouth covering the lower end of the Sushumna Naadi (nerve). This released energy then snakes up this Naadi and reaches the head, first at the root of the nose and center of the eyebrows and ultimately the top of the head at the point of the Brahm Randhra, the hair like slit on the skull, from which is finally escapes at the time of death of the ascetic, giving him liberation from the fetter of this body for ever.

Refer Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 38 and 107 of Sam Veda tradition, and Dhyandindu Upanishad, verse no. 66-68 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

21. 'I repeatedly bow most reverentially to Lord Rudra representing the Vedas (the sacred body of divine knowledge), and goddess Uma representing Shastras (the scriptures such as the Upanishads and Purans that elaborate upon and explain the practical meaning of the Vedas and their philosophies)' (21).

21½. 'I repeatedly bow most reverentially to Lord Rudra representing Vriksha (tree), and goddess Uma representing Valli (branches and shoots)' (22½).

[Note—In this context, refer verse no. 13.]

22. 'I repeatedly bow most reverentially to Lord Rudra representing Gandha (fragrances and scents emanating from flowers), and goddess Uma representing the Flower itself' (22).

[Note—A flower is so much sought after because of its attractive fragrance. Even if the flower is not visibly visible, its presence can be determined by its fragrance. So, if one knows what the true meaning of Rudra is, he can determine what actually to expect from the world, or what is the 'truth' in this world.]

22½. 'I repeatedly bow most reverentially to Lord Rudra representing Artha (the essence and meaning of any thing; the secret and essential meaning of any body of knowledge without the awareness of which the knowledge itself is worthless and

useless; here symbolising the fact that the Supreme Being is the essence in this creation and is the only Truth worth knowing, and without which the creation would be worthless), and goddess Uma representing the Akshar (the letter that is the foundation of any language and the basis of words from which the entire language evolves symbolising the fact that once the Supreme Being created this world, the latter propagated on its own)' (22½).

[Note—The verse lays emphasis on the fact that the power of any text consisting of words formed out of letters lies on the proper understanding of its meaning. Mere 'letters' and 'words' would not give the desired results if one does not understand the meaning of what they intend to convey. Taken in a broader metaphysical perspective this verse implies that one would come to realise the supreme Truth only if one understands the esoteric meaning of what has been said in the scriptures. Similarly, a wise and enlightened man would see the Akshar, i.e. the imperishable, eternal, evergreen and infinite Brahm as the quintessential Artha or meaning and essence in everything in existence.]

23. 'I repeatedly bow most reverentially to Lord Rudra representing Linga (the image of Shiva in the form of a cylindrical structure raised above a circular platform), and goddess Uma representing the Peeth (the base on which this image is consecrated)' (23).

[Note—The concepts of Linga and Peeth have been elaborately described in Yoga Upanishads of Krishna Yajur Veda, viz. Yogshikha Upanishad Canto 1, verse nos. 131, 167-8, 170-175; Canto 2, verse nos. 5-11; Canto 5, verse nos. 8-12; and Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 27-28, 44-45. These two Upanishads appear as Chapters 21 and 15 respectively.]

24. In this way, I bow to Shiva and his divine consort Parvati separately as well as in his different manifestations as separate Gods and Goddesses, and offer my worship to all of them individually and jointly (24).

25. Wherever a man is, he can do Japa (repetition of Mantras) with these Mantra dedicated to Lord Shiva. Even a man accused of killing a Brahmin can be absolved of his crimes and forgiven if he repeats these divine Mantra while standing in water (of a river etc.) (25).

[Note—This is just to indicate the power of these Mantras, and not to actually mean giving blanket pardon for such heinous crime as murder!]

26-27. When one comes to truthfully realise and understand the secrets of the enigmatic and most esoteric Divinity known as Brahm who is the base and shelter of all that exists, who is untainted by and beyond the purview and reach of any kind of confusions, doubts, suspense and perplexities arising out the concept of duality, who is an embodiment of 'Sat-chit-anand' (truth, consciousness and bliss), who is incomprehensible by the mind and intellect as well indescribable by the faculty of speech, who is eternal and universal, and who is supreme and transcendental Sublimity personified—oh Shuk (a reference to sage Shukdeo who is hearing this discourse), it is only then that one is able to understand and become enlightened about all the other secrets of creation.

This is because there is nothing separate from Brahm in creation; there is nothing beyond Brahm, and there is nothing that is not Brahm (26-27).

28-30. There are two basic types of Vidyas (knowledge) that one should know about—one is called the ‘Paraa Vidya’, and the other is known as ‘Aparaa Vidya’¹.

Oh sage! The knowledge of the four Vedas such as Rik, Yajur, Sam and Atharva, and other forms of knowledge that come within the ambit of formal education such as the Kalpa (study of Vedic rituals), Vyaakaran (grammar), Nirukta (the exposition of the Vedas; commentaries on the scriptures), Chanda (poetry and its style of composition used in the scriptures), and Jyotish (astronomy and astrology based on mathematics and calculations)—all these come within the ambit of Aparaa Vidya. This is because they can be physically studied by anyone and expertise obtained in them by due diligence, high intelligence, steady concentration, constant practice and sincere perseverance. These are known texts and can be accessed by a sincere student. One can become expert in them and acquire fame and acclaim. They can be discussed, debated, taught and learnt. The Aparaa Vidya therefore relates to all types of knowledge except the one related to the Consciousness and the Atma. The latter is discussed below.]

On the other hand, the knowledge that enlightens one about the ‘true self’, the knowledge pertaining to the realisation of the Atma, the pure consciousness that forms this ‘true self’, is called the Paraa Vidya. [This is because it is not contained in any oral or written text. It has to come with enlightenment and realisation of the ‘self’ that obtained by sincerely putting into practice the essence of what has been learnt from the scriptures, and needs a lot of patience and deep insight. It is not restricted to literary expertise of the scriptures, and is beyond the scope of the Vedas though the latter teach about it. There have been numerous instances of great souls who had no formal education and initiation into the scriptures but were nevertheless most enlightened and self realised. The words of the Vedas can only help to show one the true thing, but that ‘true thing’ has to be experienced himself by one in order to truly understand about it. That is why it is repeatedly emphasised that once a person becomes self-realised he no longer needs to study the Vedas or perform any set of rites or conform to any set of rules. Once the aim is achieved, there is no longer the need of the vehicle that has brought one to one’s destination. Refer Krishna Yajur Veda’s Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 4-5; Akchu Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 41-41 ½; Avadhut Upanishad, verse nos. 15 ½, 18; Kathrudra Upanishad, verse no. 6.]

This essential entity called the Atma is super-natural, sublime, subtle and ethereal; it is supreme and transcendental; it is pure consciousness personified; it is the true self and identity of the enlightened man; it is Brahm at the macrocosmic level. [Refer verse nos. 10-11.] (28-30).

[Note--¹The words *Paraa Vidya* refers to that knowledge which is transcendental and beyond the normal field of knowledge that can be acquired in this mundane world by study; the knowledge which relates to the supreme ‘self’ or the pure conscious Atma; the knowledge of things that is beyond the range of perception and comprehension. On the other hand, *Aparaa Vidya* means just the opposite of the Paraa Vidya, and it refers to that body of knowledge which can be acquired by diligent study of the scriptures and other texts.]

31-32. That (the Atma at the micro level of creation, and Brahm at the macro level of creation) is neither physically visible nor can it be physically grasped. It has no names, lineage, form and colour. It has no physical sense organs such as hands, legs and ears etc. [31].

It is eternal, constant, perpetual and everlasting (Nitya). It is all-pervading, all-encompassing, immanent, omnipresent, almighty, steady, immovable and

magnanimous (Vibhu—an epithet applied to Vishnu and Shiva; the Supreme Being). It can go anywhere and lives everywhere; it is universal and there is no place that is inaccessible to it (Sarwagat). It is most microscopic and atomic in form and nature; nothing is smaller than it (Susuksham). It is without any faults, errors, shortcomings, blemishes and taints (Avyaya). It is the origin of all the elements as well as of all the living beings (Bhut-yoni).

Those who are intelligent, wise and enlightened as well resolute, steady and firm in their path and convictions (Dheer) see that supreme entity that is sublime and divine in their own inner self as their Atma, the pure and pristine Consciousness (31-32).

33. It is that universal and uniform Atma which is all-knowing and omniscient—for it knows the past, the present as well as the future besides knowing the inner thoughts of all (Sarwagyata), and it is an embodiment of all forms of knowledge that exist in this creation along with being their foundation and fount from where they sprout forth (Sarwavidyo). It personifies true knowledge, wisdom, erudition, enlightenment and skill of all kinds (Gyanmaye), as well as the grand virtues of austerity and penance (Tapa).

It is from such an astoundingly magnificent, eclectic and sublime Divinity (known as cosmic Consciousness) that this visible living world consisting of Annna (food) and its consumer (the living being who depends upon food for survival) have come into being (33).

34. This world which appears to be so real and true is present in this supremely magnificent and divine entity just like one imagines the presence of a serpent in a length of rope¹. [That is, it is out of ignorance, and delusions arising out of this ignorance, that one imagines the presence of the artificial and mortal world in Brahm which is infinitely true and non-artificial as well as imperishable and eternal much like imagining the presence of a snake in a harmless piece of rope and then building an imaginary aura of fear and horrors around it.]

But that divine and supreme entity is true and real (instead of being imaginary like the snake and perishable like the world). When one develops this wisdom and it gets firmly engrained in his inner self it is only then that the man attains the eclectic state of spiritual freedom and deliverance from all ignorance and delusions, which lead to his ultimate emancipation and salvation (called Moksha or Mukti) (34).

[Note--¹The concept of a *snake and a rope* is used as a metaphor to describe how lack of awareness of the truth leads an ignorant man to imagine that a harmless piece of rope is a vicious snake and instill in him a horrible fear of life. References of this concept—(a) Krishna Yajur Veda: Kathrudra Upanishad, verse no. 17; Yogkundali Upanishad, verse no. 79-80; Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 1-2, 22; Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 5, verse nos. 48-49; Canto 6, verse no. 77. (b) Shukla Yajur Veda: Niralamba Upanishad, verse no. 14.]

35. The only way to break free from the fetters that tie the soul of the creature to this ensnaring world of delusions, artificiality and miseries is by the means of Gyan (i.e. with the aid of truthful knowledge and wisdom about the spiritual reality of the soul, its quintessential divine nature, and the truth about the Supreme Being), and not by doing deeds (even the auspicious and righteous ones in the hope that they can help break the shackle represented by this world)¹.

In order to achieve this end (i.e. in order to acquire this true Gyan), one should approach a self-realised and wise Guru (moral preceptor, teacher and guide) in the

proper way to acquire this knowledge from him. The Guru should himself be well-versed in the scriptures (so that he can give proper and correct guidance and present a well considered and filtered version of them to the spiritual aspirant, instead of misleading him with wrong guidance and confusing him with contradictory advice, as that would be suicidal for the disciple), should himself have firm belief and conviction in Brahm, should himself be Brahm-realised, and should himself be extremely devoted and faithful to Brahm (because it is only then that he would have the necessary commitment, conviction and faith when he preaches about Brahm to his disciple) (35).

[Note—¹This is because deeds would be done in this world with the help of the gross body and their results would also appear in this world to be suffered from or enjoyed by the gross body. This body and the Atma, the soul, are different entities. The Atma is the pure conscious and the truthful ‘self’ of the creature, while the body is only a residence of this entity. So when the Atma thinks that one can find freedom by doing some kind of deed, it naturally has to depend upon the body because deeds in this gross world can only be done by the body using its sense organs. This involvement of the body would naturally have its consequences, the least of which is to make the Atma dependent on it, making the latter lose its much flaunted and much lauded virtue of freedom and independence. An Atma under obligations is bonded, and bondage of any kind can never give peace and happiness. This makes the deluded Atma living inside the body live like a prisoner inside a prison—it thinks that if it ever wishes to obtain auspicious end for it then it must take the help of the body to do good deeds so that the auspicious effects of these deeds would bless it (the Atma) with freedom. This fallacious conception makes it remain subservient to the body perpetually. So when the body suffers or enjoys the results of the deeds done by it, the Atma too gets involved; it also shares these sufferings and enjoyments. This vicious cycle is got rid of only when the Atma takes the shelter of Gyan—i.e. when it realises the ‘truth’ about its own self and the nature of its relationship with the body along with the fact involvement in deeds is a trap laid down by Maya, the maverick delusion creating powers of the Supreme Being designed to keep the creature involved in the affairs of the world so that the wheel of creation set in motion by the Lord himself keeps on rolling. That is why it is said that those who realise this great dilemma of creation are the fortunate ones whom the Lord himself wishes to give freedom and liberation from the cycle of birth and death by making them wise and enlightened. For the rest, the wheel continues to rotate!

An enlightened man understands that his true ‘self’ is the Atma and that it is eternally free, divine and auspicious, so where is the question of doing something to obtain these ends? The Atma is not a gross entity like the body, but the divine ethereal Soul that need not worry about finding freedom by doing any physical deeds to obtain emancipation and salvation. It must not forget that the very root of all its present predicaments is that it had allowed its self in getting involved in doing deeds in its past life that led to this present situation. So why should it repeat the same mistake?

It is to be noted here that this observation is open to misinterpretation. What it actually means is that one should do deeds with the correct wisdom and spiritual perspective. The very fact which is stressed here that spiritual liberation is possible by Gyan implies that one would be aware of the theory of how to do deeds and still ensure spiritual freedom from its shackles. Briefly, it is do deeds with total detachment from them and neither expecting any rewards from them, whether good or bad. This presupposes that a man is aware of the eclectic view of metaphysics that it is the gross perishable body that actually does any deed and either enjoys or suffers from their consequences, and not the pure ‘self’ or the Atma which is however the true identity of the wise man. Only ignorant fools think that it is their body which is

their 'self' and that this world is real and the true, and therefore they indulge in both of them as if that is the only thing for them to nourish and harbour.

So one need not run away from doing deeds, but rather inculcate the correct spiritual view in doing them. That way, a wise and enlightened man can benefit from both—he can fulfill his worldly obligations while remaining aloof and untainted from them much like the lotus flower that remains in a dirty pond but not a single drop of water sticks to it.

There are two terms used in the context of 'deeds'—one is *Kriti* and the other is *Karma*. '*Kriti*' refers to the act of doing, accomplishments, making an effort, performing an act. '*Karma*' refers to the work done or the deeds that are undertaken by a man. Both these terms are closely linked with each other and cannot be separated and understood correctly. If one does any deed, he is naturally taking some action. Whereas the term 'action' applies to the physical activity, the process of doing anything, the activity itself, the term 'deed' would apply to something someone has done, a notable achievement. An action is taken to accomplish success in one's endeavour, while the deed would describe in general terms the category under which one's actions can be classified—i.e. whether the action was good and auspicious, in which case we say that his deeds were good and he is remembered for his noble deeds, or bad and inauspicious in which case we say that his deed were so bad that he has left a scar on the society.

The word '*Karma*' generally refers to deeds done by a man, the actions he has taken, to act upon or implementing one's firm faith and conviction, commitment and dedication towards any entity or object which one adores, admires, honours or reveres. The word '*Kriti*' in the spiritual context with its various connotations refers to, inter alia, righteous deeds and actions involving self restraint, observance of strict codes of conduct and morality, and the ability to focus and concentrate the mind upon the supreme Truth and absolute Reality or Brahman while doing all the deeds or taking all the action in detached and dispassionate manner. One should be sincere and honest when he pursues any object or make efforts to obtain success in any enterprise, whether it is in the spiritual field or in the mundane worldly realm. Firm commitment, dedication, faith and singularity of purpose are the necessary ingredients for success in any action or deed. In other words, the '*Kriti*' of a man helps to determine the degree of '*Nishtha*' that he has. The way a man does anything will show how committed he is to his work—whether his heart is in it or not, whether he is doing it under duress or doing it willingly, how much faith and devotion he has in both the action as well as its consequential result or reward. Half-hearted and disinterested actions can't be hidden. That is why it is said that a 'man is known by his deeds or actions'.

The best spiritual path to be followed is not to shy away from doing the deed itself but to remain detached from it and its results. The deed is not in itself entangling but it is the notion of 'I' or 'me' that is the chief culprit. When the man thinks that 'he' has done anything, he is bound to be proud of good deeds and their results, and ashamed of bad deeds and their evil results. But this thought is erroneous in itself because of many reasons. First, a wise man knows that the deeds are done by the gross body which is not his 'self', as this 'self' is the pure consciousness known as the Atma residing in this body which is definitely different and separate from the body. Therefore the deed cannot be done by the 'me'. Second, all deeds are done in a physical gross world of material sense object that is artificial and illusive. Therefore, the deeds and their results are like the water in a mirage—artificial and illusive. Third, the results are also suffered or enjoyed by the gross body consisting of sense organs of perception and action, and not by the Atma. Thus, why should the Atma become overworked by something that does not concern it?

In brief, only as long as the person thinks that he is the 'doer' of deeds is he accused of doing it, but if he mentally remains detached and disassociated from them he is free from the deeds and their results; he can rightly claim that he has not done

anything. So, mental detachment, dispassion and non-involvement in any deed whatsoever is the clue of doing the deeds but remaining free from their consequences. It is the mind that is the cause of all attachments and involvements, and if the mind is properly reined in, the rest is easy to follow.

Another way prescribed in the scriptures is to do the deeds dispassionately and as a service to the supreme Lord or Brahm. When the deeds are done for the Master, there is no question of the doer having any right over the result just like the labourer who works in the field of his master has no right on the produce of his labour. He cannot say that since I have toiled so much, the harvest is mine. This would automatically create a psychological detachment from the deed because one has no expectation of either enjoying its fruits or suffering from its evil consequences, such as an abundant harvest or failure of crop in this present example.

The concept of 'deeds' is a central theme in many an Upanishads, some of which are as follows. The Adhyatma Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition describes the concept of doing deeds and its effect on the spiritual liberation or bondage of the creature in fine detail in its verse nos. 49-60.

The Kathrudra Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 13 asserts that the supreme transcendental Brahm or the quintessential spiritual Truth of creation as well as Mukti or liberation and deliverance is not possible by doing various deeds in this mortal world. This same idea is endorsed in Rudra Hridaya Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse no. 35 which asserts that deeds or Karma do not provide the Atma of the creature with liberation and deliverance from this world but it is Gyan (truthful knowledge of the spiritual truths) that do.

The 'Karma Chakra' or the giant wheel of deeds and their consequences has been described in the Shwetashwatar Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 6, verse no. 3. The three Paths followed by a creature according to the deeds done by him are referred to in Shwetashwatar Upanishad, 4/7. The Varaaha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 2, verse no. 48 describes how one can become free from the fetters created by 'deeds'. The Niralambo-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 11-12 describes the concept of Karma. The Sarwasaar Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 6 describes the concept of how and why the creature becomes the doer of deeds.

These concepts and the fact that a creature's destiny depends upon the deeds done by him have been elaborately described elsewhere also in (i) Rig Veda's Kaushitaki Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 1; (ii) Shukla Yajur Veda's Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, 3/1/3, 3/2/11-12, 3/9/28, 4/3/12, 33, 36, 5/10-5/11, 6/1/1-6, 6/2/2,14-16, etc.; Adhyatma Upanishad, verse nos. 57-58, 66; (iii) Sam Veda's Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 5, Section 3-10; Canto 7, Section 21; (iv) Krishna Yajur Veda's Taittiriyo-panishad, Valli 2, Anuvak 6; Katho-panishad, Canto 1, Valli 1, verse no. 20, and the whole of Canto 1, Valli 2 right up to Canto 2, Valli 3; Skanda Upanishad, verse no. 7; Kathrudra Upanishad, verse nos. 20-26.

What happens to ignorant people after death is explained in Brihad Aranyak 4/4/1. The Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 2, verse nos. 23-26 defines what constitutes of true 'Karma Yoga'. The Mandal Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, 2/4/2-3 describes the philosophy of Deeds.]

36-37. The Guru should impart the eclectic knowledge that would enlighten his disciple about the oneness of the Atma and Brahm, called the 'Paraa Vidya'. [Refer verse nos. 28-31.]

A spiritual aspirant who is able to witness and experience the secret presence of the imperishable and eternal Brahm inside his own inner self (as his pristine pure and self-illuminated consciousness known as the Atma) is able to untie the great spiritual knot representing misconceptions, ignorance and delusions about the truth

and reality pertaining to his own 'self' as well as the rest of the world, and consequentially obtain freedom from its shackling effects. This helps him to receive the reward of spiritual freedom by way of realising the eternal essence of 'Shiva'—the imperishable and infinite bliss and ecstasy that comes with realising the eternal truth about the Atma and Brahm, the knowledge which itself is truthful, beautiful and auspicious, hence 'Shiva' in its nature, contents and essence.

Those desirous of reaching the ultimate fount of eternal spiritual bliss and ecstasy, the citadel of spiritual peace and tranquility, the pinnacle of unbound spiritual happiness and joys, should endeavour to acquire this knowledge and unfold this secret as described herein above (36-37).

38. The ethereal vibrations of the cosmos that resonates imperceptibly in the entire being of the living creature (in the form of the resonance of the divine Mantra OM¹ as revealed during meditation) is like the stringed bow, while the Atma (the consciousness and life factor in the body that enables a man not only to live but to live with intelligence, conscience, wisdom and enlightenment that would help him to hear this divine resonance of cosmic Consciousness in his inner self and personally witness the presence of Brahm inside his own self) is regarded as the arrow mounted on this bow². A wise and erudite man uses this to aim at Brahm (the supreme transcendental Truth and Reality of creation; the ultimate divine 'self' in the context of the creation as a whole; the Supreme Being who is the protector and guardian Angel of the spiritual aspirant; the ultimate spiritual goal of life that can give permanent liberation and deliverance to the soul from the endless cycle of birth and death).

Therefore, one should not be apathetic towards this spiritual goal and pursue it relentlessly, sincerely, and without any indolence or carelessness.

Only like a person who concentrates upon the target can ever hope to successfully pierce it with the arrow, only a sincere and diligent person who is steady and relentless in his spiritual pursuit can ever hope to reach and realise Brahm, and not otherwise (38).

[Note—¹The Mantra OM pertains to Pranav, the cosmic transcendental Consciousness known as Brahm. During meditation and contemplation (Yoga and Dhyana), OM is used as a universal Mantra to focus one's attention and harness the divine energy of the cosmic Consciousness. Like a kite riding a wind or a ship riding a high tide, the individual's atomic 'self' called the Atma rides atop the crest of the cosmic sound waves that the repetition of OM generates in his inner self to reach the top of the head, in the region called the Agya Chakra located between the two eyebrows where the Atma experiences an extreme sense of bliss and contentedness that makes it realise its true nature. As the repetition continues, the sound waves gather more energy and finally the Atma reaches the top of the head, in the region called the Brahm Randhra which is a hair-like slit in the skull (cranium) which opens up due to these cosmic vibrations and allows the Atma to escape from the prison of the body for ever. This is called the 'Kaivalya' Mukti or the final liberation and deliverance of the creature.

The entire process of how this comes about has been described in Yoga Upanishads. For instance, the Kshuriko-panishad, verse nos. 18-20, the Amrit Naad Upanishad, verse no. 27, the Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 3, verse nos. 12-17, the Dhyana Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 103-106—all of them describe the concept of obtaining Mukti or liberation and deliverance by the Pran escaping through the Brahm Randhra.

The vibrations caused by the constant chanting of OM create such an ambience of tranquility that it completely overwhelms the spiritual aspirant so much so that he thinks of nothing else. This is like the surging waves of the ocean which just splashes

on the shore and drenches everything present there. Just like music is soothing for the nerves, the different notes and tones of OM massage the aspirant's nerves and calm him down. There are number of Upanishads that describe the divine value of OM Mantra and how it akin to the cosmic music played by the creator at the cosmic level. Some of them are the following—(a) Rig Veda—Naad Bindu Upanishad. (b) Krishna Yajur Veda—Taittiriya Upanishad, Valli (Canto) 1, Anuvak (sub-canto) 8; Amrit Naad Upanishad, verse no. 2, 4, 24-25, 31-32; Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 2, 9-18 (which narrates how each letter of OM stands for different aspects of creation), 37, 102; Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 1, 6; Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 136-139; Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse nos. 2-12, 69-71 ½ which narrates how each letter of OM stands for different aspects of creation; Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 70; Shuka Rahashya Upanishad, verse no. 20 describes how OM is used for the purpose of ritualistic worship according to the Tantra philosophy involving Anga Nyas, Shandanga Nyas etc.; Akchu Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 42-43 ½ describe how the three states of existence (waking, dreaming and deep sleep) and the three types of bodies (gross, subtle and causal) came into existence as manifestations of the three letters A, U and M of the word OM. (b) Shukla Yajur Veda—Taarsar Upanishad, Canto 2, and Canto 3, verse nos. 1-7; Hans Upanishad, verse nos. 6-17. (c) Sam Veda—Yogchudamani Upanishad verse no. 74-81, 85-88; Pranavo Panishad which has only 13 verses dedicated to OM. (d) Atharva Veda—Ram Tapiniopanishad, canto 3, verse no.5-9.

²The metaphor or analogy of the bow and arrow—refer also to Mundak Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Mundak (Canto) 2, section 2, verse nos. 3-4.]

39. The target represented by Brahm is present everywhere, the arrow represented by the Atma is also present everywhere¹, but it is only when the archer represented by the spiritual aspirant develops the same degree of highly evolved, highly wisened and highly enlightened views about the universality and uniformity of Brahm and Atma—that is, only when he sees 'non-duality' in creation and observes nothing but his targeted Brahm everywhere, seeing Brahm and nothing but Brahm in the entire creation—is he eligible and competent to reach his spiritual target of reaching and realising Brahm. In other words, it then becomes very easy for him to aim for and realise the ultimate Truth and Divinity in creation that is the beautiful, auspicious and eternal entity known as Shiva. [Here Shiva and Brahm are treated synonymously.] (39).

[Note—¹This is a highly evolved spiritual view in the field of metaphysics and marks the culmination of enlightenment. A true self-realised and Brahm-realised person is expected to have a universal view of the Atma, the view that the Atma or pure consciousness is a non-dual entity that pervades the entire creation uniformly, and that the individual Atma and the cosmic Atma known as Brahm are the same thing. The same consciousness resides in all the living beings as their individual 'self' or Atma as well as in the rest of the creation as the irrefutable and universal cosmic 'truth' or Brahm. When this wisdom dawns upon the aspirant, he need not go anywhere to search this Atma or Brahm because it is present inside his own being, in his own inner self. He need not offer worship to any separate God who lives in some far away heaven, as the supreme God is residing within himself. Thus, he sees Brahm everywhere in this creation, and this marks the pinnacle of spiritual achievement for the aspirant. This is indeed the great teaching of the Upanishads.

We can visualise how this comes about by a simple example from day to day life. When one wishes to hear a particular radio station, he has to tune in to the right frequency by tweaking the knob on his radio receiver. The radio waves of all the

broadcasting stations are omnipresent in the atmosphere and saturate it. When a person switches on the radio set, he hears so many of them, but he immediately neglects them and navigates through the dial to search for his favourite station. Similarly, in the case of Mantras too there are so many of them, and each relates to one aspect of Divinity personified as some God. But if one wishes to have access to the Supreme Being, the Mantra OM is meant for him. So it is only when the Atma focuses on OM that it can have access to the supreme Brahm. We cannot expect to hear station 'A' by tuning in to station 'B'!]

40. That Supreme Being whose divine abode is far beyond the reach of the Sun and the Moon because their light cannot reach it (or in other words, this abode is so magnificently bright and blindingly dazzling that the light of the sun and the moon fade in comparison to its brilliance, and therefore are utterly insignificant there)¹, where even the all-pervading and omnipresent wind or air element cannot go (i.e. it is far away in the deep bowls of the cosmos, much beyond the solar system and the world as seen by humans), and which is even inaccessible to the different Gods who are deemed to be eternal and all-powerful (implying that even the Gods cannot know fully about the Supreme Being)—the same Lord reveals himself when the devotee (spiritual aspirant) seeks him and remembers him with due devotion and sincerity.

The Lord then manifests himself for such an aspirant in all his pristine pure and gloriously illuminated divine form that is still invisible to others. [That is, the Supreme Being known as Brahm reveals himself as the self-illuminated Atma or pure consciousness that is present inside the inner self of the enlightened and self-realised aspirant which only he can witness. This Atma is invisible and imperceptible in the conventional sense of seeing and perceiving anything in this material world. That is why when Brahm reveals himself to the spiritual aspirant, no one else can see the Lord. It is very personal experience and it cannot be shared by others. The very fact that such Brahm-realised holy men effuse a divine glow in the form of a halo around them, and possess some unique traits and supernatural powers not otherwise possible in this world, delineates them from the rest of the ordinary persons.] (40).

[Note—¹This statement is intended to remove any confusion in the mind of the reader regarding where the abode of Brahm is. Earlier verses have cited the instance of the Sun and the Moon (verse nos. 3-4), the animate and the inanimate world (verse no. 9) and the three worlds consisting of the terrestrial world, the nether world and the heavenly world (verse no. 13) as the possible places where the supreme Brahm can be searched and found. Does it mean that Brahm is localized to these places only, because it creates the impression that the Supreme Being is to be found in the realm of the solar system only where the sun and the moon and the known forms of life such as those known to be present upon earth or seen from earth are present? Does it mean that the rest of the creation is devoid of Brahm? This doubt is sought to be removed by this verse. The solar system is merely like a hair on the body of the Viraat Purush, and there are countless such solar systems in varying degrees of development in his vast colossus body that has 'infinity' and 'fathomless-ness' as its dimension. Since the seers or sages who had envisioned the grand philosophy of the Upanishads had lived on earth, their conceptualization was based on whatever observations they could make from earth. But they were wise people, and so to remove any possibility of error creeping in the broader vision of things they had in mind, they first said something then modified what they said to encompass even those things that were beyond even their own imagination—to stress the point that their instances and metaphors should not be taken too literally but understood in the correct spirit. Words have their own limitations and they cannot butt and bound something that even the scriptures declare as being beyond description and definitions. In the present instance for example, the light of the Sun and the Moon do not reach the other

end of the universe to light it; there are numerous such solar systems scattered in the vast bosom of the universe. Each star is a sun in its own right, lighting its own realm, and if the 'Sun' is deemed to be the 'eye' or 'manifestation of transcendental Consciousness' then it obviously follows that these far-away stars or Suns are also Brahm revealed in all these forms.

Therefore, 'Brahm' is not limited to where humans or animal and plant life exists in the universe, but is present even in the farthest and the remotest corners of creation as far a field as the universe stretches, and even beyond it so that it forms the outer boundary of this entire creation. That is why the Upanishads treat Brahm as an equivalent to the sky element which has no limits and which is present anywhere wherever there is creation in any form imaginable. In fact the word 'sky' refers to the infinite 'space' which has no limits and boundaries! Refer—Krishna Yajur Veda's Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse no. 40, Ekachar Upanishad, verse no. 12, Panch Brahm Upanishad, verse nos. 19-23, Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 38 in this context.]

41. [Verse nos. 41-45 espouse the philosophy of uniformity and non-duality of the soul, the philosophy central to Advaitya Vedanta. It establishes why and how there is no difference between the Jiva, the living being, and Ishwar, the Supreme Being.]

In this tree represented by the creature's body, two birds live. One is the Jiva (the individual), and the other is the Ishwar (the supreme Lord). Out of these two, the Jiva enjoys and suffers from the consequences of the deeds done, while the Ishwar remains a neutral spectator or witness to that deed. [The Shwetashwatar Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 6-7 uses this example of two birds to beautifully describe the relationship between the creature and the supreme Brahm. The metaphor of the tree is also used magnificently to describe this creation in Katha/Kathvalli Upanishad, Canto 2, Valli 3. Both these two Upanishads are part of this volume.] (41).

[Note—The *Jiva* refers to that aspect of consciousness that makes the creature think that it is the 'doer' of deeds, and therefore is liable for its results, both good and bad. Such a deluded individual thinks that the body is his 'self' and therefore what the body does is being done by 'him'. Such a person would naturally be affected by what is produced by the deed done because all actions have a reaction, and since he regards himself as the doer he must face the results as well.

On the other end of the thinking process is the eclectic view that the 'self' is not the body but the pure consciousness known as the Atma, and this Atma is separate from the body and it does not have anything to do with the deeds done by the body because the Atma is merely a temporary resident of the body. Besides this point, there is an element called 'conscience' in all individuals which tells them what is good and what is not. This conscience is the voice of the Atma inasmuch as it always tells the person about things which are righteous and auspicious and noble. Whenever the man indulges in worldly things or sinful acts, this conscience would warn him, even though for a fleeting moment, that the path he has chosen is not going to be conducive for his long-term good. This voice of the Atma, so-called, is the voice of the Ishwar referred to here in this verse. In other words, the consciousness revealing itself as the conscience is the *Ishwar*.

There is a very fine and almost imperceptible difference between the terms Ishwar and Brahm. While the word Ishwar generally refers to the supreme Lord of creation worshipped as a God by his devotees, the term refers to the cosmic Consciousness that is the 'soul' of this Ishwar. This 'supreme, cosmic Consciousness' is called Brahm; it is the ultimate Truth and the quintessence of everything of any worth in existence. In the individual creature this Brahm resides as his own 'self' or Atma. Therefore, Brahm is Ishwar because the former is the Lord of creation, and

Ishwar is Brahm because it is Consciousness personified in its macrocosmic revelation. Practically, they can be used synonymously.

Since the Atma is a manifestation of Brahm and the sovereign residing inside the body of the individual, it is also called the Ishwar residing inside the heart or the inner self of the creature. This view is proved by the fact that the sublime and subtle Atma shows characteristics special to Brahm, the Ishwar, the Supreme Being, such as its eternity, imperishability, self-illumination, wisdom, enlightenment, all-pervading and all-knowing abilities etc.—qualities that the gross body lacks. This is affirmed in verse no. 44 below.

Therefore, this 'Ishwar', the resident Supreme Being or Brahm in the form of the conscious Atma, does not do anything and remains neutral towards the deeds done by the 'Jiva', the individual who thinks that the body is his 'self'. Thus, the former (Ishwar) is merely a witness to the deeds while the latter (Jiva) is neck-deep in them.

It would be noted that the difference between the Jiva and the Ishwar lies in the level of erudition, enlightenment and wisdom by which things are perceived by the individual person. An ordinary man thinks that he is known as an individual because of the body, that the body is his 'self' and identity, and therefore he is subjected to all the characteristic features and qualities associated with the body—i.e. that he would die, that he takes a birth, that he suffers from this and that, that he does deeds and therefore must either enjoy the rewards of these deeds or suffer from their consequences, that this world and its enchantments are real, are meant for him and therefore must be enjoyed, and so on and so forth.

On the other end of the spectrum is the enlightened view that one's true identity is not the body but the soul or the pure conscious Atma which is the ethereal spirit that is imperishable and eternal, that this spirit neither takes a birth nor dies, that it is uniform and stable under all circumstances, and therefore it neither gets agitated or excited, nor depressed and dejected by circumstances or as the result of deeds, that it is untainted, untarnished and pristine pure, and therefore not affected by the various faults associated with this murky world which can only influence the external body and not its resident Atma, and so on and so forth.

The body is regarded as a tree on which both these birds live to indicate that the same body can lead to spiritual entrapment for one person while providing emancipation and salvation to another. The same body is used by a pervert man to commit horrendous sins and torment others no end, and a holy person uses the body to alleviate their sufferings and serve humanity selflessly. The same body can be a snare trapping the Atma, and it can also be a means of its liberation and deliverance. If a man gets involved with the world and uses his body as a means to gratify himself, he would be shackled to it, while if he uses it to study the scriptures and perform righteous deeds in an auspicious manner without getting involved in them and their results, he would be using the body to achieve liberation and deliverance. Even Yoga Upanishads emphasise the fact that meditation and contemplation is an important instrument by which the Atma can find its liberation, called 'Kaivalya Mukti' by doing various Yoga exercises, and these can only be done with the help of the body. So, in brief, it is the way one handles anything that is of greater importance rather than the thing itself.]

42. The Maheshwar (the great Lord; the truthful 'self' representing Brahm; the Atma as a representative of Brahm) does not enjoy or suffer from the consequences of deeds done by the Jiva. The former is merely a witness of everything. [That is, the sublime Atma does not have to suffer from what the gross body does. It just watches silently in a dispassionate way the deeds of the body.]

In fact, the difference between the Jiva and Brahm is artificial and is created by Maya—i.e. by ignorance-incited delusions about one's true nature and essence.

This knowledge itself is like an illumination that can remove this dark shadow of Maya¹. [Refer verse no. 44.] (42).

[Note--¹That is, basically there is no difference between the individual creature and the supreme Brahm because the true identity of the individual is his eternal and enlightened Atma, the pure consciousness or soul residing in his gross body, and not the external perishable body that is gross, inert and inane to the extreme. This Atma of the individual creature is the microcosmic counterpart of the cosmic Atma that is the essence and the principal entity of creation known as Consciousness, and therefore both are the same. What pervades in the entire creation also pervades in one's own body; what gives life to the rest of the creation also gives life to the individual creature. This is the considered eclectic non-dual view of the Upanishads. It is out of ignorance of the fact that the creature thinks that the supreme Lord is somewhere else in the heaven and has to be sought outside his own self. It is out of ignorance of the Truth about one's true 'self' that a creature thinks that he is a Jiva, a living being with a gross body, who is different and separate from Maheshwar, the great Ishwar, the supreme Lord of creation. This delusion and false conception is the result of Maya.

Once the creature becomes enlightened and wisened of this fact, once he realises that the difference between himself and Brahm is artificial and illusionary because his 'true self' is not the gross body but the ethereal cosmic Consciousness known as the Atma that is universal and uniform everywhere in creation, and that his own Atma is a microcosm of the omnipresent cosmic Atma that uniformly pervades in each form and each unit in creation, he immediately begins to see that there is no fundamental difference between his 'true self' and the supreme 'Self' of creation.

Hence, this knowledge that the dichotomy created between the Jiva and the Ishwar is an artificial creation of Maya is an awareness that would immediately lift the veil of delusions created by ignorance of the 'truth and reality'. It is like the illumination provided by the light of a candle of knowledge that cuts through the darkness of ignorance and the attendant phantoms and ghosts stalking the creature and horrifying him no end.

Refer verse no. 43 below that explicitly clarifies this point.]

43. Just like the Ghatacash and Mathakash (the space present inside a hollow pot, and the space inside the building of a monastery respectively) are imaginary and artificial segregations or partitions of the same Akash (the sky and its infinite stretch of space) which is fundamentally immutable, indivisible, uniform and universally all-pervading and all-encompassing by nature, the Supreme Being known as Brahm too is imagined to have two separate existences as Ishwar and Jiva. In fact, this artificial and imaginary distinction between the two manifestations of the same non-dual and immutable Supreme Being (Brahm) as the Ishwar and Jiva is due to ignorance about the truth and reality (43).

[Note—This is because both the Jiva and Ishwar are two sides of the same coin—one is at the gross and micro level of creation, and the other is at the sublime and macro level of creation, inspite of the fact that both have the same consciousness living inside them. That is, whereas Ishwar is the all-powerful, ethereal, macrocosmic, all-pervading and all-encompassing gross body of Brahm which has no physical barriers, the Jiva is the microcosmic gross body of the same Brahm as the individual creature with limitations of the gross body. The Ishwar is the nearest analogue to Brahm inasmuch as it is eternal, infinite, sublime, subtle, invisible, macrocosmic, universal and all-pervading in Nature, while the Jiva is mortal, gross and limited to his gross body. Both have the pure consciousness known as the soul or the Atma central to their existence. In the case of Ishwar, it is 'cosmic Consciousness', and in the case of the Jiva it is 'individual consciousness'. So the difference between the duo—the Jiva and Ishwar—is only based on an erroneous perception of the truth. Once the correct

perception is taken into consideration, the dichotomy vanishes—and this is called enlightenment and self-realisation. That is, if the ‘truthful’ identity of both is ‘consciousness’ and this consciousness is Brahm, then it follows that Jiva and Ishwar are the same. In other words, a self-realised individual who has known his true self is like an Ishwar personified.]

44. In fact, the consciousness personified as the Atma is nothing but Shiva (the auspicious beautiful Truth itself) personified. It is the level of spiritual wisdom and enlightenment that whether or not one distinguishes between a Jiva and Ishwar; actually there is no basic difference between them. [This is because the Jiva has a predominance of delusions and ignorance in it making it unaware of its glorious and divine true ‘self’, whereas Ishwar is the pinnacle of wisdom and enlightenment who knows this fact. Therefore, if the Jiva also becomes wise and enlightened then he would too become one like Ishwar. In this context, refer verse no. 42.]

If there was a real difference between them then their basic conscious nature would be compromised with. [Since a living being has consciousness in it, it is not inanimate like rock or tree, and therefore it is different from the inanimate forms of life in this creation. The difference between a Jiva and a tree has been explained by sage Yagyavalkya in Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, in its Canto 3, Brahman 9, verse no. 28/1-7. But a lowly fallen man is not different from those who are wise, enlightened and noble except for the degree of these auspicious virtues possessed by them. Both have the same body showing the same functions, both take a birth and die, both reproduce and eat and drink, but here the similarity ends. The mental and intellectual setups of both are as varied as the sky and the earth. It is the level of erudition and wisdom or Gyan that decides whether a person treats himself as a Jiva or as Brahm personified as his Atma or pure conscious ‘self’.] (44).

45. The apparent difference between the two categories of consciousness present in the Jiva and the Ishwar is dependent upon the level of their Gyan, i.e. their spiritual awakening, wisdom, enlightenment and conscience factor. The difference is due to the dominance of gross negative values in the former, and the sublime and noble values in the latter. So to say that ‘the pure consciousness’ has two types of existences—one as a Jiva and the other as Ishwar—is imaginary and due to ignorance of the absolute reality and quintessential truth about consciousness. And this truth is the fact that the ‘consciousness’ in reality is a uniform, universal, immutable, non-divisible and non-dual entity. Therefore the apparent dichotomy is due to the veil of ignorance about its immaculate pristine pure nature that surrounds the creature like a dark cloud of ignorance and delusions, leading it to believe that the Jiva (the ‘true self’ of the living being as his pure consciousness known as the Atma) is separate from the supreme Brahm (who is the supreme ‘Self’ and cosmic transcendental Consciousness) known as Ishwar, the supreme Lord of creation.

The very fact that one sees two entities in what is essentially non-dual and immutable itself shows the low level of intellectual development and the deluded mind of the creature that sees this difference. [It is like the case of hallucination when one sees two images of the same object with two eyes whereas the two eyes ought to be seeing a combined three-dimensional single image of that object. It’s like seeing many images of the sun or the moon in many pans full of water and thinking that there are as many suns or moons in the sky as the number of images seen. Refer Amrit Naad Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 12 which precisely describes this phenomenon.] (45).

46-47. The uniformity and oneness of the consciousness can be arrived at by intelligent application of the mind so that it can sift through and analyse available evidence and make intelligent deductions from it by applying wisdom, logic and the elimination process.

Once this uniformity and non-dual nature of the consciousness is established (i.e. once the wise man knows that the only thing of worth in whatever that exists in this world has the same basic nature and essence known as 'consciousness', that there is no duality and dichotomy in the world in the real sense because its basic worth lies not in its gross form but in the consciousness present in it, and that whatever duality that apparently exists is due to total stupidity and ignorance of the truth) the wise and enlightened man becomes free from all sorts of mental confusions and emotional agitations. He no longer remains tied to the shackles of delusions and ignorance¹.

He finds access to the eternal fount of extreme beatitude and felicity that comes with obtaining the essence of or knowing the truth of 'Shiva' which is non-dual and only one of its kind² (46-47).

[Note—¹The intrinsic value of a golden ornament lies in the quantity and purity of its gold content rather than its external form. Would anyone pay the same amount of money for a decorative piece of jewelry if he knows that it is not gold, but brass? Both gold and well-polished brass look almost alike to a naïve person; even the quality and purity of gold is not possible to be judged easily by a lay person. But all his confusions and doubts about the true value of the ornament are removed when its value is judged by an expert gold-smith. Likewise, 'Gyan' (truthful knowledge, wisdom, erudition, information and enlightenment) tells a man what the real value and worth of the world is, what the 'reality and truth' of this world of uncountable sense objects and astounding charms is, what spiritual value does it have? It is then the man becomes 'enlightened' and sees the reality behind the fascinating external façade of pompous artificiality and illusive charms. He realises that everything is perishable and transient, and therefore of no actual and eternal value. He discovers that the only thing of any spiritual worth in this world is the 'consciousness' much like the gold in the ornament cited above. It is the true secret of life and existence; it is eternal and imperishable. When this happens, the darkness of delusions and ignorance are dispelled, and instead light of enlightenment shines through to illuminate the entire existence for the spiritual aspirant.

²The word Shiva refers to the eclectic divine virtues of auspiciousness, righteousness, beauty, piety, holiness, renunciation, wisdom, erudition, enlightenment, purity and truth. When a person becomes wise enough to rise above the mundane and lowly existence of remaining engrossed in worldly affairs of the sense objects and self-gratification, a selfish life which lacks broadness of vision and long-term welfare of the soul, when he gets to see the 'truth' in the light of wisdom and enlightenment, it is only then that he begins to see things from a higher pedestal, with a broader perspective of existence and the truthful nature of the soul and its future, and thereby develop a panoramic view of existence. It is like seeing earth from space when all the warts on the earth's surface—the mighty mountains and the meandering rivers, the green fields and the dry deserts, the artificial boundaries that separate nations and states—vanish. What is seen is a beautiful blue ball hanging from nowhere in the vast dark void of space. One then begins to wonder why men fight each other for a yard of land and cut each others throat for a gram of gold!

Thus, a wise man begins the search for the 'truth and reality' by studying the scriptures and consulting wise men. He trains his mind to gather all information and then analyse it to intelligently arrive at conclusions that are not based on hearsay, whims and misconceptions but on sound ground and reasoning. He understands the essence of the fundamental tenets of the scriptures and sees the eclectic,

quintessential and undeniable spiritual ‘truths’ encoded in them. He applies this learning in practice and realises their true worth along with discovering who he himself actually is. He then becomes ‘Shiva’ personified; he has discovered the ‘Shiva’ principle, or the grand irrefutable Truth of creation. He has accessed the magnificently grand virtues that are the hallmarks of divinity and holiness which are collectively called ‘Shiva’.]

48. The supreme divine entity (Brahm) is the ultimate Truth and pure Consciousness that not only uniformly pervades in this entire creation but is also the base and foundation of this creation; it is the support and succour of this entire creation; it is where this creation finds its final resting place in peace.

Wise and enlightened men become free from all sorrows and miseries (i.e. they become restful and peaceful) by realising the truth of the eclectic statement ‘I am that supreme Divinity known as Shiva or Brahm personified’¹ (48).

[Note--¹Here the word ‘I’ refers to the Atma and not the gross body of the man, and the word ‘divinity’ refers to the Supreme Being represented by Brahm, the transcendental cosmic Truth and Consciousness as well as Shiva who is an embodiment of such grand eclectic virtues as auspiciousness, righteousness, holiness, divinity, renunciation, wisdom, erudition, enlightenment, purity and truth. Such wise men have come to the conclusion that their ‘true self’ is as glorious and divine as the supreme Divinity and Truth itself, and thus they become free from all sorrows and perplexities created by not knowing their high pedigree. Now they would no longer have to run after some distant God in order to worship him for his blessings, or worry for their death and what would happen to them after death as they have realised that they, in the form of their Atma, are basically immortal and eternal like the supreme Brahm, and as auspicious, truthful and holy as Shiva. They are not concerned with pursuing the material objects of the world any longer, and whatever comes their way are gladly accepted by them to sustain life happily and contentedly while they live in this world. Therefore there is no cause for anxiety and frustration, or for any ill-will and hatred and jealousy. They are fully contented and fulfilled. They might be living in a physical world surrounded with miseries and pain, but are so detached from it internally that they remain totally unaffected by anything pertaining to the world just like the case of the lotus flower living in a dirty pond remaining unaffected by the filth and muck that surrounds it. It’s indeed a life of spiritual Utopia.]

49. Only those persons who have cleansed their inner self of all taints and blackening soot created by Maya (representing all sorts of delusory and ignorance-based conceptions and misunderstandings pertaining to the actual reality and truth) are able to see the reflection or image of the Supreme Being in their inner self. This image is as glorious as its principle who has his own self-created body (i.e. who does not live in some other body like the creature’s Atma which lives in another gross body when it takes birth in this world), is self-illuminated, and is the universal witness and observer of everything in this creation (which implies that he is present everywhere, inside and outside of everything, at the same time, and also in all phases of time such as the past, the present and the future).

Therefore it follows that those who are covered by the veil cast by Maya and tainted by its evil shadow of deceit and illusions can never hope to see this glorious Divinity shining in their inner self (49).

[Note—It is like the case of seeing the image of the sun or the moon in a mirror. If the mirror is clean, the image would be perfect, and the dirtier or the more tarnished the mirror is the more unclear and distorted would the image be.]

50. A wise and enlightened ascetic who is truly self-realised and knows the true nature and form of his Atma (as described herein above) has obtained spiritual maturity, and for such an ascetic there is no going anywhere. He is deemed to have found liberation and deliverance for his soul while he is still alive, and even after death he does not have to go anywhere else as his Atma simply dissolves and merges with the supreme Atma of the cosmos present everywhere in this creation¹ (50).

[Note--¹That is, he does not go to any heaven or take another birth in a higher rung of creation. For him the heaven, which is the abode of the Supreme Being, is located in his very own 'self' where his Atma resides. He does not take any birth because he comes to know that the Atma is eternal and imperishable, and therefore the question of it first dying and then taking a new birth does not arise. Besides this, he knows that the Atma does not do any deeds and neither is it involved in the deeds done by the body. His Atma remains free from the consequences of these deeds, the primary cause for one having to take any new birth according to the principle of deeds and their consequences which compels a creature to take another birth in order to enjoy or suffer from the unrequited results of the deeds done in the previous life.]

51. Even as the sky does not go anywhere or comes from anywhere (because it is present universally and uniformly everywhere), the wise and self-realised person who has known the truth of the Atma as his 'true self' also does not have to go anywhere or come from anywhere. [That is, he neither dies and goes to heaven or hell, nor takes another birth for the simple reason that the Atma is universal, uniform, eternal, imperishable, infinite, all-pervading, omnipresent and steady as the sky element.] (51).

52. An exalted and self-realised sage, who is wise and enlightened enough to know for certain who the Supreme Being known as Brahm is, has the spiritual grasp of the Truth and Reality and therefore is established in his own 'self' which is Brahm personified. Hence, he becomes as divine and sublime as the Sat-Chit-Anand Brahm, i.e. he becomes a living embodiment of such glorious virtues as Truth, Consciousness, and Bliss and Ecstasy unbound. In brief, he becomes one like Brahm himself.

This is what this Upanishad affirms. This is its teaching. Amen! (52).

-----Shanti Paath-----

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Chapter 27

Yog Kundali Upanishad/Yogkundalyu-panishad

The Yog Kundali Upanishad/Yogkundalyu-panishad, as the name suggests, is dedicated exclusively to Yoga—its exercises, its practice, its pitfalls and precautions, its spiritual benefits, and how it can lead to one's liberation and deliverance from this trap-like perishable body as well as from the cycle of birth and death. It has three Cantos. It is one of the main Yoga Upanishads and come under the category of the revealed ones— as it was revealed by the patron God of Yoga himself, i.e. by Lord Shiva, to the creator Brahma (refer Canto 3, verse no. 1). It was also preached by Shiva to sage Gautam (Canto 1, verse no. 3). It has three Cantos.

Canto 1 deals with the concept of breath control, called Pranayam, and explains its various forms along with the Aasans and Bandhas that aid in activating the spiraled subtle energy center in the body, called the Kundalini, that had hitherto been lying dormant in the body in order to harness its latent spiritual energy. Amongst the interesting things narrated here are the four types of Pranayams (viz. Surya Bhedan, Ujjaayi, Shitali and Bhastrika), the three types of Bandhas (Mool, Uddiyan and Jalandhar), and the detailed process of kindling the dormant Kundalini fire.

Canto 2 elaborately describes a special meditative technique called 'Khechari' which bestows mystical powers upon its practitioner. It empowers him with certain unique abilities such as the ability to float or fly in the air.

Canto 3 describes the successful culmination of Yoga and its spiritual rewards—viz. self-realisation and Brahm-realisation, the submergence of the self in the supreme Self, the enlightenment about the pure consciousness known as the Atma, and the resultant eclectic and spiritually exalted state of having achieved Mukti—liberation and deliverance—from this body as well as the world.

Other relevant Upanishads of this Veda dealing with Yoga are—Yogtattva, Yogshikha and Varaaha.

-----Shanti Paath-----

The meaning of this Shanti Paath is given in Appendix no. 1 of this volume.

Canto 1

1. The reason why the mind is so undecided, restless, fickle and unsteady that it cannot remain concentrated on anything for long and continues to jump from one object to another, remaining always in a state of flux, are two—viz. (a) Vasanas (natural, inherent and inborn passions, desires, yearnings and lust pertaining to the gross organs of the body and the gross sense objects of the material world which a creature carries down to this present life as a baggage from his past life) and (b) Samir (the wind or air element, here referring to the vital winds called Pran that keep the body active and restless much like the air inside the balloon; when the body is restless the mind too would be restless because the mind is directly affected by the body and its sense organs).

If a person is able to control anyone one of them, the other is automatically controlled (1).

[Note—The various *Vasanas* in a person, i.e. the inherent desires and wishes, the latent passions and hidden yearnings that he has vis-à-vis the material world and its sense objects, inspire and propel him to do things in this world that would satisfy them. They manifest themselves as his Vrittis or natural urges, inclinations, tendencies and temperaments. For instance, if a man wishes to become a literary scholar and acquire name and wealth on this account in this life but fails to do so due to some reason, this unrequited desire would not die with the death of the body but would be carried over to the man's next life as his unfulfilled desire. This would create in him an overriding desire for knowledge in the new life that he has got as a result of so many other factors. So he would have the necessary inborn aptitude, natural intelligence and mental skills along with the urge and drive for knowledge that his sibling would probably lack though both have the same biological parents.

This explains why two brothers or sisters vary so dramatically in their nature and habits as well as in their mental and intellectual development, and why a child often shows traits quite the opposite of the ones present in its either parents. The secret lies in the fact that the child's 'true self' is the Atma which had acquired this new body due to the cumulative effects of so many factors related to its past life, such as the deeds done by the individual in its past life and their cumulative consequences, the unfulfilled desires and aspirations that he had, his earlier Vasanas (worldly passions, desires, yearnings etc.) and the resultant Vrittis (inclinations, habits, tendencies) that he has carried over to this new life, and so on and so forth.

Since the body is only a medium for the Atma to carry out its desires, and the body is able to perform any task only as long as the vital winds present in it allow it to function and carry out its designated duties, it follows that as long as there are Vasanas, the *Samir* (i.e. the vital winds or Pran present in the body) is forced to remain active so as to enable the creature to fulfill these Vasanas with the help of the body. Since the *Samir* is responsible for keeping the body active so that the individual can interact with the world to satisfy his list of Vasanas, it follows that the former cannot rest as long as the creature has Vasanas in him.

Interacting with the material world of astounding charms and fascinating sense objects create a new set of Vasanas for them. This is in addition to the baggage of desires and yearnings carried over from past life. Involvement with this world and attachment with the body in the erroneous belief that the world is the real thing, that it is meant to be enjoyed and lived to the full, and that the body is a person's true self and identity, creates a new wave of Vasanas. Constant interaction with the world makes the creature aware of newer opportunities and attractions of the material world, and this stokes the fire of Vasanas.

The natural corollary is that if the Vasanas are controlled, there would be no need for the body to remain active and be an active participant in the affairs of the mundane world of material sense objects that are by nature entrapping and creators of numerous problems for the creature. This translates into the *Samir* being put under control.

Again, since interaction with the world of stupendous material charms and full of sense objects that has a natural tendency to attract the individual towards themselves, an active *Samir* results in creation of fresh Vasanas.

In other words, Vasanas and *Samir* are inter-related; they work in close coordination. As such, if one is vanquished, if one of them is controlled, the other would naturally submit it's self. For instance, if a man has no desire for gratifying his sense organs, he would pay scant attention for the charms of the material sense objects of the world, and this lack of interest or Vasanas would calm his restlessness which is indicative of the calming of the Pran or *Samir*.

Keeping a safe distance from the pleasures of the sense objects and the comforts offered by the material things of the world would help eliminate a burning desire to acquire them, and then worry about their retention and enhancement. Since acquisition of material things of the world and satisfying the urges of the sense organs of the body needs deeds to be done and actions to be taken, once a man overcomes his Vasanas he automatically gives his body rest, which translates into the *Samir* become calmed and quietened. If the *Samir* is calmed down and willfully controlled, the body would be calmed down and lose its natural habit to be restive, which would mean that it would no longer be obsessive about the thoughts of the world which gratifies its sense organs, and would instead accept whatever comes its way with a great degree of equanimity and dispassion. It would no longer yearn for sense gratifications and attempt to indulge in the enjoyment of the material comforts and pleasures of the world which however is intrinsically deluding and entrapping. Thus, the individual is able to avoid creation of new Vasanas.]

2. Out of the two, it is better and easier to first conquer and control the Samir (vital winds called Pran that reside inside the body of the creature). [This is because once the Pran is controlled, once the body stops its natural restlessness and its organs stop their outwardly run in pursuance of the objects of the material world that lure them constantly with their irresistible charm, it would be very easy to overcome the Vasanas—the inherent desires for acquiring and enjoying the enticingly charming sense objects of the world, the various aspirations and yearnings for worldly fame and wealth, the natural tendency to appease the organs and gratify their carnal urges etc.]

There are three methods for obtaining control over the Pran, i.e. doing Pranayam or breath control exercises of Yoga successfully—(a) Mitaahaar (control over what is eaten by eating moderately and correctly), (b) Aasan (various sitting postures of Yoga), and (c) Shakti Chaalan (activating the subtle energy centers in the body, such as the activation of the Kundalini, and making them upwardly mobile along with the vital winds of the body, especially the Apan wind) (2).

3-4. Oh Gautam (name of a sage belonging to the lineage of the enlightened sage Gautam)! Listen, now I shall tell you about the first method—viz. being vigilant about what is eaten, along with the proper method of eating that is conducive to one's all round welfare. [That is, food plays a very important role in success of Yoga. The stress is on regulated diet—both in its quality and its quantity, as well as the proper way of eating food that is conducive to all round health—both physical and spiritual.]

A wise spiritual seeker and a practitioner of Yoga should eat soothing food that is non-irritating, non-stimulating and has a calming and relaxing effect on the body, invigorating it and helping it to remain healthy and agile. Such foods include eatables that are sweet and lubricating. He should not eat more than a half of the capacity of his stomach. [That is, he should not eat more than absolutely necessary, and definitely avoid overeating or indulgence in food. The food should fill only half of the stomach, and the next quarter is to be filled with water, while the last quarter is to be left empty.]

This is the correct and proper way to eat which would be good for the spiritual aspirant. In fact, this is regarded as the food eaten on behalf of Shiva or an offering to Shiva¹.

Now I shall tell you how to conquer the Pran. For this, there are two main Aasans—viz. Padmasan (lotus posture) and Vajrasan (the strong and invincible posture which is as inviolable and potent as Vajra, the strong and invincible weapon used by Indra, the king of Gods) (3-4).

[Note--¹This is because Shiva resides in the body of the creature as his truthful Atma, the pure consciousness called the 'self' of the individual creature. The food eaten is regarded as an offering to this resident deity just like offerings are made to the patron deity by putting them in the fire pit during the formal fire sacrifices. The food eaten by the aspirant is similar to this formal offering because just like the fire of the sacrifice that burns the offered food and reduces it to ashes, the food eaten by the aspirant is also burnt or digested in his stomach and its energy extracted to nourish the resident Atma. The food eaten helps the 'self' to maintain a healthy life and gives one the necessary energy, strength and stamina to remain active and productive in life. Medically also it is an established fact that over-indulgence in food is very injurious for health. It not only shortens one's life but also makes the body riddled with numerous problems besides creating drowsiness, lack of attention and lethargy. Eating slowly helps each morsel of the food eaten to be properly chewed and mixed with digestive juices in tongue before it reaches the stomach. This not only gives a

sense of satisfaction from the food eaten but puts so much the lesser load on the digestive organs. Eating fast and in a hurried fashion is never medically advisable.

If we draw a parallel from the way offerings are made during the formal fire sacrifice we would note that each offering is followed by a pause when Mantras are pronounced before the next offering is made to the fire pit. This gives the fire sufficient time to burn the previous offering before accepting the next round. From practical point of view, this helps the fire to remain kindled with sufficient vigour and heat to devour the whole lot of offerings, for had the latter been dumped in to the fire pit in large quantities then either the fire would have been pre-maturely doused or the major quantity of the offerings would have remained un-burnt. The pause for Mantras is devised to ensure that neither of these happens. The same logic applies to the food eaten by a man. If the food is eaten slowly, one not only enjoys it to a greater extent but it also prevents over-straining the digestive organs which would become weak if the practice of eating fast and in large gulps becomes a routing affair. Another benefit of slow eating is that a lesser amount of food is fulfilling; it prevents over-eating.

The food eaten is to be regarded as an offering to the resident deity inside the body, which is the Atma representing the cosmic Shiva principle, and therefore should be given the same respect and sanctity as shown for the offerings to Gods during a fire sacrifice.

This great importance and superior value of this symbolic 'internal fire sacrifice' that is done by making offerings to the Divinity residing in one's own self as the pure consciousness or Atma has been espoused and explained elsewhere in other Upanishads also, viz. (i) Avadhut Upanishad, verse no. 7; and (ii) Pran Agnihotra Upanishad, verse nos. 21-22.

The eclectic spiritual view that Lord Shiva lives in the body of the spiritual aspirant has been described in detail in the Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition which has a number of verses dedicated to this symbolic worship of Lord Shiva in the form of the Lingam—viz. Canto 1, verse nos. 72, 167-168; Canto 2, verse nos. 6, 8-14, 20; Canto 3, verse nos. 1-15; Canto 5, verse nos. 2-5, 5-16 (as abode of Shakti); Canto 6, verse no. 33; and the Brahm Vidya Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 80 which describes the Shiva Lingam symbolically present in the body. The Yogshikha Upanishad describes the human body as a holy city or pilgrim site where the Atma is the Lord, or where Lords Vishnu and Shiva have their abodes along with their respective divine consorts Laxmi and Shakti. The relevant parts are Canto 1, verse nos. 165-168, and Canto 5, verse nos. 2-5. This Upanishad, in its Canto 1, verse 72 describes the body as the palace where the Lord known as the Atma resides.]

5. The Padmasan is basically to sit in an erect position, cross-legged, so that the sole of one foot rests, facing upwards, on the thigh of the opposite leg. This posture of meditation helps one to overcome all sins and their evil effects (5).

6. The Vajrasan is to sit in a posture such that the body is ram-rod straight, i.e. the neck, the head and the spine are in a straight line. Then the left leg is bent inwards at the knee joint and turned backwards so that the heels press against the 'Mool Kandha' (the genitals). The right leg is similarly bent in and its heels placed above the heel of the left leg (6).

[Note—This Aasan is usually used done with a slight variation—instead of putting the right heel on top of the left heel which together press the genitals, they are placed side by side below the genitals. This is a far more convenient posture than the one describes above. Everything depends upon the ability of the practitioner. This is also the sign of Siddhasan.]

Refer Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse no. 84 also in this context.]

7. The main center of the cosmic dynamic energy in the body is known as the Kundalini¹. A wise and expert practitioner stirs it and activates it, thereby unleashing its hitherto dormant energy and easing it up (by means of various Yoga exercises) so that it rises from its location at the lower end of the body to reach the high point in the body located between the two eyebrows. [This is the location of the so-called 'third eye of wisdom and enlightenment' because once this subtle energy reaches this point, the aspirant begins to experience the ecstasy obtained by spiritual awakening and coming closer to the cosmic vibrations called Naad that constantly resonates in his mind and entire being but was hitherto not discerned by him due to lack of proper tuning of his mental faculties. This area of the body is called the 'Agya Chakra' and corresponds to the cerebrum of the brain.]

This is called 'Shakti Chaalan'—or activating and moving the subtle cosmic energy that is hitherto present in a latent and dormant mode inside the body of the aspirant (7).

[Note—¹The *Kundalini* is located at the base of the spine and is so-called because it is in a spiral form. This coil-like center of subtle cosmic energy normally lies in a dormant state. By doing Yogic practices, the stupendous energy trapped in its coils can be released by the unplugging of its mouth which opens into the 'Sushumna' nerve. This energy then rises up the spinal cord and ultimately reaches the top of the head. The Yogi who practices this Kundalini activation, called 'Kundalini Jagran', experiences brilliance and dazzle unmatched by any other experience. Since it requires a lot of willful effort and energy to make this happen, and an activated Kundalini helps the spiritual aspirant achieve success in his meditation and contemplation on the one hand and providing sufficient energy to his Pran or vital life forces present inside the body to enable the pure consciousness known as the Atma to experience extreme bliss and ecstasy that comes with 'self-realisation', the process is called 'Shakti Chaalan'—or activation of the hidden energy of the body for the aspirant's spiritual upliftment.

The process of activating the Kundalini has been elaborately described in the book 'The Serpent Power' by Arthur Avalon & Sir John Woodroffe.

The Upanishads that deal with Kundalini and its activation are the following—(a) Krishna Yajur Veda's Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 7-8, 43-46, 65-74, 76, 82-84; Dhyanbindu Upanishad, verse no. 66-69; Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 82-139; Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 81-84. (b) Sam Veda's Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 36-39.]

8. There are two main ways to activate the Kundalini—(a) Saraswati Chaalan (by using the power of knowledge and expertise to accomplish the task of activating the Kundalini, because 'Saraswati' is the patron goddess of knowledge), and (b) Pran-rodh (meaning control of the vital winds called Pran that are present inside the body by doing Pranayam and other Yoga methods).

By practicing Pran-rodh (Pranayam), the coiled Kundalini is straightened out (i.e. it becomes uncoiled, or loses its rigidity and stubbornness, thereby releasing its trapped dynamic cosmic energy that was hitherto present in a subtle form and was lying dormant and untapped) (8).

9. [Verse nos. 9-18 describe what is known as 'Saraswati Chaalan' in Yoga parlance.]

Let me first tell you about Saraswati Chaalan¹. Ancient scholars used to call this Saraswati as 'Arundhati'² (9).

[Note—¹The Yoshikha Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 23 says that the *Saraswati* Naadi rises from the Naadi Chakra located in the lower part of the body and goes up

to the tongue, thereby controlling the function of speech. That is why it is designated as 'Saraswati', as this Goddess presides over this function.

Basically, the Saraswati Chaalan involves doing Pranayam or breath control exercises, the two Aasans called Padmasan and Vajra Aasan, and uncoiling of the Kundalini and enabling its subtle energy to enter the Sushumna Naadi with the aid of the Saraswati Naadi and the vital winds called Pran located in the lower parts of the body.

The word 'Saraswati' refers to knowledge, erudition, wisdom and sagacity along with their relevant skills and expertise. This verse implies that a person who has embarked on a spiritual journey and plans to do Yoga to realise the ultimate Truth of existence and become enlightened about himself should first become well conversant with the theoretical aspect of the metaphysical knowledge pertaining to this field. He should be fully acquainted with all the pros and cons of Yoga, all its intricacies and complexities, before actually practicing it. Half-baked information and knowledge, or misconceptions and confusions of any kind, no matter how small and insignificant, would be more dangerous for him than not stepping on this path at all. This is because Yoga is a highly technical field which requires great expertise, resilience and patience. A wise man is one who gathers all background information and prepares himself well in advance before actually embarking on an adventurous journey to the unknown and un-chartered territory. He moves slowly and cautiously, testing his ground, his preparedness and his aptitude. If he lacks any virtues, he should first inculcate them, and practice hard and with sincerity. Yoga is not a summer holiday camp!

The Saraswati Chaalan can be translated as 'activating the power of wisdom, knowledge, erudition and information as a precursor to attaining success in Yoga, or any endeavour for that matter, and a launch pad for the spiritual journey of the aspirant that enables him to attain a state of self-realisation when he can experience the presence of cosmic energy and consciousness within his own self, realise his true potentials, and become truly enlightened'. It involves getting fully acquainted with all the different steps of Yoga, such as the crucial 'Pran-Rodh' or control of the vital winds mentioned in verse no. 8 above. Since no success is possible in any field with the backing of knowledge that is technically correct, updated, precise and practical, the importance of invoking Saraswati, the patron Goddess of these eclectic qualities and intellectual assets, is too evident to be emphasised or highlighted. It enlightens the aspirant about the pitfalls, how to overcome them and what precautions are necessary to pre-empt them, what are the landmarks on this journey and how one judges one's success, which is the correct path to follow and how to walk on this path, what is the truthful goal and how best to realise it, and so on and so forth. Thus, Saraswati Chaalan basically prepares the spiritual aspirant for the arduous journey ahead. See note to verse no. 17 of this Canto 1 also.

This philosophy of the Saraswati Chaalan also requires the spiritual aspirant to exercise the greatest of restraint over what he speaks because Saraswati is the patron Goddess of this faculty, and second, it envisions the activating of one's dormant subtle spiritual energy and harnessing it for obtaining bliss and ecstasy of conscious awareness of the pure 'self' made possible by following the disciplined system of Yoga.

²*Arundhati* was the most erudite, sagacious and wise wife of sage Vashistha, the moral preceptor, guide and teacher for the line of kings of Ayodhya in which Lord Vishnu manifested himself as the famous incarnated divinity known as Lord Ram around whom the well known epic Ramayan is built. She was the daughter of Prajapati Kardama and his wife Devahuti. Sage Atri's wife Anusuiya was her sister, and sage Kapil was her brother. Her famous son was sage Shakti. She was a preacher and a well known scholar of the scriptures in her own right, and was no less enlightened than her husband Vashistha.

Her glory and virtues have been immortalized by believing that one of the distant stars is her manifestation, and this star is named after her as 'Arundhati Nakshatra'. It is the star called Alcor belonging to the Great Bear group. It is a very dim star and rarely visible, but its importance lies in the fact that all newly wed Hindu couples are obliged to view it as it is considered auspicious and a bestower of good fortunes to them. Since it is poorly visible to the uninitiated, the couple's priest gradually guides them to it by first pointing to the brighter stars nearby and then gradually guiding them to this star. This process is called 'Arundhati Darshan Nyaaya'. It has great symbolic value—because it implies going from the gross to the subtle, from something that is very evident and appears to be the real thing but isn't to something that is not so evident but is indeed the real thing, from the known to the unknown. In philosophy it implies arriving at a definite conclusion and reaching one's sought-after goal by using logic, intelligent deductions and analysis of all available information.

Ancient scholars honoured Arundhati and acknowledged her superiority in wisdom, knowledge and erudition by calling her Saraswati, the patron Goddess of wisdom, erudition, speech and knowledge. In other words, she was a living image of all the virtues that this Goddess Saraswati was famous for; she personified Saraswati.]

10. At the time when one breathes through the Ida Naadi (i.e. the left nostril) during the course of Pranayam, one should steadily sit in the meditation posture called Pranayam (verse no. 5). By doing this practice diligently, the Kundalini would be activated by itself in a natural way (10).

[Note—The Yogshikha Upanishad, which is Chapter 21 of this volume, describes the process of Pranayam in stepwise detail wherein the breath is passed through one nostril at a time.

The word *Naadi* literally refers to a tubular duct present inside the body through which all the vital forces of life travel from one point to another and keep the body alive, active and healthy. It is through the Naadi that the vital winds known as Pran flow; it is through them that blood flows; it is through them that senses travel from the sense organs of the body to the brain and from the brain to all the corners of the body; it is through the Naadis that various juices and fluids of the body are secreted and made to reach their targeted areas. Even if one Naadi is damaged, the body suffers.

But in the context of the Kundalini activation, the word Naadi refers to the central nervous system passing through the spinal cord.]

11. Then that Naadi (here referring to the area of the Kundalini in the body which is the waist area and the base of the spinal column from where this Ida Naadi originates) should be wrapped by a length of cloth that is twelve fingers-width long and four fingers-width broad (11).

[Note—The Gheranda Shahita and the Hath Yoga Pradipika (3/113) also mention this wrapping. While the Gheranda Sanhita prescribes that this cloth should be white and soft, and then the rest of the body should be smeared with ash of the fire pit, the Hath Yoga Pradipika says that this cloth is not a physical wrapping of cloth but implies that this area where the Kundalini is located, i.e. the Mool Kanda area, is approximately of this size and is naturally covered or wrapped around by the sky element.]

12. The thumb and the fore-finger should be used first to firmly clasp both the nostrils and shut them tightly. Then the practitioner of Pranayam should do Rechak and Purak (exhalation and inhalation respectively) alternately through them as convenient to him¹ (12).

[Note--¹That is, first one nostril is used to exhale by closing the other, then the process is repeated through the second nostril. The entire process of Pranayam

consisting of three stages—viz. Rechak or exhalation, Purak or inhalation, and Kumbhak or retaining the breath inside the body for a given time—is described elsewhere in other Yoga Upanishads as well, such as the following— (i) Shukla Yajur Veda = Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, 2/53, 2/92-120. (ii) Sam Veda = The entire Canto 5-6 of Jabal Darshan Upanishad; Yoga Chudamani. (iii) Krishna Yajur Veda = Brahm Vidya, verse nos. 21-22, 66-76, Dhyan Bindu, Yoga Tattva, Yogshikha and the present Yoga Kundali Upanishad.

The Patron Gods of Pranayam have been enumerated in Dhyan Bindu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse no. 21 which says that the three phases of Pranayam have three patron Gods. That is, the Purak phase (in which breath is inhaled) has Brahma the creator as the patron God; the Kumbhak phase (in which breath is held inside the body) has Vishnu the sustainer and protector of creation as the patron God; and the Rechak phase (in which the breath is exhaled) the patron God is Shiva or Rudra.

The benefits of Pranayam have been enumerated in Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 91-99, as well as in Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 44-46, 53-55.]

13. This Ida Naadi ought to be kept activated—i.e. the process of breathing through the left nostril by closing the right nostril should be done for a period of two Murhuts¹. At the same time, attempt is to be made to simultaneously pull up the Sushumna Naadi a bit from the Kundalini² (13).

[Note—¹*Murhut*—This is a time measurement and applied for a short period of time. It is approximately a period of time equivalent to 48 minutes, or 1/30th part of the day consisting of 24 hours. Therefore, the day has 15 Murhuts and the night also has 15 Murhuts.

²That is, a conscious effort is made to exert a pull on the Sushumna Naadi so that the trapped energy of the Kundalini is sucked upwards. This Sushumna Naadi is the duct or nerve that passes through the center of the spinal cord from its lower end right up to the head.]

14. With this method, the Kundalini is activated and its energy sneaks into the Sushumna Naadi through its lower opening and begins to gradually move upwards. Simultaneously, the various vital winds called Pran present in the various parts of the body begin to enter the Sushumna as soon as its lower end is opened by the activating of the Kundalini (14).

[Note—The Kundalini keeps the lower end of the Sushumna Naadi blocked. When the former is heated by doing Pranayam and other Yoga Aasans and Bandhas, it opens this mouth. The trapped vital winds inside the body which cannot escape, because all escape routes have been closed by means of the various Bandhas, Aasans and Pranayam, now enter this only opening left for them—i.e. they enter the Sushumna Naadi. This is the central nerve passing through the spinal column.]

15. By exerting upward pull and creating sufficient pressure on the vital winds by constricting the throat and pulling in the muscles of the abdomen, these vital winds are constrained to move upwards towards the chest and even reach higher in a gradual manner. This is the effect of the Saraswati Chaalan process—i.e. it is the combined effect of Pranayam whereby exhalation through the Ida Naadi or the left nostril creates a natural upward pull on the Pran¹ along with the simultaneous and conscious pulling up of the vital winds from the lower part of the body through the channel of the Kundalini and Sushumna Naadi (15).

[Note—¹This phenomenon is commonly observed even in day-to-day life. The chimney above the fire-place in the house expels hot air and creates a suction action which generates convection currents in the air. As a result, hot air of the fire-place

which is lighter rises up through the chimney and cool air from the outside is sucked into the house through the various openings such as windows, doors and ventilators. The same phenomenon applies here as well. When breath is expelled through the nostril, it creates a vacuum inside the body, and since other openings such as the anus and mouth are closed, the vital winds trapped inside the body and heated due to this incarceration are then sucked up. Since the only opening open to them is the Kundalini and the lower end of the spinal cord represented by the Sushumna Naadi, these winds force themselves into these channels and make their way upwards. Their movement upwards is felicitated also by the fact that they are heated, as hot air is lighter and has a natural propensity to move upwards.]

16. When this is accomplished, the Pran or vital winds can be made to rise up higher still from the region of the chest by doing Rechak or exhalation through the Surya Naadi (i.e. the right nostril—by closing the left nostril during this stage) simultaneously with constricting of the throat muscles (16).

[Note—When verse nos. 15 and 16 are read together, we determine two distinct phases here. The first phase is narrated in verse no. 15 when the Pran (the vital winds) is pulled up from the lower end of the abdomen up to the region of the chest by using the Ida Naadi. The second phase involves lifting or pulling up of the Pran still higher up from this region to enable it to reach the upper part of the body, i.e. the region of the throat and the forehead.]

17. That is why a person (who is desirous of activating the Kundalini and harnessing its latent cosmic energy for the purpose of obtaining the ‘high’ of conscious awakening) should practice this process of invoking the blessing of the patron goddess of speech and sound, i.e. Saraswati, for the fulfillment of one’s desires¹.

An aspirant who does this successfully is able to free himself from all sorts of diseases. [That is, the exercise of Pranayam gives him good health, and not only spiritual bliss.] (17).

[Note--¹Since the process of Pranayam involves the control of the passage of breath through the nostrils from where the basic nasal sounds are produced which are not only symbolic of the presence of life and awareness in the body but also form the basic vowel sounds of the Sanskrit language. Besides this, throat and chest muscles are also constricted during Pranayam so as to prevent the escape of the Pran through the mouth and generating sufficient pressure so that the breath can cause the vocal cords to vibrate and create sound—refer verse no. 49 of this Canto 1. This combined effort is how ‘speech’ is created, of how the spoken word is generated.

Since spoken words, especially the ones done with finesse and wisdom, are indicative of a person’s knowledge, scholarship, erudition and expertise not only in the language spoken but the subject he is talking about, they help one to express himself and are indispensable instruments for dissemination of knowledge and information. Therefore, this method of pulling up of the Pran to enable one to speak is called Saraswati Chalan because it activates the function of speech of which Goddess Saraswati is the patron deity. Verse no. 28 ½ of this Canto clearly emphasises that Pranayam clears the throat of accumulated mucous, thereby felicitating clarity of speech and a properly tuned speaking apparatus.

Since acquiring knowledge is a painstaking affair and requires concentrated effort of all the faculties of the body over long periods of time and usually undertaken by sacrificing the natural urge of the body and the mind to indulge in pleasures and comforts of the sense organs and the material world, the activation of the Kundalini and release of its stupendous reserves of energy gives the necessary support and impetus in this auspicious endeavour. Speaking effectively and loudly, articulately and coherently so that others can learn from one’s own knowledge, as is done by

teachers, public speakers and preachers, requires physical stamina and energy, the activation of the Kundalini takes care of this aspect as well. Since knowledge and learning, speaking and understanding are personifications of the grand virtues symbolised by Goddess Saraswati, the entire phenomenon of activation of the Kundalini is named after her.

There is another way of looking at this thing—the Saraswati Naadi is the mainstay of the effort of pushing up the energy of the Kundalini into the Sushumna Naadi. It not only provides the necessary impetus but also enables the aspirant to experience the progress of this energy upwards and observe the gradual enhancement of the level of conscious bliss and ecstasy as the process advances. Since knowledge is central to anything requiring technical skills and expertise as this exercise of Yoga does, it is deemed to be under the domain of the Goddess who presides over knowledge, i.e. Goddess Saraswati. See note to verse no. 9 also.]

18. By this ‘Shakti Chaalan’ practice¹, the practitioner of Yoga is able to get rid of diseases such as excrescence (an abnormal outgrowth of the body, such as tumors etc.), dropsy (inflammation of the body and filling of water in tissues), enlargement of the spleen, and all other diseases related to the stomach and abdomen (18).

[Note—¹*Shakti Chaalan* is a dynamic practice of Yoga which involves such exercises as Pranayam, sitting in the two postures of Padmasan and Vajrasasan, sucking in the vital winds called Pran and pushing them up through the Kundalini into the Sushumna Naadi along with the Kundalini’s subtle energy, and then directing them upwards till they finally reach the head region. This process is called Shakti Chaalan because of two reasons—viz. one, it activates the hitherto dormant cosmic energy in the body that was trapped inside the Kundalini, and two, it requires a lot of energy, stamina, strength and self-control to successfully accomplish it. ‘Shakti’ itself is indicative of this aspect as it stands for the virtues of power, strength, stamina, vitality, energy and dynamism.]

19. [In the following verse nos. 19-62, the process of Pranayam is described in great detail.]

Now I shall narrate the process of controlling the Pran (vital winds present in the body such as Pran—breath which moves in the upper part of the body, and Apan—the wind that passes down the intestines and remains located in the lower part of the body). This process is called ‘Pranayam’.

Pran is a broad term that is used to define the wind or air element that moves inside the subtle space of the body. When this inherently mobile wind or Pran is made to become static, when its mobility is controlled and it is literally put on hold, then this process is called ‘Kumbhak’¹ (19).

[Note—¹The word *Kumbhak* comes from ‘Kumbha’ meaning an earthen pot or pitcher. Just like the air inside this closed space is static and unaffected by the wind blowing outside the pot or pitcher, the practitioner of Yoga is able to build calmness inside himself inspite of the turmoil and upheavals of the outside world in which he lives if he is able to control the vital winds inside his body by holding them inside his abdomen by doing the process of Pranayam in a reenactment of the air of the pot or pitcher becoming static inspite of the storm raging outside.]

20. Kumbhak is said to be of two types—viz. ‘Sahit’ meaning ‘including, inclusive, or incorporating; with the help of others, or aided and accompanied by other means’, and ‘Keval’ meaning ‘only, without any match, unparalleled, independently, and without any aid’.

The Sahit form of Pranayam should be done till the time one is not able to become an expert in Yoga and able to do Keval form of Pranayam successfully (20).

21. The Sahit Kumbhak has four types—viz. Surya Bhedan, Ujjaayi, Shitali/Sheetali and Bhastrika (21).

[Note—The four types of Kumbhaks described here have been explained below as follows—(a) Surya Bhedan in verse no. 24-26; (b) Ujjaayi in verse nos. 26-29; (c) Shitali in verse no. 30-31; and (d) Bhastrika in verse no. 32-39.]

22-23. [These verses describe the location to be selected for doing Pranayam.]

One should select an isolated place which is conducive to spiritual practices and relatively comfortable to sit upon (i.e. there are no stones and pebbles or any other thing that can prick and cause constant annoyance and bodily discomfort because this diverts the attention from Yoga by creating diversion), there are no grass and shrubs around (from which insects such as mosquitoes, grasshoppers etc., and reptiles such as snakes, snails and worms etc. can cause any disturbance), and there is no fire, water and cold in the immediate surroundings (i.e. the place is not too hot nor damp or chilly). The place should be calm, quiet and serene as well as generally free from all pollutions.

The aspirant should select an even ground which is neither too high nor too depressed or low but is comfortable in a general way (i.e. the ground should be reasonably even and smooth, and should not have sharp ridges, furrows and grooves as found in ploughed fields, hill or mountain sides, rocky plains etc.), and then spread his meditating mat there. He should sit on it and take the 'Baddha Padmasan'—the lotus posture (described in verse no. 5 above) in which the two legs are closed in from the knee joints so that the soles of the foot rest one on the top of the other in front of the groins, and the open palms of the hands are placed on the soles in such a way that they rest upon each other and point upwards. Thus, the palms would be roughly placed just in front of the navel. The body is held ram-rod straight, with the buttocks, the spine, the neck and the head in one straight line.

Sitting in this posture, he should practice the Saraswati Chaalan process as described in the previous verses (as described in verse nos. 9-18 above) (22-23).

24. The air should be drawn in gradually through the right nostril and held in the abdomen. Then it is exhaled gradually thorough the left nostril called Ida (named after the Ida Naadi that goes up to here) (24).

25. In the process of 'Kapal Shodhan'¹, the phase of Rechak, i.e. the phase when the air held inside the body is exhaled, is done slowly. [That is, the breath is not expelled in a hurry or forcefully snorted out, but gradually exhaled in a controlled fashion.]

This helps to eliminate the four types of diseases associated with disturbed Vaat (winds or air) in the body, as well as those ailments that arise from worms (25).

[Note—¹The word *Kapal Shodhan* literally means the cleaning, scrubbing, decongesting or purging of the head of all impurities that clog its subtle spaces. Here it has a physical significance as the process of Pranayam is able to clear any congestion that is present in the mucous linings of the head and restores its original decongested form so that it can think clearly, cogently, coherently, analytically and intelligently, and function in its prime format. The head is freed from general heaviness, congestion, headaches, drowsiness, listlessness and fatigue that are usually caused by numerous diseases that block the Naadis or different nerves and veins that supply impulses and blood to the brain. This is a every day experience that when one suffers from cold and catarrhs, or disturbed stomach or metabolism, or any other disease that cause general discomfort to the physical body, the first to suffer is the

man's mind and its ability to work properly. Since Pranayam has an overall cleansing effect on the body by not only de-clogging and scrubbing clean the blocked Naadis (nerves, veins, arteries, ducts etc.) present in the body but also rejuvenating and kindling afresh the body's dying and smouldering fire of life and vitality that has become overburdened and is on the verge of being doused due to numerous factors, it is natural that the brain feels revived, refreshed, invigorated, revitalized and restored. Since the brain is the central processing unit of the body and its controller, a rejuvenated brain directly has a reviving effect on the body. In other words, the aspirant gets a new lease of life and feels re-invigorated and refreshed.

From the perspective of metaphysics and spiritualism this Kapal Shodhan refers to the removal of all doubts and confusions that shroud the mind and prevents it from thinking clearly, intelligently, analytically, rationally and coherently. It helps the mind to become alert and agile so that it can peep behind the external façade of the world to see the hidden 'truth and reality' of existence. An alert and active mind is able to use all its faculties to the best of their abilities; it helps the spiritual aspirant to think intelligently and analytically so that he can separate the chaff from the grain. A mind restored and rejuvenated by Pranayam is an important aid in one's spiritual attainment; it acts as a comrade-in-arm.

It is just like the case of a king having a wise and intelligent Chief Minister as his advisor as opposed to one who is advised by a lax, lazy, incompetent, stupid or drunk advisor. The mind is inherently intelligent and wise; it is its indulgences, misuse, overburdening with trash, wrong company and polluted environment etc. that make it dull and stupid and lose its astounding abilities and glittering virtues. It becomes dull, dark, tainted and corrupted, being shrouded in delusions and ignorance, it generally begins to hallucinate. How can such a mind be an able and wise advisor for the spiritual aspirant? On the other hand, an alert and refreshed mind would naturally be freed from all these fetters and regain its freedom and ability to think and advise the aspirant wisely and intelligently. This is a clear and practical benefit of Pranayam and Yoga in general terms.]

26-29. The above exercise (of verse no. 24-25) should be done repeatedly. This is also called 'Surya Bhedan' Kumbhak [25 ½].

[Now, the second form of Kumbhak called 'Ujjaayi' is being described.]

While keeping the mouth closed, the air (breath) should be drawn in through both the nostrils (as opposed to drawing it in through only one nostril at a time) in such a manner that it produces a subtle sound of hissing or rustling while being drawn in. This air (breath) should then be filled in and confined to the region of the throat and heart [26 ½]. After holding this air inside the body as described here, it should be slowly exhaled through the left nostrils called Ida [27].

This helps to eliminate the heat of the head region (and clears the way for the mind to work properly, along with the removal of congestion in the head causing headaches, heaviness, drowsiness, forgetfulness, lack of alertness, and other ailments of the head region), clears the throat of cough, rekindles the subsided fire of the digestive organs (i.e. restores hunger and appetite by making the digestive organs work properly), and thereby remove the very cause of many a diseases. It also helps to re-invigorate, refresh and revive the working of the different ducts in the body (such as the alimentary canal, the various other ducts such as the bile duct, the urethra, the trachea, the nerves, the veins, the arteries, the capillaries and etc.) along with helping one to get rid of different diseases related to Naadis (veins and nerves), as well as from dropsy, incontinence and diseases related with disturbed metabolism [28 ½].

This Kumbhak called 'Ujjaayi' can be done while one sits in any Yoga posture or even while moving around. [That is why inhalation through both the nostrils is

allowed—a necessity when one is walking or jogging around or doing any other strenuous activity so that adequate amount of oxygen is taken inside the body to provide oxidation to the tissues and release sufficient energy that is required during physical activities that are strenuous and burn more energy in the body than usually done when Yoga is practiced while sitting quietly.] [29] (26-29).

30. [Verse nos. 30-31 describe the third type of Kumbhak called 'Shitali'.]

During the Shitali Kumbhak, the air is drawn in (i.e. Purak is done) by the open mouth, with the help of the tongue (like done by a panting animal). [That is, in this form of filling the body with inhaled breath, the air is drawn in through the mouth instead of the nostrils as done otherwise in normal Purak.] This inhaled air is held inside the body for a given period of time and then gradually exhaled through the nostrils (and not through the mouth) [30].

[Note—Breathing through the open mouth helps the moist surface of the tongue and the buccal cavity to absorb more quantity of oxygen and at a quicker pace than the normal process by breathing through the nose. It helps better, faster and more intake of oxygen and hence more oxidation of the tissues to not only release extra burst of energy but its faster replenishment. Fresh air is the fuel for the fire burning inside the body in a subtle manner. If the fire does not get proper ventilation, it would be choked to extinction. That is during vigorous exercises we find it extremely convenient and necessary to breathe through the mouth as the body's requirement of oxygen goes up to replenish its faster depleting stock.]

31. This helps to eliminate such diseases as those related with malfunctioning or enlarged spleen, excrescence (an abnormal outgrowth of the body, such as tumors etc.), disturbed bile, fever due to these or related causes, excessive thirst etc. [31].

32-39. [Verse nos. 32-39 describe the fourth type of Kumbhak called 'Bhastrika'.]

To do Bhastrika Kumbhak the practitioner should sit in Padmasana (lotus posture) so that the body is held ramrod straight and the neck is in line with the spine.

To begin with, the mouth is closed and the air (breath) exhaled out or Rechak is done through the nostrils [32].

Then the air is drawn in (inhaled) rapidly during the phase of Purak so that its movement is felt by the throat, palate, head and heart [33].

The process of Rechak and Purak (exhalation and inhalation respectively) is done in quick succession and repeatedly like the ironsmith blowing in air into his bellows [34].

In this way, the air or wind element present inside the body should be carefully activated and mobilized. If one feels fatigued or exhausted in any way, then the Purak (inhalation of air) should be done through the Surya Naadi (corresponding to the right nostril), the air is then held inside the body during Kumbhak by clamping the nose with all the fingers except the index finger (which is held erect), and then Rechak (exhalation of air) is done through the Ida Naadi (corresponding to the left nostril) [36 ½].

This practice eliminates the sensation of burning in the throat (due to excess acidity and disturbances in the mucous lining of the throat) along with increasing or reviving the ebbing fire of the intestines (i.e. this practice restores or increases hunger and appetite). [With restored appetite and rejuvenated digestive organs, it is natural that not only the burning in the throat would vanish as it is usually a symptom of disturbed digestion and excess of bile and acidity, but the general health of the practitioner gets a positive boost and he feels energetic and restored.] [37].

This Pranayam helps one to become aware of the presence and powers of the Kundalini (because the latter gets automatically jerked into activity as affirmed earlier in verse no. 10 above). It bestows all round auspiciousness, blessedness, happiness and joys on the practitioner. It is very auspicious and good for him [37 ½].

Whatever obstacles such as accumulated mucous etc. that are present at the mouth of the Sushumna Naadi and block it, creating a hindrance for the subtle energy of the Kundalini along with the Pran from entering this Naadi, are removed by this practice of Pranayam [38].

It also helps to rupture through or break open the hardened Granthis or knots that symbolically represent the inherent stubborn nature and temperament of the aspirant that have been caused by the three Gunas such as Sata, Raja and Tama present in him in varying proportions. [These Gunas are the basic qualities present in all living beings in different and varying proportions, and their combination decides the individual's personal character and nature. These have so firmly established themselves in him, so firmly engrained themselves in his personality that they appear metaphorically like hard tumors of the body, or gnarls of the fingers, or knurls and knots found on a tree—very stubborn and difficult to remove. The aspirant who does Pranayam is able to overcome this symbolic hardened stiffness in his character or stubbornness in his nature, and instead becomes merciful, compassionate, considerate, malleable, affable, generous, kind and of a general gracious nature. This is equivalent to the symbolic piercing of these knots. Refer verse nos. 67-68 of this Canto 1 also.]

That is why one should diligently practice this Bhastrika Pranayam regularly [39]. (32-39).

[Note—Refer also Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse no. 100.]

40. An aspirant who has sincerely devoted himself in pursuing this path of Yoga should employ three 'Bandhas' (closings or restrictions of subtle apertures of the body) while doing the above described four types of Kumbhaks¹ (40).

[Note--¹The *Bandhas* refer to the closing of the subtle apertures of the body through which the Pran or the vital winds could escape when pressure is exerted on them while doing Pranayam. The three Bandhas are described below.]

41. The three Bandhas are the following—Mool Bandha, Uddiyan Bandha and Jalandhar Bandha. Now there signs or the way to do them is being described (41).

[Note—Refer Dhyani Bindu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, verse nos. 73-78 ½.]

42. [This verse, along with verse nos. 43-45, describes the Mool Bandha.]

Mool Bandha involves the constriction of the anus and forcefully diverting the Apan Vayu¹ upwards. This wind is naturally present in the lower part of the body and has a natural tendency of moving downwards and out of the anus instead of going upwards. [This is the reason why force is to be exerted on it to make it change its natural movement and change direction. So it becomes an arduous task to divert it upwards against its will and natural habit.] (42).

[Note—¹The *Apan* wind is the one that is present in the intestines and moves down and out through the aperture of the anus. It is responsible for movement of the food downwards in the intestines and expulsion of the waste from the body through the anus. When the anus is constricted and shut closed, the trapped Apan wind gets heated and then when pressure is exerted on it during the course of Pranayam, it is forced to change its direction and move upwards. Besides this, heated air is lighter

than cool air, and when it cannot find any exit through the lower end of the body, it would have a tendency to rise up and find an escape route. Thus, finding no other opening except the lower end of the spinal cord, or the Sushumna Naadi, it would force its way in it and then snake upwards. This procedure is called *Mool Bandha*—literally ‘closing of the root’, so named because the Mool Kand, the carrot-like knot of Naadis which form the base or foundation of the body, is located in the region of the anus and the genitals.

The *Tejobindu Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse nos. 27 of Krishna Yajur Veda describes Mool Bandha as follows—“The ‘Mool Bandha’ is closing of that spot in the body which is like the base or foundation for all living beings. It is possible to control the mind and its attention by controlling this Mool or root, which can be done by closing it or doing the Mool Bandha. Those who are well versed in the philosophy pertaining to meditation as a tool of Brahm-realisation should be very particular about it (as it helps them to control their mind and its faculties)”.

The word ‘Mool’ means the origin or basis of anything, and ‘Bandha’ means to stop or close. The Mool Bandha is done by pressing the genitals with the heels and constricting the muscles of the anus to close this opening. Meanwhile, the Apaana Vayu (the wind present in the rectum and anus region) is pulled upwards forcefully. It is described in *Dhyanbindu Upanishad*, verse no. 73-74^{1/2} of Krishna Yajur Veda, as well as in *Yogchudamani Upanishad*, verse no. 46 of Sam Veda tradition.]

43-45. [These three verses describe how the Kundalini is activated by Mool Bandha.]

When this restricted Apaana wind (whose natural movement downwards and out through the anus is restricted by the latter’s closure by doing Mool Bandha) begins its movement upwards, it comes in contact with the fount or the pit of fire (located in the Kundalini and the rest of the sac-like lower abdomen). This hitherto dormant fire is now stoked by this wind/air which begins to swirl around the lower part of the body, thereby rekindling the dormant fire; it begins to burn with renewed vigour and energy [43].

When the Pran (literally ‘the combined life-giving vital wind forces in the body’) is heated and stirred into activity by the combined effect of the fire element present in the body and the diverted Apaana wind¹, it is able to burn all the impurities that have accumulated in the body. [It acts like the blast furnace which burns all things put into it.] [44].

The result of this natural heating process is that the dormant Kundalini is shaken up and stirred into activity much like a sleeping snake being prodded by a heated stick. It then hisses and becomes straightened like that snake [45]. (43-45).

[Note—¹It is to be noted here that this Mool Bandha is done in combination with the Kumbhak phase of Pranayam. When the air is held inside the body during Kumbhak it is natural for it to get heated by the latent heat present inside the body. This is a natural process, especially when Pranayam is done for a prolonged period and the exhalation and inhalation are done rapidly as described in verse no. 34 above.

Refer also verse no. 64-66 of this Canto 1 below.]

46. [This verse describes how the activated energy of the Kundalini enters the Sushumna Naadi.]

When heated, the energy present in the Kundalini now expands and enters the lower end of the Sushumna Naadi (which had hitherto closed the mouth of the Kundalini by plugging it with its lower end) much like the awakened snake slithering into a cave.

That is why it is ordained upon ascetics that they practice Mool Bandh regularly (46).

[Note—Refer Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse nos. 104-105, 108.]

47-50. [These verses describe the Uddiyan Bandha.]

The Uddiyan Bandha is done before doing Rechak (exhalation of breath) after the period of Kumbhak (holding of air in the body). This Bandha helps the Pran (here referring to the Apan wind which has been heated earlier and diverted into the Kundalini) to enter the Sushumna Naadi and move upwards inside it. Since this particular Bandha makes the Pran upwardly mobile, it is called Uddiyan by ascetics. The word 'Uddiyan' means 'one that enables an entity to fly; one that becomes upwardly mobile and is able to fly; one that lifts up' [47 ½].

To do Uddiyan Bandha, one should sit steadily in the Vajra Aasan posture (described in verse no. 6) and put the hands on the bent legs [48]. The heels are pressed against the genitals from below and this helps to exercise great pressure on the Kanda area—i.e. the Mool Kanda, or the area around the groins [48 ½]. While doing this, the muscles of the abdomen are forcefully pulled inwards and upwards along with similar attempt to constrict the muscles of both the throat and chest. [In brief, attempt is made to constrict the entire muscular system of the lower part of the body and the chest area so that great pressure is exerted on the wind that has entered the Sushumna Naadi, thereby facilitating its upward movement in this Naadi.] [49].

By practicing this exercise, the Pran (vital winds) are able to get absorbed in the tissues of the abdomen in a gradual manner. This helps to eliminate all diseases of the stomach and abdomen. [This is because this exercise tones up the muscles and invigorates them, providing them with new energy and strength to function with renewed vigour. When the tissues are well ventilated and energised, when their toxic wastes are removed by the scrubbing affect of the Pran rubbing against them, they would too regain their lost strength and energy to function in a prime shape.] That is why this exercise should be practiced regularly and persistently [50]. (47-50).

[Note—Refer Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse nos. 106-107.]

51. [This verse describes the Jalandhar Bandha.]

The Jalandhar Bandha is said to be the constricting of the muscles of the throat that is done at the end of Purak (inhalation of breath or air) so that the inhaled air is prevented from escaping (51).

[Note—Refer Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse nos. 109-111.]

52. In this way, when the Pran (referring to the vital winds present in the body) is restricted from all sides and put under great pressure by doing Mool Bandha (constricting the anus), Jalandhar Bandha (constricting the throat) and Uddiyan Bandha (constricting the abdomen), it is natural that it would enter the Sushumna Naadi and move up in it. [This is because all exit paths have been blocked and the air inside the sac-like body is pressurized by drawing in and making the muscles taut and rigid. The only opening left open for it is the lower end of the Sushumna Naadi, so it sneaks into it. Since this Naadi is like a tube, the heated wind then automatically moves upwards.] (52).

53. By sitting properly as described above, one should practice the Saraswati Chalan process of Yoga (as described in verse no. 9-18) and develop control over the Pran, the vital winds (as narrated from verse nos. 19-52) (53).

54-55. [These verses describe the duration of time till which the Pranayam should be done.]

All the four types of Kumbhaks (verse no. 21) should be done ten times each on the first day, and then gradually increased by five times on each consecutive day, i.e. on the second day each type is done fifteen times, on the third day twenty times, and so on. All the three Bandhas (verse nos. 41-52) are employed while doing these four types of Kumbhaks (54-55).

56-57. [These verses list the various precautions that are to be taken while doing Yoga, for otherwise they make the practitioner sick very easily and prove to be his undoing.]

Sleeping during the day, keeping awake during the night, withholding the urge to evacuate the bowels and the bladder (i.e. to resist going to the toilet when necessary), to walk excessively that causes fatigue, not doing the various Aasans (sitting postures) properly, to strain too much in doing Pranayam (breath control exercises), and to constantly worry (over imaginary and real problems)—these are some of the pitfalls or perils against which a wise practitioner should guard because they can make him sick very quickly (56-57).

58-61. [These verses list the ten obstacles in the practice of Yoga. These act as a scourge for him.]

If the practitioner imagines that he has developed some disease by doing Yoga exercises and stops midway, then this is the first obstacle of Yoga [58].

The second obstacle is not to have full faith in the practice and doubt its effectiveness and authenticity. The third obstacle is to get intoxicated and become careless and callous while doing Yoga practice, lacking diligence, perseverance and sincerity. The fourth obstacle is to be lazy and indolent, doing Yoga half-heartedly, without interest and enthusiasm as if it was a forced burden imposed upon him against his will. The fifth obstacle is sleeping too much, more than what is necessary for the body [59].

The sixth obstacle is not to do Yoga lovingly and with great desire to succeed in it, i.e. not having affection for it and lacking sincere devotion for and commitment towards it. The seventh obstacle is to make errors and be deluded with pretensions, such as having a false sense of pride at the greatness, honour and importance that Yoga bestows upon its adherents, or that access to some great mystical powers are just round the corner which would make him much sought after and respected in the society, or that honour, respect, laurels, power and authority are in the offing as a natural reward of Yoga. The eighth obstacle is to be indulgent in and having a yearning for the objects of the senses in this material world along with a desire for self gratification. The ninth obstacle is the fear of ill fame, ignominy, ridicule and dishonour should one fail or not be completely successful in Yoga as expected, or doing Yoga in spite of others around him not doing it or not approving of it as something alien to them, or because they think, though erroneously, that it is some sort of black magic involving postures and exercises that seem to be ridiculous or bordering on black magic, or secret occult practices that are not acceptable in modern society [60].

Wise ones have said that the tenth obstacle is not being able to successfully understand the essentials of Yoga and not being able to obtain its basic benefits (both in terms of spiritual upliftment and enjoying the ecstasy and bliss of realisation of the

conscious self, as well as the attainment of various other physical benefits such as acquisition of mystical powers, fine tuning of the body and getting rid of bodily ailments, acquiring name and fame etc.)¹.

A wise and erudite aspirant should ponder over them deeply and take precautions against them. He should eliminate these hindrances in Yoga to be successful in its practice [61]. (58-61).

[Note—¹This observation that ‘the tenth obstacle of Yoga is not being able to successfully understand the essentials of this eclectic philosophy and not being able to obtain its basic benefits’ also implies that one has not been able to properly and correctly understand the wide meaning and great importance of Yoga, both in its physical form as the numerous exercises involved as well as in its metaphysical and spiritual aspects. It includes not properly understanding how to do the various Yoga exercises properly and subsequently failing in them, not knowing their benefits or the pitfalls to guard against, and not understanding that the main purpose of Yoga is to bring about a harmonization between scattered units of a person’s personality and life so that he becomes one complete whole and achieve the optimum level of energy, strength and stamina. Yoga enables him to work to his full capacity and ability to achieve success in life and obtain his set goals with ease and continued enthusiasm. He achieves sufficient backing to reach the pinnacle of spiritual ‘high’ or reach the state of enlightenment when he can personally experience the ecstasy and bliss obtained upon realisation of the supreme Consciousness that pulsates in his entire being as described in the scriptures. He no longer feels depressed and bogged down with so many bodily and worldly problems, but feels a new surge of restored energy and vitality inside his inner self that not only re-invigorates him but also lifts him from a life of dejection, lethargy, ignorance, delusions and hopelessness to a life of hope, vigour and enlightenment.

From the spiritual perspective, the main objective of Yoga is to bring about a union between the individual ‘self’ with the cosmic supreme ‘Self’. This is not hypothetical and imaginary but actually possible because both of them are essentially personified forms of the eclectic and divine ‘Shiva’ principle in its pristine purity and majestic glory, albeit viewed at different planes, for while the individual ‘self’ exists at the micro level of creation, the supreme ‘Self’ prevails throughout the entire creation at the macro level. Both these units of creation are fundamentally the same; there is no difference, distinction or duality between them. They are called ‘Shiva’ because they are the same Consciousness that is pure, divine, auspicious, truthful, beautiful and enlightened.

The bringing together of the different vital winds called Pran in the body is a metaphoric way of depicting the union of the various scattered units of creation into one unified whole as mentioned above. All the different Prans in the body control different organs and perform different designated functions. According to *Subalopanishad*, Canto 9, verse no. 1-14 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, there are twelve vital winds present in the body. It lists their functions as follows—(1) Pran—this controls eyes and the faculty of sight (verse 1); (2) Apan—this controls ears and the faculty of hearing (verse 2); (3) Vyan—this controls nose and the faculty of smell (verse 3); (4) Udaan—this controls the tongue and the faculty of taste (verse 4); (5) Samaan—this controls the skin and the faculty of touch (verse 5); (6) Vairambh—this controls speech (verse 6); (7) Mukhya—this controls the hands (verse 7); (8) Antarayaam—this controls the legs (verse 8); (9) Prabhanjan—this controls the anus (verse 9); (10) Kurma—this controls the genitals (verse 10); (11) Shyen—this controls the Mana or the thoughts and emotions (verse 11); (12) Krishna—this controls the discrimination, intellect and wisdom (verse 12); (13) Shwet—this controls Ahankar or the notion of ego, pride, arrogance, vanity etc. (verse 13); (14) Naag—this controls the ‘Chitta’ or the faculty of concentration, memory, sub-conscious, reasoning (verse 14).

So, as is evident now, the scattered working of the consciousness through each of these Prans is brought under one umbrella by doing Yoga. Yoga should not be restricted as merely doing physical exercises to tone up the body like going to a gymnasium and exercising there, but as an all-important and indispensable vehicle for obtaining bliss of spiritual realisation and its attendant all round calmness and tranquility which is the hallmark of self-realised persons and those who have accessed the ultimate Truth of creation that is known as the 'Shiva principle'.]

62. Hence, one should be very sincere and diligent in doing Pranayam. He should be careful and vigilant; he should inculcate the proper virtues of wisdom, erudition, expertise and correct knowledge, both in terms of detailed procedure of Yoga as well as the real aim of doing it, the various perils and obstacles that are to be guarded against, and so on and so forth before embarking upon this spiritual journey in order to eventually succeed in it. [It should not be done for narrow-minded vested interests such as acquiring mystical powers that come automatically with success in Yoga and then using these majestic super-human powers to acquire worldly fame and clout, or terrifying others into submission by threatening them with dire consequences if they disobey, or doing Yoga with half-baked knowledge in a hurry to excel, or to test the veracity and efficacy of the philosophy of Yoga. This would not only be unproductive but very harmful for the practitioner too. It is like playing with live electricity to test its might.]

This due diligence and proper care in how to do Yoga in the correct way and with the correct perspective helps one to concentrate upon doing it. The sub-conscious becomes engrossed in meditation as a result of which the Pran wind begins to move inside the Sushumna Naadi (the duct moving through the spinal cord from its lower end where it opens into the Kundalini, and goes right up to the top of the head). [As any work, even routine worldly duties, requires paying of attention and concentration of all the faculties of the body in order to achieve success in it and getting the best result out of the effort, it is never possible to do Yoga successfully if the mind is fickle and diverted elsewhere. This concentration of the mind also makes the ascetic become conscious of the subtle sensations and titillations emanating from the Sushumna Naadi as it gets activated and the vital winds and the subtle energy of the Kundalini begin to move up in it. An exhilarating sensation of spiritual satisfaction and its accompanying ecstasy overwhelms the practitioner when the rising vital winds and the released energy of the Kundalini begin to tickle the sensory nerves in the spinal cord.] (62).

63. [This verse advises as to when the Apan wind should be attempted to be moved in and up the Sushumna Naadi.]

Only when the body is fully de-toxified and all the congestions are removed (by doing Pranayam, Aasans, Bandhas etc., and observing other rules of Yoga such as diet control, overcoming the ten obstacles and other pitfalls mentioned earlier) can the Pran (vital winds such as Apan) move freely inside it (i.e. inside the Sushumna Naadi). It is only then that an attempt should be made to move the Apan upwards (through the Sushumna Naadi), and not before (63).

64. The process whereby the anus is closed to divert the Apan wind upwards is called Mool Bandha. This enables the Apan wind to get heated and accompanied by the energy of the latent fire energy present in the body it begins to move upwards. [Refer verse no. 42-45 also.] (64).

65-66. [These verses tell how the Kundalini is activated.]

When the Pran is also heated, it combines with the Apan to become one unified 'activated Pran'. [That is, the artificial distinction between Pran, the breath residing primarily in the upper part of the body, and Apan, the wind in the intestine and primarily residing in the lower part of the body, is removed when they are heated. Actually, air is one, undivided and immutable element that is universal and non-dual. The various distinctions and nomenclatures are made on the basis of their functions and locations to facilitate study, analysis and understanding. The Pran is located in the upper part of the body and is the term applied to the air moving in and out of the body through the nose and mouth. On the other hand, the Apan is the wind moving down in the intestines and out through the anus. When the nose and mouth along with the throat are closed during the Kumbhak phase of Pranayam, especially done with the Jalandhar Bandha, and it is accompanied with the closing of the anus by doing the Mool Bandha, it is natural that the Pran and the Apan get trapped inside the sac-like abdomen. This not only heats them but enables their mixing. Thus the artificial distinction is removed, and the combined duo is known hereafter by a single name of 'Pran'.]

The accumulated heat (caused by trapping of the winds inside the body and the closing of the mouth, the nose, the throat and the anus) and the agitated winds exert a combined pressure on the Kundalini, the coiled energy center at the base of the spine, resulting in its uncoiling and getting straightened. It then pushes against and finally enters the mouth of the Sushumna Naadi which lies just at one end of the Kundalini. [The Sushumna Naadi emerges from the center of the spinal cord and blocks one end of the Kundalini facing the lower end of the spinal cord. So when the Kundalini is heated, it straightens and pushes against the Naadi. The pressure and the heat melt the blockade of the mouth of the Sushumna Naadi, and the Kundalini pushes itself into it. Then it releases its energy into this Naadi. This energy and the accompanying vital winds then rise up in it like the mercury does in the bore of the thermometer or a snake slithers into its hole. Refer also verse nos. 42-46, 82-84.] (65-66).

67-68. [These verses describe how the energy of the Kundalini is able to rise high in the Sushumna Naadi and reach the head by breaking through the three 'Granthis' or knots symbolising the three ganglions or glands located at three strategic points in the body. These Granthis are like three formidably strong forts that have to be overcome before the aspirant can reach the citadel where he would come face to face with the 'emperor' called the 'true self' in the form of pure consciousness that comes with self-realisation which is attended by extreme bliss and ecstasy. This experience is the successful culmination of Yoga; it is like conquering of the final fort. If the body is to be treated as a prison for the Atma, the pure and truthful 'self' of the aspirant, then this would mark his liberation and final deliverance because at the height of Yoga, his Pran reaches the top of the head from where it escapes out of the body by rupturing the Brahm Randhra, the slit in the cranium, and merging with the cosmic wind element present outside. The body subsequently disintegrates into its elements such as earth, water, fire and sky. This ensures that there is no new birth for him in any time in future. This is like a prisoner breaking free from a fortress and finding eternal freedom in the vast world outside.]

The subtle cosmic energy released from the activated Kundalini then overcomes the hindrance created by the three 'Granthis' by piercing through them. [The three Granthis are the three knots that tie the various Naadis in the body. Here it refers to

the three main ganglions that coordinate all the nerves as well as the three glands which regulate all the veins in the body.]

The first Granthi to be overcome and pierced through by the Kundalini (i.e. its subtle energy which is also called Kundalini Shakti) is the Brahm Granthi (located at the base of the spine). The energy of the Kundalini is like a brilliant ray of electric or a powerful concentrated beam of laser, and potent enough in rupturing this Granthi. In simple words, it is the opening of the mouth of the hitherto blocked Sushumna Naadi or the lower end of the spinal cord. Therefore, it enters the Sushumna Naadi after overcoming this first obstacle, and moves up in it.

Then it reaches and passes through the second Granthi, i.e. the Vishnu Granthi located in the Hridaya Chakra (which is the swirling energy center located in the region of the heart). Finally, it reaches the Rudra Granthi (located in the Agya Chakra in the forehead in the mid-point between the two eyebrows) (67-68).

[Note—The word *Granthi* means a knot. It also refers to the ganglions that help to coordinate the different nerves just like major junction boxes in the network of electric wires in a building. The word Granthi also refers to the glands that control all the major functions of the body, including those of the nerves and veins. Just like a knot binds something, these Granthis of the body bind the subtle energy present in the body from being released. If we treat them as representing the ganglions then it means that by the process of Yoga in which the subtle energy of the Kundalini is released in the spinal cord, or the Sushumna Naadi to be precise, these hitherto clogged and inactive ganglions are reactivated and they begin to function in prime shape. If we consider them as glands then it would mean that the functioning of these glands is restored and this in turn helps the body to work properly.

These Granthis can be also regarded as aphorisms for the numerous spiritual hurdles faced by a spiritual aspirant in his spiritual journey. The three Granthis are like the three forts that have to be overcome before the final victory over the citadel. If the body is considered as a metaphoric prison for the Atma of the aspirant, then rupturing of the various Granthis is like his breaking free from its walls and finally escaping to the world outside to gain freedom by rupturing the Brahm Randhra located on the top of the head in the final stages of Yoga.

The location of the Granthis is very significant in this context. Let us have a look at this aspect and see why these have been considered as formidable fortresses in this discussion.

The *first* Granthi known as the ‘Brahm Granthi’ is located in the region where the sexual organs are located. The very fact that Brahm in his manifestation as Brahma the creator is responsible for creating this world, the Granthi is so named after him because the sexual organs are responsible for creation. Overcoming this Granthi is tantamount to control over one’s sexual urges which is a very formidable task under normal circumstances. Control of sexual instincts requires a lot of self-control, and once this is successfully achieved the person retains his internal energy that is otherwise wasted in sexual indulgences. The power to create new life by the sexual process makes a man equivalent to Brahma the cosmic creator and the *first* of the Trinity Gods.

The *second* Granthi is known as ‘Vishnu Granthi’ and is located in the region of the subtle heart. Lord Vishnu is responsible for sustenance and taking care of the creation with care and love. The heart is associated with the virtues of emotions and sentiments as well as of love, compassion, kindness and graciousness as well as longing and desires. This Granthi symbolises the natural characteristics of the heart. It stands for worldly involvement and attachment with the numerous charming material sense objects of the world. It is the heart that makes a man emotionally and sentimentally involved and attached with the world. The obstacle of the heart is so formidable that more often than not the heart prevails over the sane advice given to

the creature by his mind not to pursue certain things, and this overbearing nature of the heart only lands him in immense troubles. To overcome the natural impulses of the heart and bring it under control is tantamount to piercing of the second Granthi. Involvement with the world and its affairs is symbolised by the word Vishnu who is the *second* of the Trinity Gods.

Finally, the *third* Granthi is called the ‘Rudra Granthi’ as it is located in the head where the brain symbolising the mind and intellect with their formidable abilities is located. It is called ‘Rudra’ because when a man is unable to satisfy his urges and cannot obtain his desired objects, if his ego and pride are hurt, if he fails in any of his endeavours, if he finds that his compatriots succeed in anything in which he has failed, it is natural that he becomes angry, vengeful, wrathful and fretful. In other words, he displays the virtues of being ‘Rudra’ personified. It is an equally daunting task to control one’s anger and its accompanying wrathfulness. Once an aspirant is able to control his anger along with the control of the other two natural urges, he becomes a truly self-controlled and realised soul. Display of the virtues of Rudra makes a man equivalent to Lord Shiva, another name of Rudra, who is the *third* of the Trinity Gods.

According to Tantra literature, there are three Granthis—viz. Brahm Granthi, Vishnu Granthi and Rudra Granthi. They obstruct the upwards movement of the energy or power of the Kundalini. Each of the six Chakras (whirling energy centers of the body) has two Granthis on either side.

The Brahm Granthi is situated between the Muladhar Chakra and Swadisthan Chakra. The Vishnu Granthi is situated between Manipur and Ahahat Chakras. The Rudra Granthi is located between Vishuddha Chakra and Agya (Gyan) Chakra. The energy or cosmic divine powers of the Kundalini has to pierce through these three knots before it can reach the Sahasraara Chakra at the top of the head.

Refer Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 86-89 which belongs to the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition also, and is Chapter 21 of this volume.]

69. It then passes through the center of the eyebrows (i.e. through the Agya Chakra) and reaches the realm of Chandra (Moon) where the Anahat Chakra shaped like a lotus flower having sixteen petals is located (69).

[Note—The *Chakras* according to the Tantra philosophy are swirling energy centers of the body, and they are shaped like lotus flowers having varying number of petals. The Chakras and their colour, functions and locations etc.: they have been briefly outlined in note to verse nos. 85-86 of this Canto 1 below.]

70. This energy of the Kundalini which has reached the realm of the Chandra (Moon) in the forehead (between the eyebrows and the root of the nose) now dries up the secretion of the Chandra which effuses in this area. [That is, it dries up the mucous that might be present in the area of the sinus region of the forehead. It acts as a natural decongestant that clears the head and makes the practitioner mentally alert. See verse no. 71 below.]

Being propelled by the vital wind forces of the body, and stoked by the energy of the Surya (Sun) subtly present in the body and represented by the latent heat energy that prevails throughout the body and its tissues, the ‘Kundalini Shakti’ (i.e. the dynamic cosmic energy arising from the Kundalini which had been mixed earlier with the two vital winds—viz. the Pran and Apaana according to verse no. 65)—now accepts the blood and bile of the body. [In other words, it symbolically accepts the heat and energy present inherently in these two entities—blood and bile. Or conversely, it cools them down and absorbs their energy to re-energise and revive itself by restoring its low level of energy and heat that it might have lost earlier whilst overcoming the Granthis and breaking through the various other hurdles as it moves

ahead from the lower part of the body to the upper parts. It is like the case of a space vehicle which has reached certain height after its initial launch when it fires another rocket to provide it with sufficient boost and power to enable it to break free from the gravitational pull of the earth and enter space for its onward journey to another planet, which in this case would be the ultimate 'Shiva Tattva' or the ecstasy of Brahm-realisation mentioned below in verse no. 74.] (70).

71. Upon reaching the area called the realm of the Chandra (Moon) the Kundalini Shakti heats and then soaks up the white mucous present there by its own inherent heat. Thus it removes the coldness from this area. [This refers to the stuffy feel that comes with the nostrils and the forehead getting choked by mucous when one catches cold. The practice of Pranayam would activate the Kundalini, and its heat would act as a decongestant and clear the blocked nose and head of sticking mucous. The heat of the Kundalini Shakti would literally burn or kill the germs and therefore act as a natural anti-biotic in colds and catarrhs. This would effectively remove 'cold' from this area.] (71).

72. The Kundalini Shakti heats the white Chandra representing the tissues that effuse white mucous, and having done this it then moves ahead upwards. [That is, once the passage of the nostrils and the forehead is cleared, the subtle energy of the Kundalini and Pran now move to the top of the head to give the practitioner the much sought-after sense of extreme bliss and ecstasy.] (72).

73. This is the stage when the aspirant tastes the nectar-like bliss and experiences the exhilarating joy that accompanies the realisation of the presence of the eternal fount of bliss and divine ecstasy that resides in his own 'self' as the consciousness known as the Atma. As a result, his mind—which had hitherto sought to acquire happiness and joy from the external world and its material objects of sense gratifications which are nevertheless transient and perishable by nature—would now no longer need to do so because it has now found an eternal source of bliss and unbound ecstasy inside the aspirant's own self (in the form of the bliss and ecstasy that comes when one experiences the presence of the pure consciousness residing in one's own bosom) (73).

[Note—Refer Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 127, 146 in this context.]

74. In this way, the Kundalini Shakti is able to transcend or overcome the hurdles created by the eight-fold Prakriti or the eight types of hindrances that come in the way of one realising one's true nature as pure consciousness known as the Atma¹.

As a result, the ascetic is able to have a first hand experience of 'Shiva' (the eternal Truth and auspicious consciousness known as the Atma) residing in his own self. This realisation is self-realisation. The cumulative affect of all this is that the grosser form of the cosmic consciousness in the form of the various Prans (vital winds of the body that keep the body alive and active) plunges into and become one with the subtler form of the same divine cosmic consciousness known as the Atma (the 'true self' of the man and the only truth that really matters from the spiritual perspective).

In other words, the culmination of Yoga is to help one realise one's true divine form and find rest in the spiritual glory of self-realisation, the discovery of the ultimate fount of bliss and joy residing in one's own bosom as the 'consciousness' known as the Atma (74).

[Note--¹These eight obstacles are the following—the five elements such as the sky, air, fire, water and earth which form the structure of the gross body + the Mana or mind + the Buddhi or intellect that together make up the subtle part of this body + Ahankar or ego and pride which forms the basic quality that prevents a man from coming to terms with the fact that what he has acquired in this world is not the real thing and all his efforts of gaining happiness from the material objects of the world have yielded nothing for him in real value. Thus the total comes to 5 elements + 1 Mana + 1 Buddhi + 1 Ahankar = 8.]

75. The 'Raja', i.e. the fluid of the female organ which is red in colour representing the fiery celestial cauldron known as the sun (and personified by the blood element of the body which stands as a metaphor for life and heat because blood sustains life and is hot by nature), and the 'Shukla', literally meaning 'white' but here referring to the male fluid called semen which is white in colour and symbolises the moon (which is personified as the mucous element of the body), are thoroughly churned, battered and mixed by this process of Yoga. This combination then rises up the Kundalini and the Sushumna Naadi when whipped up by the vital winds, i.e. the Pran and the Apaana, as these are heated and made to enter the Kundalini and move up the Sushumna Naadi (as described in earlier verses).

At the culmination of this process, these two—the two primary fluids that infuse life into this body, i.e. the female Raja and the male Shukla, and the two vital winds called the Pran and Apaana, merge into one homogenous entity that is known as 'Shiva'. That is why these four units of creation are said to have a similar origin¹ (75).

[Note--¹This is a symbolic representation of the basic fact that every life form has only one origin in the supreme transcendental Consciousness known as Brahm at the macrocosmic level of creation, and as the Atma at the microcosmic level of existence. It is from the single cell that the sperm and ova are formed, the distinction arising due to the role that they are assigned to perform in the scheme of creation, and similarly no matter what name is assigned to the wind element depending upon the function it performs it would nevertheless always remain the same indivisible element known as air or wind which has no inherent distinctions between its various manifestations. The primary aim of Yoga is to bring about a union and harmony between two or more units of creation which are fundamentally one and the same but for reasons arising out of ignorance and its attendant delusions have come to be regarded as separate and independent units—which they are basically not. When this eclectic knowledge dawns upon the spiritual aspirant, he is overwhelmed with the bliss that comes with obtaining eternal peace and a sense of achievement that accompanies the fulfillment of one's long-lasting search for the real and eternal Truth.

This process of mixing of the vital forces of Nature present inside the body so that oneness or uniformity between them is obtained is the main aim of Yoga as prescribed in this and other Yoga Upanishads. It is symbolised by the stirring of the Kundalini's subtle cosmic energy and activation of the Sushumna Naadi aided by the process of Pranayama and various Asanas and Bandhas. The churned and heated vital winds called Pran and Apaana whip up a virtual storm inside the body and arouse the other two fundamental elements of life, i.e. the male energy and the female energy representing Brahm and Shakti or Maya respectively, and mix them into one homogenous gel that then rises up the Sushumna Naadi to pass through the various hurdles and finally reach the forehead. It then transcends it to finally reach the upper area of the head where the aspirant experiences the sensation of extreme ecstasy and bliss that comes with realisation of the presence of the supreme fount of eternal consciousness present in one's own self. This is the culmination of the process of Yoga and the fulfillment of the desire for attaining self-awareness and self-realisation.

The word *Shiva* here refers to the subtle, sublime, auspicious, divine and truthful consciousness of which one becomes aware at the time of culmination of Yoga. It is the symbolic union of the independent forces of life inside the body into one uniform non-dual Atma, the true 'self' of the aspirant. This is the picture at the microcosmic level of the individual. When this is Pran finally escapes from the body into the outer atmosphere to merge with the all-pervading air or wind element outside, the other component elements of the gross body—such as earth, water, fire and sky—too merge with their primary forms when the body lacking the Pran dies and disintegrates. This finishes off the job of attaining final Mukti or liberation and deliverance for which the aspirant had set about doing Yoga in the beginning. This merger of the elements with their cosmic counterparts lends the individual creature a macrocosmic presence. Once a wise, enlightened and self-realised person becomes aware of the universal spiritual truth that his 'true self' is not the gross body but the subtle and sublime Pran symbolising the cosmic spark of life called 'consciousness', he no longer remains a gross person with a body, but becomes sublimity and subtlety personified!]

76. Even as solid gold melts and expands when subjected to heat, the subtle and sublime cosmic energy lying hitherto dormant and coiled-up inside the body (in the Kundalini) expands and spreads throughout it—whether this body is small (such as those of a child) or big (such as those of a grown up man)—to cover each nook and corner of the body when the energy is stoked and heated. [This is done by the arousal of the Kundalini as per the process described in this Upanishad above.] (76).

77-78. [These verses describe the subtle changes that take place in the body when the divine energy of the Kundalini is activated by the process of Yoga. Refer also verse nos. 65-66, 70-71.]

Under the auspicious influence of the divine and sublime cosmic energy when it is activated inside the body (by the process of Kundalini activation), this gross body assumes a form that is godly in nature—that is, from being 'Adhibhautik' it becomes 'Adhidaivik' (i.e. from being mortal and perishable, inert and inane, subject to various faults and shortcomings associated with the gross organs and the buffeting effects of the restless mind—collectively called the Adhibhautik body, it becomes one that is stable, eternal, holy and imperishable, a body that assumes certain divine characteristics that transcend the limitations imposed on a gross physical body by the forces of Nature—collectively called the Adhidaivik body). The gross body transforms into a most subtle and sublime form [77].

It (the body) abandons its gross, perishable, polluted, lowly, inane and inert nature to become sublime, subtle and divine in form that is clean, holy, auspicious and conscious of its exalted stature as being the abode of the supreme Brahm residing inside it as the pure conscious Atma. This exalted state of the body is obtained only by those who have obtained success in Yoga (as narrated in this Upanishad), and not by others who are engulfed in ignorance and delusions [78]. (77-78).

[Note—This is the reason why holy men effuse a divine glow of divinity and spiritual energy which forms a halo around them. Ordinary men lack this effulgence. Yoga cleans the body so thoroughly that all the impurities that normally cloak the Atma and prevents its natural illumination from shining through are removed, resulting this divine light to illuminate the whole being of the aspirant. The divine halo that is observed around holy and self-realised persons is actually the light of the Atma, the pure consciousness, shining through. It is like cleaning the glass covering around the wick of a lantern so that its light can illuminate the surroundings.

The skin is not as transparent as the glass of the lantern, but is more like a translucent piece of glass found in chandeliers and decorative lightings. The lighted wick is not clearly visible here, but only its diffused light illuminates the surroundings. The skin is so thick that one cannot see the bones and other internal organs, so it is no mean achievement that the glow of the consciousness is visible from the outside as a halo around enlightened men.]

79-80. When the spiritual aspirant becomes aware of his 'true self', i.e. about his pure consciousness as his Atma representing his truthful identity as the 'self', it is only then that he finds Mukti, or freedom from the fetters of this mundane life of birth and death involving a gross and perishable body (because he would have now realised that his true self is not the body which takes birth, gets old and dies, but the Atma which never takes any birth and never dies as it is eternal and imperishable). He is deemed to be therefore liberated from the shackles of Kaal, or death personified (because he no longer fears death and being the eternal and imperishable Atma instead of the body, he will not have to die at all).

Successful culmination of Yoga makes him wisened and enlightened about the existence of the 'truthful self' in the form of the consciousness residing inside his bosom which is distinct and separate from the gross body. He is reassured of the truth that this body is perishable and mortal when all delusions arising out of ignorance of the 'true self' are removed just like a person feeling reassured and confident when he discovers the illusion that what he was fearing as a dangerous snake is in fact a harmless piece of rope, or when he discovers that the appearance of silver foil inside the shell of an oyster (because the inside glistens like silver foil does in light) is nothing but an optical illusion, or that the distinction between a male and a female is basically artificial when he realises that the same Atma lives inside both the bodies and the fact that both the bodies have the same ingredients as their fundamental building blocks. That is, these facts make him wiser, and he is no longer led astray by illusionary appearances (79-80).

81. Such a wise and enlightened spiritual aspirant sees no difference between a rounded ball of cereals called Pinda and the universe both of which are rounded in their external form. He also sees no fundamental difference between his subtle truthful 'self' and the microcosmic Atma—as both are the same 'consciousness' personified. Therefore, he is firmly established in the ultimate Truth of creation—that the self-illuminated Atma of the individual and the cosmic supreme transcendental Atma at the macrocosmic level called the Parmatma are one and the same entity (81).

82-84. [These verses describe the shape of the Kundalini and how the dormant fire element in the body is ignited.]

The Kundalini is like the coiled stem of the lotus flower, while the Mool Kand (the clutch of Naadis at the base of the spinal cord) is like the bulbous root of the same lotus. Much like a snake coiled in such a way that the end of its tail is inside its mouth, this Kundalini lies with its mouth covered by the Braham Randhra Naadi¹ [82 ½].

To awaken this Kundalini, the aspirant is advised to sit in a Padmasan posture, constrict and pull up the anus, do Kumbhak (holding of the breath during Pranayam), divert the vital wind (i.e. the Apaana wind) of the body upwards and make it strike the Swadisthan Chakra² so that the dormant fire element in the body is ignited³ [84]. (82-84).

[Note—¹This Brahm Randhra Naadi is the Sushumna Naadi—so called because it goes right up to the top of the head where the Brahm Randhra, the hair-like slit in the skull, is located, and through which the vital winds find their way out when an expert ascetic wishes to leave the body at the time of his death. In other words, the lower end of the Sushumna Naadi blocks the opening of the Kundalini like a cork on a bottle.

²The Swadisthan Chakra is the swirling subtle energy center of the body located in the region of the groins of males and the Bhug area of females. It has a 5-headed male phallus like a sprouting seed and its counterpart in the female is the clitoris.

³In essence this verse means that when the Apaana wind is restricted by doing Mool Bandha involving the closing of the anus along with Jalandhar Bandha when the throat is closed and constricting of the muscles of the abdomen during Uddiyan Bandha, an immense amount of pressure is exerted on the Apaana wind. It buffets the Swadisthan Chakra which is like blowing of air in the lower end of the furnace. This would obviously stoke the fire energy present in a dormant form in the Kundalini. This situation is like the lighting of the fire in an oven. When air is blown into the ovens from the lower end, the firewood placed on the grate catches fire easily and burns vigorously.

Refer verse no. 42-46 and 65-66 of this Canto 1 also.]

85-86. By this method the sleeping or dormant Kundalini is awakened or shaken up and made active. The subtle cosmic energy present in it is then unleashed and it rises up to pierce through the three Granthis, viz. the Brahm Granthi, the Rudra Granthi and the Vishnu Granthi¹, besides piercing through the six Chakras² and reach Sahastraar Chakra symbolically depicted in the form of a subtle lotus with a thousand petals present in the top of the head, i.e. the Brahm Randhra which is located at the top of the head just below the cranium.

At this point of Yoga one experiences a gloriously divine spray of extreme bliss and ecstasy spraying upon him and drenching him from all sides, which metaphorically represents the union of the divine Shakti with the eternal fount of truthfulness, bliss and joyous abandon called Shiva³. [Here, the 'Shakti' is symbolised by the cosmic divine conscious energy that is made active by doing Yoga and activating of the Kundalini, and 'Shiva' represents the awareness that comes with it of the presence of the pure consciousness called the Atma as one's true 'self'. This Atma is eternal, truthful, imperishable, immutable and non-dual; it is divine and sublime. When the aspirant becomes aware of it, he is filled with an extreme sense of spiritual achievement and contentedness at the fulfillment of his desire for attaining a state of eternity and perpetual bliss. He would want nothing more; he has reached the pinnacle of spiritual attainment that is rare and difficult to achieve.] (85-86).

[Note—¹The three *Granthis* and their vanquishing has been described in note to verse no. 67-68 of this Canto 1 above.

²The six *Chakras* are the subtle energy centers of the body. Briefly they are the following—(1) The 'Mooladhar Chakra' is located between genitals and anus in the area called the perineum. It is the site of the symbolic Shiva Lingam (Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 168) and the route through which the Apaana wind finds its entrance in the Kundalini (Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 13). It is also here that the ascetic hears the Naad. It is said to be a symbol of Shakti or the dynamic powers of Shiva principle (Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 8, 11-12 and Canto 3, verse no. 2). (2) The 'Swadhisthan Chakra' is located in the region of the groins of males and the Bhug area of females. It has a 5-headed male phallus like a sprouting seed and its counterpart in the female is the clitoris. (3) The 'Manipur Chakra' is located in the navel area, is shaped like a gem and is surrounded by the network of Naadis (nerves) called solar plexus. It is also the site of the Sun energy. (4) The 'Anahat Chakra' is located in the chest between the heart and lung area and it

is shaped like a swan looking downwards. It is also assumed to be like an 8-petal lotus facing down. It is also called the Hridaya Chakra because of its close proximity to the heart and close association with it as the Atma or pure consciousness resides in the subtle space of the heart. (5) The 'Vishuddha Chakra/Kanth Chakra' is located in the throat. To the left of it passes the Eda nerve representing the moon, to its right goes the Pingla nerve representing the sun, and in the center is the Sushumna nerve through which the Kundalini energy rises up from the base of the spine to the skull. (6) The 'Agya Chakra or Bhru Chakra' is located between the eyebrows and root of the nose. It is also called the third eye of enlightenment and wisdom.

Besides these six, there are some other important Chakras, and they are the following—(7) The 'Brahm Rahandra Chakra or *Sahasraar* Chakra' is located in the head and has the form of a grey cloud or smoke. It is the hair-like spilt in the top of the skull from where the vital wind called 'Pran' makes its exit from the body of a Yogi (ascetic) at the time of his death. (8) The 'Vyom Chakra' is symbolic of the sky and it is shaped like a 10-petal lotus located at the top of the head. (9) 'Bhug Chakra' is triangular in shape and represents the female genital organ. It is also called 'Kaam Roop Peeth' from where all passions and desires originate (refer Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 170-171). (10) The 'Talu Chakra' is also called Raajdant as well as Ghantikaa, and it is closely related to the Kanth Chakra. It is the route to the 10th door of Brahm. It is located in the palate (back of the mouth).

The Chakra's location have been mentioned in Canto 3, verse no. 9-11.

³Refer verse nos. 67-75 above of this Canto 1 in this context.]

87. This eclectic and exalted state of existence is tantamount to spiritual liberation and deliverance, called Mukti, and is the blissful and ecstatic state of enlightenment and self-awareness (87).

[Note—In this context of Mukti obtained by activation of the Kundalini and the Sushumna Naadi through which the Pran of the ascetic moves to the top of the head, the Kshuriko-panishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse nos. 18-19, describes how the Pran finally escapes through the Brahm Randhra to provide final liberation to the spiritual aspirant.]

Canto 2

[This Canto describes in detail one of the most difficult but nevertheless an important exercise of Yoga called the 'Khechari'. While on the one hand it is so potent that it can bestow upon its practitioner the ability to float or fly in the air, but on the other hand it is most dangerous to adventure into this field without proper guidance as it is equally potentially fatal if not done properly. So it should always be practiced under the aegis of an experienced teacher. It is a long haul endeavour, taking as much as twelve long years to be rewarding. Refer also to Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse nos. 51-59 of the Sam Veda tradition, Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 2/1/8 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, and Yogshikha Upanishad, 5/40-42 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition in this connection.]

1. Now we shall discuss the Khechari¹ Vidya (i.e. the knowledge pertaining to the special posture of Yoga called by this name of Khechari). This knowledge and its diligent practice helps one to become free from old age and its decrepiting effects as well as having a long life and becoming eternal in a symbolic way² (1).

[Note—¹The word *Khechhari* is derived from the root ‘Khe’ which stands for the sky, and ‘Chari’ means to move, to wonder or to roam. Therefore, the combined word ‘Khechhari’ means one who can move in the sky. This Mudra has been graphically described in Gherand Sanhita, Chapter 3, verse no. 25-28, besides the Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 5, verse nos. 40-42, the entire Canto 2 of the Yog Kundalini Upanishad; and Dhyani Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 81-93 of Krishna Yajur Veda; as well as in Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse nos. 52-64 of the Sam Veda tradition, and in Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, verse no. 2/1/8 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition.

It ought to be noted that the Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse nos. 52-64, and Dhyani Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 81-93 elaborately describe its benefits, and one such practical benefit is the natural way of contraception as clearly described in these two Upanishads.

The *Khechhari Mudra* is amongst the best and toughest body postures that can be adopted by any ascetic, but at the same time it can empower the practitioner with stupendous mystical and occult powers and potentials. It involves elongation of the tongue by constantly pulling it out and making it flexible by constant flexing, rolling and shaking from side to side. The nerves and veins at the lower end are cut so as to make them senseless. To obtain success in this, the tongue is smeared with butter and stretched by holding it with an iron tong. This results in the tongue getting sufficiently elongated as to reach the inner opening of the mouth by inverting it backwards, and then it is tucked at the base of the upper palate to close the opening of the nostrils at the roof of the mouth cavity. When the elongated and backwards bent tongue is stuffed here, these openings of the nostrils are closed by it, thereby blocking the flow of air (breath). Meanwhile, the sight is fixed unwaveringly at a point midway between the two eyebrows.

The benefits of Khechhari Mudra have been listed in Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 1-4, 21-24, 49.

²Yoga in general has a definitive positive affect on the body and general health besides its spiritual value. It's a very potent and powerful instrument in the hands of any spiritual aspirant to reach his goal of liberation and deliverance on the one hand, and to maintain good health and lead a fruitful life by ordinary people who might not be as spiritually enlightened on the other hand. For the latter, the hidden benefits of Yoga would come on a platter even without their asking for them and as an unexpected bonus or gift. What better can any endeavour be when its rewards are got even without seeking them almost as an expected windfall. Since Khechhari is a higher form of Yoga, its results would also be commensurate to its exalted stature; its rewards would be equally more enduring and powerful. The speed with which the body decays and suffers from the decrepiting effects of old age is reduced and virtually put on hold if one practices Yoga diligently. This is because he observes rigid self-discipline in all spheres of life—such as in his eating habits, his general life style, his working, his indulgences and all other physical activities as well as mental thoughts. All these help to tone up the body, and though the latter is destined to come to an end one or the other day but it would be a painless and natural process rather than that imposed by artificial living which shortens life and makes it more of a burden than something to be enjoyed. Lack of discipline and self control plays havoc with the body and its functions, which in their wake make the person prey to numerous diseases and problems that begin to afflict him and have an upper hand on him. A long life led healthily and peacefully to its natural end in some distant future in comparison to a life full of bodily aches and pains so much so that the person prefers death than another day of agonies is a metaphoric long life begot as a reward of Yoga.

In practical life it is observed that certain people lead a happy and peaceful life inspite of facing the same set of problems that seem like a burden to others. Yoga calms one down sufficiently enough to achieve this exalted mental state of equanimity and calmness.

Besides this physical benefit, the philosophical aspect of long life is the eclectic realisation that the 'true self' is not the gross body but the ethereal Soul or the Atma which is nothing but pure consciousness living in this body, and that this sublime and divine entity known as the Atma is eternal, imperishable and infinite unlike the body. Hence, the aspirant indeed becomes 'eternal, imperishable and infinite' like the Atma because the latter is his true 'self'.]

2. A person who is tormented by old age, numerous diseases and death staring in his face should diligently practice the Khechari Vidya (2).

3-4. One should acquire a thorough knowledge of this Khechari Vidya by seeking it from some wise and expert teacher by taking shelter with him and becoming his devoted disciple. [In other words, an aspirant who wishes to overcome the various problems of the body should practice Yoga, and for this he must first seek out a competent teacher who himself is an expert in this field and then request the latter to accept him as his student. He should take refuge with such a wise teacher of Yoga, and put himself in his care and guidance.]

The teacher ought to be carefully selected as he must be well accomplished and well known in this world as an expert in this specialised field of knowledge called Khechari. He should have thoroughly studied this Vidya from scriptures dealing with it, should be an acknowledged expert in this field who has an in-depth knowledge of all its finer intricacies and different aspects, besides actually practicing this form of Yoga himself. [Because it is only then that he would be able to give correct and precise guidance to the aspirant and alert him on its various pitfalls and perils besides advising on how to best avoid them or overcome them.]

This Khechari Vidya has the mystical potentials of eliminating the miseries and torments associated with old age, death and various diseases. Its knowledge and practice are both very difficult (3-4).

5. This Khechari Vidya is fruitful only when it is practiced along with the mystical meditation process called 'Melan¹'. In other words, they must be practiced simultaneously or in close association with each other (5).

[Note—*Melan* literally means establishing a union between the Pran Shakti (the mystical powers of the vital life-infusing wind forces inside the body) and the Shiva-Shakti (the divine and supernatural powers of the consciousness called the Atma residing inside the bosom of the aspirant). The 'Shiva' is the cosmic Truth and Consciousness that resides in the body of the individual as his Atma or soul, and the 'Shakti' is the power, strength, authority and potentials of the Atma.

The union or Melan is brought about by the method of using the Mantras meant to be repeated during the Khechari Mudra (and this is given in verse nos. 17-20 of this Canto 2 and in verse no. 1 of Canto 3) under the proper guidance of the teacher. It helps to bring about this union by focusing of the mind.]

6. Oh Brahmin! It might be possible to do practice but it is rare to achieve Melan even after hundreds of births (6).

[Note—One might be successful in doing the physical exercise of Khechari form of Yoga, but its final aim to bring about a union between the Pran and the Atma is difficult to achieve. It is like a student being successful in finding admission in an excellent college but that does not mean that he would either excel in his studies or in life. At best, the environment of the college, the faculty and the facilities available there can help him in the pursuit and attainment of his own goals in life, but the final result and achievement would depend upon the individual's own diligence, efforts,

competence, aptitude, intelligence, wisdom, sincerity and so many other factors. Learning the skills in college and being able to apply them in practice in real life situations are totally different propositions.

Similarly, a good teacher and circumstances can aid a spiritual aspirant to reach higher spiritual goals of life, but ultimately he is the one who would have to walk the mile which is like walking a tight-rope as far as Yoga is concerned, because while it is rewarding on the one hand, it is equally dangerous if not done properly on the other hand. The road can lead up to the citadel, but the road would not move there and neither would the citadel come down to receive him!]

7. This Melan (union between the Pran and the Atma as described in note to verse no. 5 above) is achieved by an aspirant after diligently trying to accomplish it in many births, and after a long period of sincere practice (7).

8. It is only when the aspirant accepts the Melan Mantra (i.e. the mystical formula that brings about successful fusion of the Pran (or vital life-infusing winds) and Shiva (or the truthful 'self' known as the Atma which is cosmic Consciousness living inside the body of the individual) from an accomplished Guru (a moral preceptor, a teacher and guide of Khechari Vidya) and practices it sincerely according to the prescribed method as laid out for it in the scriptures that he attains success in it in the sense that it bears fruits for him and bestows upon him certain Siddhis (mystical authority and super-human powers) (8).

9. When the aspirant is able to understand this Melan Mantra fully and comprehend its esoteric meaning and spiritual import, it is only then that he gets liberation and deliverance from the shackles of this ocean-like intractable and un-crossable gross world and becomes a personification of the truthful, eternal, divine and sublime entity known as Shiva. [That is, by properly understanding the spiritual importance and significance of the Melan Mantra and how it brings about a union or fusion between his Pran and Atma at the microcosmic level of existence, and between this combine of Pran-Atma at the individual level and the all-pervading and all-inclusive cosmic transcendental Consciousness at the macrocosmic level, he is able to establish oneness between his gross existence as the man having a body and his sublime existence as the Atma or soul which is pure and conscious 'self' residing inside his own bosom as a personification of Brahm symbolised by the word Shiva—an entity that is truthful, eternal, divine, holy and auspicious. When this is achieved, the grossness vanishes and only sublimity survives.] (9).

10. [Verse nos. 10-13 stresses the importance of the scriptures and their study.]

It is most important to note that even the wisest of Guru is not able to impart knowledge without the help of scriptures; therefore it is imperative for a wise student or disciple to have direct access to the scriptures. That is, oh wise sage, since no knowledge is available and sustainable without the scriptures, it is of utmost importance to have knowledge of the scriptures (10).

[Note—Even the teacher has learnt anything through a thorough study of some text, and it is better for a student to access this text directly. The reason is that, one, if there is some confusion then there is a standard text to decide the matter, and second, there is always a possibility of the teacher himself erring inadvertently or himself not being aware of certain things that the more intelligent student might discover. After all, the teacher is a human being himself with his own limitations and failings. Therefore, the

importance and significance of the scriptures can never be either overstated or underrated.]

11. Therefore, the aspirant should diligently and sincerely search for the scriptures everywhere in this world wherever they are available even if it involves going to far off places in search of them. When truthful scriptures (i.e. the ones that are genuine, authentic and original without interpolations and tweaking done by others, because they would then be deemed to be corrupted) are accessed and studied thoroughly, their teaching should be implemented in life. It is then that spiritual success and its attendant rewards are soon and easily available to the aspirant (11).

12-13. Success and accomplishment in any field, let alone spiritual practice, is not possible in the whole world having three dimensions (i.e. in the past, the present and the future time; in the terrestrial, the heavenly and the nether worlds) without a thorough study and implementation of the various principles and doctrines enunciated by the scriptures. [That is, one should always consult standard texts if one expects to inculcate truthful knowledge in any field, and metaphysics is no exception. If the source material of any knowledge is corrupted, it is obvious that the knowledge it imparts would also be corrupted and prove detrimental for the good of the seeker of this knowledge. So, great importance should be placed on accessing truthful and authentic scriptures from reliable sources.]

That is why the Guru who teaches the scriptures and explains them, who himself practices the great tenets of these scriptures as well as the Yoga of Melan (i.e. who puts the knowledge of the scriptures into practice himself and practices meditation that helps to bring about a union between the individual and his true self as the pure conscious Atma), is deemed to be a revered image of the exalted God himself¹.

Such a wise teacher who is a regular practitioner of what he teaches is to be regarded as a living image of Shiva, a personification of Shiva, and offered due reverence and worship. An aspirant should seek his shelter and patronage in his own spiritual pursuit. [This is because such a man is the right guide who would show the correct path to the aspirant. He has had a first hand experience of the pitfall, perils and obstacles of Yoga and the precautions needed to avoid them or overcome them. This expert guidance makes the path all the more easier for the aspirant.]

It is expected that once one has acquired this eclectic mystical knowledge, he would not disclose it to unworthy people (because this knowledge of the Khechari Mudra of Yoga is like live fire, and put into wrong hands it would be catastrophic and devastating). [Refer verse no. 25 of this Canto 2.] (12-13).

[Note--¹This is basically meant to emphasise the point that since it is the teacher who makes a man worth his salt as a human being, what he is worth for, since it is the teacher who him the light and spiritual path by unfolding the great secrets enshrined in the scriptures—or for that matter any field of knowledge—and explains them threadbare to the disciple, removing all his doubts and misgivings, and generally bringing the esoteric texts and their mysteries and hidden meaning within his grasp, for otherwise the same knowledge might have been worthless for the student like a set of meaningless words had they not been explained to him by the teacher, it follows therefore that the teacher deserves all the respects and regards that a disciple can muster for someone who has shown him the true path of knowledge and made him educated and enlightened by removing the veil of ignorance that had shrouded him earlier like a foreboding dark shadow.

The teacher is like someone who comes to the rescue of a person trapped in a bog and is being rapidly sucked in. The material world and its delusions are like entrapments that not only ensnare the creature but rob him of all his peace and happiness for all times to come. He is so pre-occupied with the world and its never-ending work that he does not realise that he is trapped at all. It is only when he reads the scriptures or comes in contact with liberated souls who are fortunate enough to have tested spiritual freedom that he realises his predicament and precarious state of existence. A wise creature would then decide that it is never too late to make a beginning, for without making the first move, without taking the first step, no one can reach the destination however far it is. So, he takes the shelter of a Guru because the person is totally ignorant of the path ahead and the proper way to walk on it with full preparation. He needs expert advice and guidance.

Citing the example of the bog here as mentioned above, even his own companions are of no help to him because they themselves are trapped and need help. Therefore, when he comes in contact with a wise and self-realised Guru, it's like a boon from the heaven for him. The Guru extends a helping hand and extricates him from the bog represented by his ignorance, delusions and entrapments of the world. The Guru puts him on solid ground and shows him the path that would lead him to his destination. How can anyone with scruples ever be ungrateful to such a Guru who has given his doomed destiny new lease of life and salvaged his soul from the pit of darkness and endless miseries? It's a basic obligation on the part of the disciple, and a sign of decent and civilised behaviour that he pays due respect and recognition to the Guru.]

14-15. Keeping this acquired knowledge secret and concealed, one should approach an expert Guru wherever he is available and practice it diligently under his expert guidance (14-15).

[Note—The plausible reason for advising one to keep the knowledge secret is that if he advertises about it, people would flock to him and this would snatch him of his peace and serenity. He would be facing so many curious people who would treat him as a novelty that either he would be pumped-up with a false sense of importance and scholarship, or would end up with numerous self-declared expert advisors who would throw him in a tailspin of confusions and doubts with their own bit of 'expert advice' that they claim has proved very effective for them! The result would be catastrophic for the spiritual aspirant either way. So it is best to keep quiet and maintain a low profile.]

16. With the acquisition of success in the practice of Khechari Vidya, one acquires the mystical ability to float or fly in the sky. This Vidya should be practiced with the aid of the relevant Mantra called the 'Beej Mantra' or the basic formula for Khechari that can enable a practitioner to successfully float or fly in the sky (16).

[Note—It is having knowledge of the key secrets of this mystical ability that would empower the person to lift himself from the ground and float in the air. More contemporarily it is like learning the skill of flying and getting a practical hands-on experience of it under the guidance of an expert flying tutor before a man is able to take to the air on a glider or an air plane. If the flying student is not well trained or is not able to handle the entire routine of flying properly, he would crash land and die. In the field of Yoga it is a well established principle that if its practice is a giver of immense powers and authority on the one hand, it can be very dangerous and potentially devastating if not handled properly on the other hand. It can be injurious, and sometimes does more harm than good.

The Beej Mantras are like the key formulas that one must remember in order to solve complicated problems of science or mathematics. A flight engineer is expected to know his science of flying and the vehicle he is handling like the back of his hand

when he is piloting an air plane or a space craft, for otherwise merely relying on the automatic flying software of the on-board computer would land him in serious trouble if some emergency occurs. He would not have the time to refer to manuals and text books when the plane is about to crash land.

In other words, the practitioner of Khechari Vidya should have a thorough, not only 'adequate' knowledge of it before he endeavours to do it. Khechari Yoga lifts the ascetic from the ground; he begins to levitate against the forces of gravity like a heavier-than air plane lifting from the ground. So if he fails or is careless even for a moment, he would crash-land. This repeated failure would be de-moralizing for him. Lifting the body requires deep concentration and a sharp coordination between the body and the mind.

This is a metaphoric Melan or coordination or union between the gross body and the subtle mind. Once this initial Melan is achieved, the practitioner progresses to the next level where a coordination is brought about between the various units of the vital wind that supports life inside the body, such as the Pran also known as breath, and Apaana which is the wind that moves in the lower part of the body. In the next step, the unified Pran wind obtains Melan or union or unification with the Atma or the consciousness that resides in the body. This Atma is his true self. Further ahead, this individual 'self' or Atma is brought in union with the cosmic Atma or cosmic 'Self' which is no other entity but the supreme transcendental Consciousness known as Brahm. In other words, the ultimate aim of Yoga in all its forms is to bring about a Melan between the individual's consciousness and the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness. This is the 'Truth' called the Shiva Tattva which is absolute and quintessential.

The idea of 'floating in the air' during practice of Khechari is a metaphoric way of saying the soul has attained an exalted and lifted state of existence, that it has risen from a low plane of existence to a higher plane of existence. This means that a practitioner of Khechari Yoga and Melan Mantra has lifted himself from a lowly life of delusions, ignorance and worldly involvements, has broken such fetters and has risen to an exalted level of enlightened living which is spiritually mature and liberating. Such a person becomes self-realised and Brahm-realised.]

17. [Verse nos. 17-20 describe the Beej Mantra for doing Khechari Mudra of Yoga.]

A successful aspirant is able to become a leader of the Gods who roam in the sky; he obtains free access to the sky and can roam in it as he wishes¹.

Now, the primary Beej Mantra² of Khechari is being described. The Sanskrit alphabet 'Ha' represents the 'Khechar' aspect of this Mantra. [That is, the seed letter 'Ha' of the Mantra is the esoteric formula which injects into the main Mantra the mystical power that would enable the person who has mastered this Mantra's use to be able to fly or float in the sky or space.]

Similarly, the alphabet 'Ee' (as pronounced in *eel*, *keen*, *feel*), which is the long vowel sound and the fourth vowel of the Sanskrit language, represents the Dharna. [That is, this alphabet 'Ee' represents a firm determination and unwavering resolution on the part of the aspirant for obtaining success in this knowledge and its implementation. It indicates his steadfastness of purpose and his ability to keep this Mantra in memory at all times during his sojourn in the sky. This is important, for should he forget it, he would fall back immediately. This is like an air plane pilot always remembering the intricate science of flying and running the air plane during flight, for otherwise it is impossible to fly a huge plane and to meet emergencies should they occur. There is no time to consult books in flight; it would be absolutely incredulous even to think in this term! It is also like the jet engine of a plane which is revving up for take-off.]

The fire element is represented by the alphabet 'Ra', and the water element by the 'Anuswar' (the dot placed on the top of an alphabet to give it the nasal sound)³.

The combined effect is the creation of the mystically charged esoteric letter 'Hrim or Hring'. The seed/root monosyllable Mantra Hrim or Hring stands for the 'Shakti' element of creation. This represents the cosmic energy and divine powers of creation which regulates everything in existence. It is therefore used to invoke the divine energy and seek its intercession on the behalf of the aspirant who uses this Mantra for worship. (17).

[Note—¹An aspirant who practices Khechari Yoga in a holistic manner along with the relevant Mantra dedicated to it is deemed to be as exalted as the Gods. He is not subjected to any of the physical limitations and grossness experienced by ordinary creatures whose movements are limited by the principles of physics because they have a gross body with fixed dimensions, weight, contour, constituent parts etc. For instance, it is not possible for any human being to float in the air without any aid as is a normal practice for the Gods, but Khechari Yoga enables him to achieve this super-human and magical feat.

An ordinary creature's physical compulsion of having to be limited to the ground and his inability to lift himself up and float in the air is symbolic of the fact that he is eternally bound to this mundane world of material sense objects, trapped and shackled to it for life. He lacks the will and the wherewithal to break free from this fetter. Yoga empowers him; it provides him with the necessary conducive environment and the instrument which can enable him to do so—to break free from the fetters of the body as well as the world and find his ultimate liberation and deliverance. By being able to float in the air due to success in Khechari Yoga, the aspirant should understand its great spiritual import and significance. He must realise that it indicates he has risen above the ordinary and mundane, and instead has attained an exalted spiritual stature where liberation and deliverance is just round the corner.

There is another way of looking at Khechari Yoga and its potential powers to make its followers equivalent to the exalted Gods. There are five basic elements—viz. earth, water, fire, air and sky in this order of subtlety, with the earth being the least subtle and the most gross, and the sky being the most subtle and the least gross. The ordinary life of miseries and pains where the aspirant remains engrossed in this world, when he has not yet stepped on the path of Yoga symbolises this earth element. He is like an ordinary creature rooted to the earth and unable to break free from its shackles and find freedom or the ability to lift himself up from the quagmire in which he has landed. On the other extreme end is the sky element symbolised by his ability to float in the air which he achieves by doing Khechari Yoga.

The air element is very much like the sky element and only slightly less subtle as is evident from the fact that it is only the air element that is able to fill the entire space of the sky as compared to other three elements. So, when the aspirant is able to practice Pranayam which indicates his ability to control the air element, it is deemed that he has obtained full control over this element of creation.

The next hurdle is the control of the water element which is done by practicing the various Bandhas, especially the Jalandhar Bandha which indicates his ability to directly overcome the hurdles created by the water element.

The fiercest and the most untamable of the five elements is the fire element. This is done by controlling the Kundalini and harnessing its stupendous energy during Yoga as described in the present Upanishad.

With these controls in place it is more than clear that there is little to differentiate between the practitioner of Yoga and the Gods. Such a person is indeed no less powerful than the Gods. He is deemed to have acquired the powers and virtues possessed by the Gods.

²The *Beej* Mantras are also called the seed or root Mantras. The word Beej refers to the fundamental, essential, elementary part of the Mantra. They are monosyllables which encrypt all the divine, spiritual, mystical and eclectic powers, potentials and authority possessed by the patron deity for which that particular Beej

Mantra is meant. These Beej Mantras are used in formal ritualistic worship, as during fire sacrifices, in occult forms of worship when worship instruments consisting of geometrical lines and figures, called the Yantra, are employed much like we have the circuit diagrams in an electronic instrument, as well as for doing Japa or constant repetition of a particular letter or word or phrase having divine and mystical qualities in order to invoke their powers and potentials for the benefit of the aspirant, and meditation and contemplation. These Beej Mantras are added as a prefix or suffix to the main Mantra to enhance and multiply its effects and potentials. For example, the root/seed/Beej Mantra 'Ra' stands for Lord Ram as well as the fire element. In other words, when it is used during a formal form of worship, it would boost the effect of the main Mantra of Lord Ram as well as subtly inject it with the stupendous and magnificent powers of 'fire'.

They are monosyllables and are much like the alphabets used in science and mathematical equations to denote other elements or factors. They encrypt great secret powers of creation in them, and must be pronounced and used properly even as the different alphabets standing for different atoms in organic chemistry must be properly placed at their designated places to make any sense out of them; otherwise the entire complex chemical compound represented by these monosyllable alphabets would be meaningless. Even in algebra, we use alphabets to denote certain things, and then go on calculating on the basis of these hypothetical assumptions to arrive at conclusive results. This system is used in all spheres of science. Therefore we conclude that the use of these 'Beej' Mantras during occult practices and ritualistic forms of worship to invoke divine powers and seek results is like the time tested scientific method applied in the sphere of metaphysics.

³The fire element would be like the heat produced by the combustion of the plane's fuel which powers the engine and enables the heavier-than-air machine to leave the earth and become air borne. The water element would be like the coolants used to cool down the engine and other parts of the plane and prevent their overheating. In the case of Yoga we can visualise their practical contribution in lifting a person's body from the ground as follows—

The Khechari Mudra is practiced not in isolation but in close coordination with other Mudras and Aasans (postures) of Yoga along with Bandhas (restrictions and closures of various apertures of the body), Pranayam (breath control), Shakti Chalan and Kundali activation etc. as described earlier in Canto 1 of this Upanishad. All these activities generate heat in the body which in turn warms up the water content of the latter and creates subtle steam. Steam has immense power as is evident when it can turn turbines that generate electricity and move the piston of huge engines that power the steam locomotive or the ship on high seas. The same thing happens here though in a different way and at a different plane. The fire let loose by activation of the Kundalini not only provides heat to warm the body's fluid contents or its water element, but also the air element. Hot air is known to rise up as is seen in hot air balloons. The combined effect of these two primary elements of Nature, water and air, getting heated is that the body is lifted from the ground much like the lifting of the hot air balloon. The Kundalini present at the lower end of the body provides the fire that keeps the air and water elements sufficiently hot and activated. Since all exit points of the body have been closed tight shut due to various Bandhas, Aasans, Mudras and Pranayam, the only option for heated air and the steam trapped inside the body is to lift the latter up.]

18-20. The Khechari Yoga is accomplished by using this Mantra. The next part of the Mantra is as follows—The Beej Mantra representing the Som or Moon is the alphabet 'Sa' (pronounced as in *sun* or *son*). Before this is the letter 'Bha' (pronounced as in *abhor*) which is the ninth alphabet of the Sanskrit consonant when counted backwards from 'Sa', and is followed by the letter 'Ma' (pronounced as in *mother*) which is the

eighth letter from 'Sa' when counted backwards. This letter 'Ma' is followed by the letter 'Pa' (pronounced as in *punk*, *pun*, *Pundit*) which is the fifth consonant when counted backwards from the letter 'Sa'. The letter 'Pa' is followed by the letter representing the Moon, i.e. the letter 'Sa' once again. The last letter in this sequence is 'Ksha' which is a combination of the letters 'Ka' (pronounced as in *kerb*, *kernel*) and 'Cha' (pronounced as in *champion*).

The resultant Mantra is the following—Hrim + Bha + Sa + Ma + Pa + Sa + Ksha = 'Hrim Bhum Sum Mum Pum Sum Kshum' (18-20).

[Note—The Mantras have the nasal sign 'Anuswar' which is represented by putting a 'dot' over each letter to represent the fact that they are empowered with cosmic divine powers. The Anuswar is also called the Bindu, a dot. This Bindu has great metaphysical significance as described in numerous Upanishads that deal with Yoga and Naad (the ethereal sound of creation). The concept of Naad and Bindu, called the 'Naad Shakti', has been explained at length in Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse nos. 105, 167, 178; Canto 2, verse no. 6; Canto 3, verse nos. 2-3, 11; Canto 4, verse no. 47; Canto 5, verse no. 28; and Canto 6, verse nos. 21, 48-49, 71-73.

The relationship between the Bindu, Naad and the Mana (the mind) has been described in Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 178, Canto 6, verse nos. 71-73.

The Anuswar sounds like 'um' in the word 'Rum', or like 'ung' as in 'Rung'. Hence, the alphabet 'Bha' becomes 'Bhum' or 'Bhung', and so on and so forth.]

21-23. When one accepts this above Mantra from a wise and expert Guru and does meditation using it, i.e. repeats it with due diligence, sincerity and concentration, it is activated and becomes very potent and powerful. Then it is able to bestow upon him all types of mystical super-natural powers called Siddhis.

By doing Japa (repetition) of this Mantra twelve times a day, all sorts of Maya (delusions and ignorance pertaining to this artificial material world and the gross perishable body) cease to have any effect on the practitioner even in his dreams. [That is, when the mind and intellect are purified by the good effects of this Mantra, they would be fine tuned and enable the person to see through the dark veil of delusions that mislead him into believing as true things that are false and illusionary by nature. This Mantra acts as catalyst of change and enables the practitioner to rise higher from the muck of ignorance-induced worldly fantasies to the divine world of spiritual reality.]

An aspirant who does Japa of this Mantra for five Lakh times (1 Lakh = 1,00,000) while observing all the sanctioned rules and regulations meant for doing such a Japa, is able to attain success in acquiring expertise in Khechari. All the problems of his life are eliminated, and he obtains happiness and joys that are equivalent to those enjoyed by the exalted Gods (21-23).

24. The wrinkles of the body disappear as do the graying of hair. That is, even an old man becomes comparatively younger in his body than his actual physical age. This is why this Khechari Vidya is called 'Maha Vidya' or the great knowledge. One should not doubt its efficacy, and therefore should endeavour to practice it with due diligence and firm faith (24).

25-26. Oh Brahmin (Gautam)! If due care and diligence is not shown while practicing this Khechari Vidya, it would not yield any result and become potentially dangerous

for the practitioner; he would have to suffer instead of benefiting from its practice. [Refer verse nos. 12-13 above of the present Canto 2.]

Even if total success is not achieved initially inspite of being careful and diligent and doing practice in a holistic manner, one should not be disheartened and dejected to an extent that he abandons Yoga midway, but have patience and show resilience by persisting with it under the guidance of an expert guide or teacher, for it ought to be noted here that without the regular help and guidance of an expert guide and teacher, success is difficult to obtain in this spiritual endeavour. The Mantra for Khechhari should be consistently and persistently repeated inspite of initial failures (for it is bound to show results sooner or later) (25-26).

27. If one is fortunate enough to have received the scripture pertaining to this knowledge of Khechhari (i.e. if one is lucky to come across the knowledge of this mystical practice in some ancient text or is able to locate an expert teacher of this subject who can explain its intricate details and give practical advise, which is a rare possibility because such wise persons are difficult to encounter), then he should practice this mystical form of meditation sincerely and with the greatest of diligence and faith.

In this way the practitioner is sure to achieve success in it and be blessed with the mystical powers that accompany this success in a natural way (27).

28. [The actual process of Khechhari is being narrated now from here onwards.]

To begin with, the aspirant should, under the expert guidance of a teacher, vigorously rubbing the rear end of the roof of the mouth cavity (i.e. the hind part of the palate) so that it is scrubbed and cleaned thoroughly (28).

29. Using an instrument which is as razor-sharp at the edges as the plant called 'Thuar' (the plant with the Latin name *Euphobia neriifolia*; the cactus plant), the aspirant should make a very small incision in the muscular tissue that connects the tongue to the lower surface of the mouth cavity at its rear (29).

30. On this incision he should sprinkle a powder made of a mixture of rock salt/mineral salt and myrobalan (a herb) for seven consecutive days. Then another minute incision is made again deeper in the tongue (30).

31. By repeating this process continuously for six months (i.e. by making deeper incisions each time), the tongue is detached from the lower jaw (i.e. it is now freed from the muscular tissue that ties it to the lower surface of the mouth cavity) (31).

32-36. Then the tip of the tongue should be covered with a clean cloth and slowly elongated by regularly and persistently pulling it outwards by clasping its tip with the fingers and drawing it out in slow rhythmic to-and-fro movements of the hand.

Constant practice of this elongation process lengthens the tongue sufficiently enough to reach the area of the forehead between the two eyebrows, and if this process is persisted with, the tongue can be stretched to reach the two ears also. It would protrude out to reach the chin without much effort [33 ½].

If this practice is continued for three years without break, the tongue would be so long as to reach the hairs on the head. By this time, the tongue has been sufficiently lengthened so as to enable it to reach the shoulder blades on the side of the neck on the one hand and the Adam's apple in the throat on the other hand. [Naturally, if the

tongue is made flexible and elongated enough so as to reach the shoulder blades, it would be easy for it to touch the Adam's apple which is closer at hand.]

If the practice of stretching the tongue is continued for another three years, it can reach the back of the neck and its base in the front.

By and by the tongue can be elongated sufficiently enough to go right up to the top of the head where the hair-like slit called the Brahm Randhra is located in the cranium and cover it. There is no doubt in it [34-36]. (32-36).

[Note—It would be evident by now why this Khechari is considered both rare and dangerous to practice. Besides this, it is a long haul process, requiring a lot of patience and resilience on the part of the practitioner. Pulling, flexing and stretching the tongue besides cutting it from its root in the way narrated herein above is of course not a child's joke under any circumstances. It can be very dangerous and fatal even.]

37-38. As has been observed, this elongation process enables the tongue to become elastic and stretchable. It can then be easily used to cover the Brahm Randhra and close it like a doorway (or like a cork on the mouth of a bottle). To do this along with the assiduous practice of doing Japa of the prescribed Beej Mantras for this form of Yoga systematically (as described in verse nos. 17-20) is obviously a very difficult proposition¹.

These Beej Mantras should be invoked properly and in a systematic way, i.e. the two basic rituals of 'Kar Nyas' and 'Anga Nyas'² must be painstakingly done to fully harness their mystical potentials. Otherwise, the results are not very encouraging; they might not even be worth the effort put in (37-38).

[Note—¹The elongation process of the tongue is already so stressful and painful, and when one is expected to concentrate upon the Mantras while doing so it becomes all the more impossible. Then the long time factor involved—a total of approximately twenty one long years, counting the 3 + 3 years required to sufficiently elongating the tongue as mentioned in verse nos. 32-36, another 3 years to tuck it inside the mouth as would be described below in verse nos. 39-42, and another 12 years as mentioned in verse no. 48 when the tongue is inverted and tucked inside the rear of the mouth cavity and the nostrils are vigorously rubbed by a stick while the eyesight is focused at the center of the eyebrows—would undoubtedly make it a very daunting and foreboding task. By simply visualizing a man being able to sustain the strain of this most formidable form of Yoga for such a long period of time, observing its strict tenets and sitting in the grotesque and extraordinary postures for prolonged durations and not faltering in his resolve is indeed difficult to imagine. It not only seems a Herculean task but involves a lot of danger and hurdles.

²*Kar Nyas* and *Anga Nyas* of the 'Beej', i.e. the seed or root of the main Mantras, are the two basic rituals of invoking the divine powers of the Mantras which are basically mystical formulas employed in religious practice, specially during occult rites and meditation of which this Khechari is a part. The word 'Kar' means hand, and 'Anga' means body, while 'Nyas' refers to an invocation, or vesting or assigning any entity with something, or entrusting an entity with some trust and responsibility; to deposit, repose, trust, pledge, entrust, to keep a thing in mind, etc. This is a ritualistic process in which certain parts of the body are touched and certain Mantras are said. It also means the purification of the individual parts of the body and the installation of the individual letter of the invoked Mantra, complete with its full potentials, at those points. Therefore, Nyas is a process of pledging utmost faith and conviction on the divine and holy Mantra's supernatural powers and potentials by invoking it and reposing it on the various locations of the body and its vital parts, such as the limbs, the abdomen and chest, the throat and forehead etc.

In the context of the Beej Mantras, it refers to invoking their divine cosmic powers and establishing them on various parts of the body, or assigning the patron Gods of these seed Mantras some specific part of the body so that they can establish themselves there.

Hence, doing Kar Nyas with the Beej Mantras would be to establish these symbolic Gods representing the cosmic, divine and mystical powers that are encrypted in the different Beej Mantras on the hand of the practitioner, while Anga Nyas would be to do the same on other parts of the body such as the chest, abdomen, shoulders, throat, forehead etc.]

39-41. This exercise should be done very gradually, with great patience, resilience and painstaking efforts; it cannot be rushed through. Done in a hurry or impatiently, it can be very hazardous for the body.

If the tongue is sufficiently long it would be possible to invert it with the help of the tip of fingers and tuck it into the opening at the back of the mouth where the rear of the palate opens into the wind pipe. This spot is called the 'Brahm Vivar'¹ (39-41).

[Note—¹The *Brahm Vivar* is literally a hole-like aperture present at the back of the mouth where it opens into the wind pipe which connects the lungs to the nose. This is the location of the 'Talu Chakra' or the swirling subtle energy center located at the rear of the palate. It has a direct link to the Brahm Randhra present in the cranium at the top of the head, and which is the hair-like slit marking the suture joint between the two parts of the skull.]

42. By constantly practicing this for three consecutive years with patience, the tongue can be made to enter the 'Brahm Dwar', literally the 'doorway to Brahm' which is another name for the Brahm Vivar (as described above in verse nos. 39-41).

Once the tongue enters this spot, the latter should be systematically rubbed by the former (42).

43. There are some practitioners of Yoga who have obtained success in Khechari even without this rubbing of the Brahm Dwar/Brahm Vivar with the tongue, but only those who have previously attained expertise in systematically invoking the Mantra of Khechari can ever hope to do so. [In other words, only those who have mastered the art and skill of invoking the Mantras of Khechari are exempt from going through this most arduous and difficult exercise of inverting the tongue and rubbing it against the back of the mouth and the rear of the palate. The plausible reason is that the Beej Mantras are made up of both vowels and consonants capped with the 'nasal sound' of Anuswar. See verse nos. 17-20. Constant practice of repeating these Mantras create vibrations that perhaps have the same scrubbing effect as obtained by the physical rubbing done with the help of the tongue.] (43).

44-46. Quick results are obtained by simultaneously doing Japa of the Mantra (i.e. to devotedly repeat the Mantra and use it as tool to do meditation with) and doing Manthan (literally the vigorous churning, or rubbing of something with another thing).

For the purpose of Manthan, a thin stick or rod made of iron, silver or gold is used. Its tip is wrapped in some tissue-cloth soaked in milk, and then it is inserted in the nostril while the practitioner sits in Sukha Aasan (the sitting posture which is comfortable for him), holds the Pran (breath) in the region of the heart (chest), and has focused his eyesight at a point midway between the two eyebrows. The inserted

stick is then rubbed against the mucous lining of the nostril at its hind part where it opens into the wind pipe. This process is called Manthan.

If the process is done with perseverance for a period of six months, it begins to show results (44-46).

47-48. During this period, the state of the Yogi (the practicing ascetic) is like that of a sleeping child. It should be noted that this process of Manthan is to be done only once a month, and not daily [47].

The tongue should be repeatedly inserted into the Brahm Dwar on a regular basis (as described in verse no. 30-42). [That is, though the Manthan should be done only once a month, the insertion of the tongue into the back of the mouth cavity should be done on a daily basis. This restriction means that the main purpose of Manthan with a stick is to clean the clogged holes of the nostrils and scrub clean its mucous membranes like one cleans the tongue while brushing the teeth in the morning. It is also like a periodic cleaning of the household chimney or drain pipes so that all blockages are removed.]

If this process is done for a continuous period of twelve years then it is sure that the Yogi would get success in it, and consequentially attain mystical powers that accompany its successful completion (47-48).

49. At the successful culmination of this Yoga, the aspiring ascetic is able to have the divine vision of the entire creation in mirror of his inner self. [That is, he witnesses the presence of the cosmic Divinity inside his own bosom as the pure consciousness known as the Atma. Since whatever that truthfully exists is nothing but the Atma in its all-pervading and universal form as consciousness, when the ascetic sees this Atma he is deemed to be metaphorically witnessing the entire world in his own bosom.]

According to the philosophy of Yoga this is made possible because in the stage when the ascetic is successfully able to insert the tongue in the Brahm Dwar (verse no. 42) he would be able to taste the exhilarating nectar that provides eternal bliss and ecstasy as the divine subtle energy of the activated Kundalini is making its way up through this region by passing through the Rajdanta or the Talu Chakra¹ on its way up to the Brahm Randhra (49).

[Note--¹The *Rajdant* is also called the 'Talu Chakra' as it is located at the rear of the palate and the back of the mouth where this opens into the wind pipe. It is closely related to the Kanth Chakra or the subtle energy center located at the pit of the throat. It is the route which leads to the so-called 10th door of Brahm which refers to the Brahm Randhra located at the top of the head. Earlier, Canto 1 has described in detail how the activated energy of the Kundalini accompanies the Pran or the vital winds present in the body as they move up the Sushumna Naadi during Pranayam and Kundalini activation to ultimately reach the forehead, and then proceed ahead to finally reach the top of the head in the region of the Brahm Randhra.

The Talu Chakra is like the tri-junction or the meeting point on the highway called the Sushumna Naadi that links the Kundalini located in the lower part of the body to the Brahm Randhra located at the top of the head. At the Talu Chakra, the inverted tongue can metaphorically 'taste' the elixir of bliss and ecstasy that drips from the surrounding tissues of the body when the aspirant experiences these eclectic sensations as his vital life forces represented by the Pran accompanied by the Kundalini Shakti are on their way up through the Sushumna Naadi. In practical terms it indicates that some sort of sweet fluid begins to effuse from the tissues of the brain when its nerves are titillated as the Pran rustles up the Sushumna Naadi towards the Brahm Randhra. This is why the practitioner of Khechhari Yoga is said to experience first hand the bliss and ecstasy that comes with Brahm-realisation.]

Canto 3

[This Canto describes how the spiritual aspirant who follows the fundamental philosophy of Yoga—here emphasizing the importance of meditation and contemplation more than the physical exercises of Yoga—achieves the exalted state of self realisation and Brahm realisation. It was preached by Lord Shiva, the patron God of ascetics and Yoga, to Brahma the creator.]

1. Lord Padmaj (i.e. Brahma the creator, so-called as he was born sitting aloft a divine lotus that emerged from the navel of the Viraat Purush in his manifestation as Vishnu at the beginning of creation) said (to Lord Shiva)—‘The Melan Mantra of Khechari is “Hrim Bhum Sum Mum Pum Sum Kshum”. [Refer Canto 2, verse nos. 5 and 17-20 for detail.]

Oh Shiva! Please tell me what is the significance of the three cardinal days of Amaavasya (the day of the dark moon), Pratipada (the first day of each half of the lunar month), and Purnamaasi (the day of the full moon) as described in relation to this Melan Mantra’ (1).

2. [Lord Shiva replied--] ‘These three days are symbolic representations of the three phases through which the spiritual aspirant passes in his journey of self-realisation and discovery of the pure consciousness residing in his own self with all its divine glory and brilliant splendour.

Hence, the dark moon night/day stands for the first phase of his existence and intellectual vision which is veiled by the dark shadow of spiritual ignorance just like the darkness that covers the bright disc of the moon and prevents its glorious shine from being visible and giving any light.

The second phase is the night/day just after this dark moon. It signifies the emergence of the first ray of hope and the first light of enlightenment and self-realisation that emerges out from behind this dark veil of total ignorance and falsehoods as soon as one starts his trek of discovery of the Truth and the pure Consciousness residing in his bosom, and which is nothing but his true divine ‘self’.

The final phase of the full moon is the metaphoric depiction of the successful culmination of his spiritual journey when he has discovered his true self and the brilliant splendour of his self-illuminated consciousness that removes all the causes of his spiritual delusions. This is the most auspicious state of existence for him. It marks the pinnacle of his spiritual journey when he becomes self-realised and Brahm-realised. His glory and divinity shines like the disc of the full moon; his enlightenment and spiritual fulfillment are complete and untainted. The world basks in his spiritual illumination, the light that emanates from his divine ‘self’, the exalted pure conscious Atma, much like it does in the moon’s soothing light. His mere presence is enough to spread peace and happiness all around much like the mere presence of the moon fills the entire sky with its nectar like moonlight (2).

3. When a man runs behind the sense objects of the material world with a great desire and longing for them, these desires and longings go on increasing exponentially instead of being satisfied and getting abated and calmed down¹. There is no end to this pursuit (because it is like running behind a mirage in a desert—the further the man

runs, the more the world and its artificial attractions retreat from him, baiting him to come hither to nowhere!).

Therefore, it is only by distancing oneself from both the sense objects of this material world and the desire, the greed and the lust for them that one can ever hope to obtain something that is truthful and eternal, that is faultless, taintless and without any of the shortcomings that are the hallmarks of everything in the world that the man seeks so assiduously out of his ignorance of the truth and reality² (3).

[Note--¹The reason is the man cannot obtain sufficient amount of satisfaction from this urge for sense gratification, as the objects of sense gratification are infinite, and the comforts and pleasures that they offer are equally infinite. Besides this point, the fact is that these material objects of the world are like the mirage seen in a desert— i.e. not only is it false but it runs further away from the man just at the time when he thinks that it is within his reach. So he continues to fruitlessly pursue the world eternally for the entire span of his lifetime without actually getting any worthwhile results from his efforts. This leaves him frustrated, distressed, weary and dismayed, which cause endless agitation and restlessness for his soul. It's like trying to catch hold of the sky with one's hand, which is an impossible proposition, or like attempting to grab the moon by catching hold of its image as seen in a mirror or pot full of water. As soon as the fingers touch the surface of the water, the entire moon vanishes, only to come back when the surface of the water become smooth and static to tease the person to try again.

²That is, only by relinquishing one's desires for sense gratification and for obtaining the material objects of the world that pepper him ceaselessly with colorful promises of giving him unimaginable charms and pleasures can a man ever hope to find real and eternal peace and tranquility. As long as the mind is distracted by the world which keeps it firmly shackled by its charms, thereby keeping the man enthralled and ensnared in shackles called Maya which are delusions arising out of ignorance of the reality, it is impossible for the mind to focus on something else. It is like the case of the flame of a candle flickering widely in a gust of wind, where the wind would stand for the various desires for this world and the flame would represent the mind. Only when the surge of uncountable worldly desires are eliminated from the landscape of the mind by training the latter wisely that one can get rid of the world and its shackling effect inspite of living in it and surrounded by its material sense objects. The key to overcome Maya is the key to obtain spiritual liberation and deliverance, and it is to distance one's self from the world and its numerous illusions and deceptive charms. Dispassion, detachment, renunciation, non-involvement and indifference are some of the important tools to achieve this noble spiritual end.]

4. A wise person who wants his own spiritual good should abandon his involvement with the sense organs as well as with the material world of sense objects permanently. Instead, he should focus his attention on the cosmic Shakti (i.e. the divine energy of the pure consciousness) residing in his own self (as his pure conscious Atma). He should become steadfast in this and be firmly focused on this fount of divine Shakti (4).

5. To examine the working of the mind with its internal in-built checking mechanism called the intellect, and using this intellect to analyse its functioning and seeing where it has erred, and then freeing oneself from the mind's wayward activities and tendencies is called 'Param Pada'. That is, freeing one's self from being hostage to the mind and its nefarious designs and pitiful state of worldly indulgences, to free one's self from remaining engulfed in ignorance and submerged in delusions created by the mind is tantamount to attaining the exalted spiritual state of wisdom, erudition,

enlightenment and self-realisation, which is the supreme state of conscious existence called 'Param Pada'.

It is an established principle that it is the mind that is the root which creates this delusory world, while at the same time it is the same mind that is the point source or 'Bindu' from where the wellspring of wisdom, erudition, sagacity and enlightenment springs forth. It is the mind that can cause all sorts of delusions for the creature and make him believe that something that is inherently false and misleading is true and real, while it is the same mind which when properly trained and guided can lead him to the auspicious path of greatness as well as spiritual liberation and deliverance (5).

[Note—This verse essentially describes how the Mana or the mind can be a source of both entanglements with the world as well as the source of liberation and deliverance from it. The most important component of a creature's body is his brain. It is the level of development of the brain that determines in which rung of evolutionary hierarchy the creature stands. The brain has two components—the grosser mind and the subtler intellect. The mind is always in a state of flux, remaining undecided and running hither and thither like a mischievous child let loose in a toy shop, while the intellect is marked by stability and is like a wise adult who knows what to do and what to choose. When the child (here referring to the mind) is put under the care of his parent (here referring to the adult intellect), it would have a proper upbringing, would be disciplined, well behaved and well trained. This child would not commit some grave error because he has been trained to be alert and think before acting, while an uncared child would be a nuisance for the society. Likewise, the mind, when it is under the supervision and guidance of the intellect, is under leash, and such a mind can be very productive for the man just like a properly raised child can give a lot to the world and the society when he grows up.]

6. Just like clarified butter is created from milk, the Bindu (the point-source of enlightenment leading to self-realisation) springs forth from the mind. Hence, whatever faults and shortcomings there are in the mind are restricted to it and they do not taint the Bindu¹ (6).

[Note--¹Butter is produced by churning milk, and only the best creamy part of milk floats on top and removed as butter, while all the impurities and adulterations in milk are left behind. Similarly, the wisdom and enlightenment that is produced is very refined and unpolluted as compared to the mind from which it has emerged. Another illustration would be the lotus flower. It emerges from the dirty pond but remains unaffected by the latter's pollutions.]

7. The Shakti (i.e. the life-giving energy of breath) that flows through the two Naadis called Surya and Chandra (i.e. the right and left nostrils respectively) has a limiting effect on the creature. So in order to obtain freedom from this artificial limitation imposed upon the inherently unlimited and eternal consciousness which is the true self and identity of the creature, attempt should be made by a wise aspirant to establish this Shakti (the cosmic energy that infuses life in an otherwise inert and inane gross body and miraculously transforms it into a living being) in the channel which runs between these two—i.e. in the Sushumna Naadi¹.

When this Shakti moves through this central channel (i.e. the Sushumna Naadi) it can pierce through all the obstacles (represented by the different Granthis as explained in Canto 1, verse nos. 67-68) on the way and reach the citadel from where the expert aspirant can break himself free from all the fetters tying him down to this body and the world to obtain final liberation and deliverance as and when he so wishes².

So, assiduous attempts should be made to painstakingly divert the Pran (the vital life sustaining winds in the body which help the consciousness to keep the body alive) into this Sushumna Naadi to give the creature his much-wanted freedom and deliverance from the shackles of the gross body and the world in which this body is bound to live, instead of merely keeping the Pran moving through the nostrils because this would only help to keep the gross body alive, and with it to keep all the shackles intact³ (7).

[Note—¹This is because he lives only as long as the breath flows through these two nostrils. Otherwise he would suffocate to death. In other words, his life and existence becomes dependent upon the breath that flows in and out through the nostrils. This breath, called the 'Pran', never finds rest or liberation because as soon as it is exhaled or manages to slip out of the body to freedom in the outer atmosphere, it is immediately pulled back in as inhaled breath. The man becomes so restless and suffocative that he gives no second thoughts in pulling the Pran right back in as soon as it leaves the body as exhalation. But this does not end here. Once inside, the restlessness continues as the Pran finds itself trapped and suffocated in a sac-like body, a state which is not in the nature of wind element as it likes to be eternally free and unfettered. So it tries to go out immediately, and the man has to breathe it out as exhalation. This oscillation of the Pran is symbolic of the man's continuous cycle of birth and death, with the inhalation standing for birth because it infuses life in the body, and exhalation for death because at the time of death the vital wind leaves the body and renders it lifeless. Thus, the man never finds true liberation and deliverance as long as his Pran continue to move in the nostrils.

On the other hand, if this same Pran is diverted and made to travel through the channel of the Sushumna Naadi, it can finally and permanently escape from the Brahm Randhra in the last stages of Yoga, thereby providing the spiritual aspirant his final liberation and deliverance which is called Mukti in metaphysical parlance. Since this is a one-way exit of the Pran, it provides him with Moksha or final emancipation and salvation. He no longer would have to re-enter the body, which translates into his not having to take any birth in the future.

The way the Pran exits from the body by these two methods—viz. one, by the normal breathing process wherein it flows in and out of the nostrils, and two, by the movement through the Sushumna Naadi as done by Yoga techniques, it would be clear for the spiritual aspirant that if he sincerely wishes to obtain Mukti or Moksha then he should aim at moving his Pran through the Sushumna Naadi instead of the nostrils. In other words, he should diligently practice Yoga as described in this Upanishad with a lot of patience and commitment on his part.

²This refers to the subtle cosmic energy of the Kundalini accompanied by the vital life-consciousness symbolised by the vital winds collectively called the Pran reaching the forehead where the ascetic can experience the bliss obtained when he becomes aware of the presence of pure consciousness residing inside his own self. The irony is that this consciousness was always present in his bosom as his Atma but it could not be experienced by him because the faculty of the brain which would actually do so was previously too pre-occupied with the passage of breath through the nostrils and the numerous sensory perceptions of the world that it received through the medium of the sense organs of perception present in the body and responding to them that it had little energy and time for other things.

But now when the aspirant has decided that enough is enough, that he no longer wishes to be charmed by false things of the world or enjoy its material sense objects that are however transient and perishable and never give true happiness and peace, but would rather seek things that give him eternal, true and real happiness and peace, things that have an enduring spiritual value, he begins to distance himself from the artificial world and its material objects. He trains his body and mind to get detached

from them and treat them as traps, and instead strive for nobler issues in life which would enable him to taste the nectar of eternity, bliss and contentedness.

With the mind-intellect freed from its overburdened task of dealing with the ever-changing world, it can now concentrate upon the spiritual dimensions of existence. Being freed from the grosser aspects of existence, it now has the time and the energy to think and deal with the sublime and subtler things of life. It is only when the grosser part of life is eliminated that one can experience the subtle things. For instance, when hard rock music is blaring in the background, it is impossible for anyone to enjoy the soothing effects of classical instrumental music or some Sufi songs.

This spiritually exalted and enlightened state empowers him with the third eye of wisdom, so-called because now he has become spiritually enlightened and is able to see things in their non-visible aspect which is beyond their mere physical form. That is, he gets a transcendental vision. Further on, this Shakti reaches the Brahm Randhra and can empower the Pran (the life-infusing vital winds of the body) to escape through it should the ascetic wish to leave his gross body and obtain what is called 'Videha Mukti', or liberation of the soul from the fetters of the gross body.

³Moving the Pran or breath through the nostrils would ensure that the gross body does not die, but that would also entail continued sufferance from the numerous problems that the creature endures because of this gross body. Once the Pran abandons its movement through the nostrils and instead moves up through the Sushumna Naadi, it would be a one-way movement that would take the creature to the citadel of 'spiritual high'—i.e. the exhilarating feeling of spiritual awareness and its attendant bliss and ecstasy. Merely moving the winds through the nostrils, i.e. merely breathing through the nose, would be literally frittering away the stupendous abilities of the vital winds that can enable the Atma to obtain final liberation and deliverance from the fetters of this gross body and equally gross world. This is only possible when the Pran moves up the Sushumna Naadi.]

8. The Pran (i.e. the consciousness that injects life into the body and which is manifested in the form of the life-infusing divine mystical powers inherent in the vital winds of the body) should be focused in the 'Bindu' (literally the 'dot'; here referring to the point in the forehead between the two eyebrows which is called the Agya Chakra). Simultaneously, the Vayu (i.e. the physical winds that move inside the body as breath and flatulence) should be controlled in the nostrils (by the process of Pranayam). [This combined effort helps the aspirant to achieve the spiritual high of experiencing bliss and ecstasy that comes with becoming aware of the stupendous fount of these virtues present in one's bosom as the pure consciousness.]

The three aspects of this creation—viz. the Bindu (symbolising the single point from which the entire creation has emerged, i.e. the supreme transcendental Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness), the consciousness residing in the bosom of the creature as his truthful Atma (which is his true 'self') and the Prakriti (which is the Nature at the macrocosmic level of creation and a creature's individual nature and inherent temperament at the microcosmic level of existence)—are actually an extension of this Pran Vayu. So, as soon as the Pran Vayu ceases to exist, the world also ceases to matter for the aspirant¹ (8).

[Note--¹That is, it is only as long as the vital winds that sustain life in the gross body keep the latter alive that the creature relates to the world, and the world has any meaning for him. As soon as this Pran Vayu leaves the body and the latter dies, the world ceases to matter or exist for all practical purposes as far as the creature is concerned. In this scenario, the 'creature' would be some entity different from the body. What or who is it then? The answer is 'the Atma or pure consciousness'—it is the truthful identity of the creature. How does this Atma interact with the world, or

how does the creature become aware of the world? The answer is ‘through the medium of the body and its sense organs as well as its mind and intellect’. The body is kept alive by the Pran Vayu, hence the existence of the world is only till the time the Pran Vayu lives in the body and keeps it alive. This happens till the time the creature breathes. And therefore, when this Pran Vayu stops moving through the nostrils and instead moves along the Sushumna Naadi to reach the point in the forehead where the extreme sense of bliss and ecstasy is experienced by the aspirant, the breathing stops automatically because this diversion of the Pran Vayu is possible only when it is stopped from moving through the nostrils and instead diverted to the Sushumna Naadi. When this happens, the world would also stop to exist for the sensory perceptions of the body as the mind would be engrossed in enjoying the bliss and ecstasy obtained at this juncture.]

9-11. The spiritual aspirant should learn about the six Chakras of the body¹ and then find rest (i.e. fix his attention and the energy of the Pran and consciousness) in the Chakra which gives him extreme sense of bliss and ecstasy (i.e. the Sahasraar Chakra).

The six Chakras are the following—Mooladhar, Swadhisthan, Manipur, Anaahat, Vishudha and Agya [9 ½].

The Mooladhar is situated near the anus, the Swadhisthan near the genital, the Manipur in the area around the navel, the Anaahat in the heart region, the Vishudha in the pit of the throat, and the Agya in the forehead [11]. (9-11).

[Note—¹The *Chakras* according to the Tantra philosophy are swirling energy centers of the body, and they are shaped like lotus flowers having varying number of petals. Refer also to: Canto 1, note to verse no. 85-86.

The Chakras have been described in detail in other Upanishads as well, notably the Saubhagya Laxmi Upanishad, Canto 3 of Rig Veda tradition, Dhyanbindu Upanishad, verse nos. 44-49 and Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 168-178 as well as Canto 5, verse nos. 5-15 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, as well as Yograjo-panishad, Yogchudamani Upanishad, and Jabal Darshan Upanishad, Canto 4 of the Sam Veda tradition.]

12. Having acquired the knowledge of these six Chakras, the aspirant should first focus on concentrating the Vayu (i.e. the Pran winds; the vital wind forces in the body which keep the body alive) one by one on these, raising it from the lower level to the next higher level until it reaches the Sahasraar Chakra where the extreme sense of bliss and ecstasy is witnessed by him. But this is not the goal. He should divert it still ahead and push it upwards into the head (so that ultimately it reaches the top of the head to enter the Brahm Randhra Chakra¹) (12).

[Note—¹The concept of how the ascetic is able to obtain final Mukti or liberation and deliverance when his Pran or vital life-bearing winds representing consciousness reaches the Brahm Randhra have been elaborately explained elsewhere in Amrit Naad Upanishad, verse no. 27, and Kshuriko-panishad, verse nos. 18-20 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

13-17. By this practice, the Pran gets established in the symbolic universe located at the top of the head¹. In other words, the spiritual aspirant gains knowledge of everything worth knowing in this world. He virtually sees the world from a high ground and thus have a broad and panoramic view of existence.

In this holistic manner, the ascetic is able to have knowledge of and become enlightened about all the vital factors of life present in his body which is treated as a miniature universe—i.e. he acquires knowledge of and gets acquainted

with such potentially powerful aspects of the universe as Vayu (the various vital winds and their functions and how to harness their potential powers), the Bindu (literally the 'drop' and 'point', here referring to his vital forces of life and inherent strength that is represented by the drop of semen which he becomes able to self-control as well as the drop of blood and lymph and other important fluids in the body, and also to the point in the forehead where he experiences the exhilarating sense of extreme bliss and ecstasy when the Pran reaches this point during meditation), the Chakras (the swirling dynamic energy centers of his body which were hitherto clogged and unable to release their divine energies but which now have been opened up, empowering the aspirant with stupendous energy and powers), and the Chitta (the subtle aspect of the mind, the sub-conscious mind and its astounding abilities and powers).

This metaphorically makes the ascetic aware of the supreme Authority and the universal cosmic power that regulates the entire universe, and this eclectic knowledge fills him with the ecstasy and a sense of fulfillment that comes with the knowledge of the 'Supreme' and being acquainted first hand with the 'Lord' of creation. [After all, this is the ultimate aim of all spiritual endeavours—to become acquainted with the supreme Brahman. So, when the ascetic is able to achieve this exalted stage of enlightenment, he indeed becomes Brahman-realised.]

This is the culmination of Yoga—aimed to bring about a union between the individual and the Supreme Being. This is called the state of Samadhi wherein the ascetic tastes the nectar-like bliss of truth realisation and self-realisation [13 ½].

Just like the case wherein the fire inherent in the firewood cannot be brought to light without rubbing the latter vigorously, the astounding potentials and magnificent powers of Yoga cannot be demonstrated without stringent and painstaking effort and practice [14 ½].

Even as a lighted lamp covered by a clay pot cannot show its light unless the pot is broken, the brilliant light of enlightenment and self-realisation that emanates from the knowledge that the ascetic acquires of the supreme Truth of creation known as the cosmic Consciousness when he has successfully completed his Yoga practice and has experienced its attendant bliss and ecstasy that is likened to dripping nectar called Amrit inside his own self (as his pure conscious Atma) cannot be brought to light unless the covering in the form of the pot-like gross body is done away with². This is possible with the help of and guidance from a wise and self-realised Guru (who is a moral preceptor and an expert Yoga teacher himself) [16 ½].

The Guru is like a 'Karnadhaar', i.e. a helmsman or a boatman³, who can take a man across this world which is like a deep sea that is choppy and awe inspiring [17]. (13-17).

[Note--¹Obviously, the skull and its inside do resemble the inverted 'hemisphere of the sky' under which the entire universe is located. The brain is also located here, and the latter is the center of knowledge and wisdom without which life would be as good as non-existent. The grosser part of this brain, the tissues etc. are like the lifeless parts of this universe such as lifeless plants, asteroids, rocks and mountains etc., while its subtle part, the thinking and intellectual part—i.e. the mind and intellect, are like 'life' personified. 'Life' does not simply mean living like an animal, but living a fruitful life of intelligent and auspicious living which is only made possible by the use of intelligent aspect of the mind which can analyse and determine what is good, noble, auspicious, righteous and correct, and what is not. Even an ordinary animal has brain, but what distinguishes it from a human being is the latter's ability to think

rationally and intelligently, to determine and choose between options, to be able to differentiate between the good and the bad, between the gross and the sublime. This intellectual and wise aspect of the mind forms the subtle, the most important and useful part of the brain.

²The body is a gross thing much like the clay pot, while the consciousness residing in it is like the lighted lamp burning inside the pot. That is why consciousness is often called 'self-illuminated' because it gives light. In the present context, the 'getting rid of the body' has two connotations—one is to actually leave the body which the ascetic accomplishes by doing Yoga and forcing his Pran to make its exit from the Brahm Randhra at the culmination of Yoga, while the second meaning would be to disassociate and detach himself from the physical gross body and realise that his true self is the pure consciousness that is an ethereal Spirit. This Spirit is like the wind or air element that is not limited like the body, and is free from all the encumbrances associated with the gross body. Further, when the ascetic de-links himself from the body, he is not at all affected by the grossness, limitations and faults associated with the latter. This is what is meant here. A truly self-realised and acclaimed ascetic would rise above the grossness and limiting effects of the body, and instead become universal and ethereal like the Spirit that is his Atma.

³The word *Karnadhaar* literally means a helmsman, but here the meaning 'a boatman' is more apt because he is supposed to take his ward, the spiritual aspirant, across a 'sea' represented by this world. Only an expert boatman can do this.]

18-19. This ocean-like world called the Bhavsagar can be crossed only on the strength and powers that come to a spiritual aspirant with constant practice of Yoga (meditation and contemplation on the Truth) and inculcating noble, auspicious and righteous virtues called 'good Vasanas'.

Enlightenment and realisation sprouts in the creature like a divine flower that first emerges as an un-opened bud, then its two or more sepals unfold to reveal the petals which then follow suit and open out to make the flower bloom in its full glory and magnificence. This is the metaphor for the culmination of Yoga and self-realisation in a graded and step-by-step way that is natural but time consuming.

It is also like the faculty of speech ('Vaikhari') which has its secret origin in the thoughts of the man, then these thoughts are given words which can be likened to the sepals of the unfolding flower, followed by the actual process of speaking when the thought is made public which is like the blossoming of this symbolic flower. When the speaking is complete, when the man has completed the task of expressing himself, the speech rests and the man becomes quiet which is a metaphoric way of saying that all the aspirations and desires of the ascetic, which had made him undertake the rigours of Yoga in the first place, are fully satisfied when he experiences the extreme state of bliss and ecstasy that comes with self-realisation, and it is then that he becomes rested, contented, calm and steady (i.e. he reaches the stage of Samadhi which is a trance-like state obtained in the higher stages of Yoga; refer verse no. 13 ½ above of this present Canto 3) (18-19).

20-23. When the spiritual aspirant who has developed this wisdom of thought that the supreme entity that empowers the faculty of speech to speak is the supreme transcendental Lord (Brahm) residing in his own bosom as his true self (as pure conscious Atma), he would behave accordingly. So, when someone speaks ill of him, or speaks to him with words that are rough, insulting and generally unwarranted, or on the contrary even speaks good of him and say comforting nice words to him, he would remain steady, composed and calm with stoic equanimity

in both the cases. He would not at all be affected either by the uncalled for words and insinuations and lose his poise and calm, nor would he feel elated and proud at being praised and spoken good of. In both the cases he would remain completely indifferent to, unruffled by and unconcerned with what is being said. [This is because he knows that the Lord is speaking to him—scolding him for his wrongs, errors and shortcomings, or testing his patience, resilience and resolve, or lauding him for his goodness and virtuousness. So he must accept everything with great humility, for therein lies his greatness and proof of his exalted and enlightened state of existence.] [20 ½].

The creation at the microcosmic level of the individual creature is said to be of three kinds—viz. *Vishwa*, *Taijas* and *Pragya*¹. The same creation at the macrocosmic level of the universe is said to be also of three kinds—viz. *Viraat*, *Hiranyagarbha* and *Ishwar*². The created world, i.e. the gross world, is similarly of three kinds—viz. *Bhu*, *Bhuvaha* and *Swaha*³ [22].

All the various aspects of creation have unfolded from one basic source (the *Bindu*)⁴, and when the time comes for conclusion and folding up of the world, they would naturally revert to their original and basic form from which they had sprouted in the beginning. [This single source is the supreme entity known as *Brahm*.] That is, when things are seen in the correct perspective and analysed with intelligent application of the mind, all extraneous appearances vanish and only the basic oneness of the entire edifice of creation is visible. In other words, when the world comes to a conclusion, it would merge and become indistinguishable from the egg-like primordial source from which it had emerged [23]. (20-23).

[Note—¹The *Vishwa* refers to the gross body of the creature, i.e. his sense organs of perception and action which makes him aware of the external material and artificial world during his waking state; the *Taijas* refers to the subtle body of the creature, i.e. the mind-intellect complex that is active in his dreaming state of consciousness when the external physical world has ceased to exist but the mind still conjures up a colourful picture of the world in the dream and keeps itself as well the consciousness as active in it as in the physical world; and *Pragya* is causal body of the creature, i.e. the deep sleep state of consciousness when the mind has also ceased to exist.

²Similarly, the three levels of existence at the macro level of creation are called respectively *Viraat*, *Hiranyagarbha* and *Ishwar*. The word *Viraat* refers to the gross body of the cosmic consciousness that is vast and all-incorporating ('*Viraat*') and forms the sum total of all the gross bodies that exist at the micro level of creation; the *Hiranyagarbha*, literally the golden egg of the creation, refers to the subtle body of this *Viraat* from which the latter has emerged; and *Ishwar* is the macro level counterpart of the causal body of the creature, i.e. it represents the causal body of the *Viraat* and the sum total of all the causal bodies in creation.

Since the 'body' must have some living entity residing in it, it follows that this 'someone' or 'some living entity' is different from the body and it uses the body merely as its habitat or dwelling. This 'living entity' is known as the supreme transcendental consciousness called the *Atma* of the individual at the micro level of creation, and *Brahm* at the macro level. It is 'transcendental' because it goes beyond the limitations and definitions of the gross or subtle body. Since *Brahm* is the 'cause' of the entire creation coming into being, the inner chamber of the body where it lives is called 'causal'—one that causes something to happen. The counterpart of *Brahm* in the creature's body is the *Atma*. It is called 'consciousness' simply because it is the only truly living entity in the otherwise entirely inert and inane gross body made up of different elements which are themselves lifeless and lack any inherent consciousness in them besides being perishable and comparatively gross as compared to the pure Consciousness. Since the living being shows all signs of life and consciousness, since it has emotions and feelings, it is more akin to this *Atma* than it

is to the gross inert body. This fact is acknowledged when the scriptures assert and affirm that the true nature and identity of the creature is the Atma and not the body in which this Atma lives.

Taking the example of this material world, physical science tells us that everything has a visible structure that depends upon molecules which themselves are formed by arrangement of atoms in different permutations and combinations. The atoms also have a world of their own, with the electrons circulating the central nucleus consisting of the protons and the neutrons. When we apply this theory to metaphysical understanding of creation, we can draw a parallel and deduce that the visible physical world is the gross body of Brahm, the molecules are the subtle body, and the atom is the causal body. The nucleus of the atom without which the atom—and therefore the entire edifice of the material world dependent upon this atom—would cease to have an existence is the Brahm of Vedanta. This would be the macrocosmic view of creation. Its microcosmic partner would be the atom itself—with its rounded structure being the gross body, the component of the electrons, neutrons and protons etc. being its subtle body, while the nucleus itself would be causal body which houses the neutrons, protons and other sub-atomic forces that regulate the functioning of the edifice of the atom as a whole.

³The seeds of the three worlds that would come into existence were encrypted in the three words that the creator Brahma had pronounced at the time of creation. They were—‘Bhu’ from which was created the mortal world represented by earth and its inhabitants, ‘Bhuvaha’ from which the space above the earth was created, i.e. the world of the sky where birds as well as Spirits etc. would live, and ‘Swaha’ represented the heavens where the Gods would have their abode. Therefore, these three words are the seeds from which the huge tree of this creation came into existence.

In the context of what has been said in note 1 and 2 above, the Bhu would correspond to the gross body of creation, Bhuvaha to the subtle body, and Swaha to the causal body, while the supreme Brahm would be the one who pronounced these words to initiate the process in the beginning.

⁴This phenomenon can be best understood with the example of the huge tree with numerous big and small branches with their leaves, multicolored flowers, succulent fruits and hordes of birds, insects et al that find their temporary perch or permanent abode on it. The entire tree has had its origin in one single seed that is minuscule as compared to the size of the tree. This seed is like the ‘Brahmaand’ or universe in a miniature form, while the tree itself is the unfolded universe with its astounding variety and an astonishing array of multifaceted characteristics. When someone wishes to know the fundamental truth about the origin of this colourful tree, he would obviously come to conclusion that it is the seed. Similarly, when one goes deeper and deeper and sees the basic unit from which this edifice called the universe has emerged he would finally come to the conclusion that it is the microscopic Atma known as cosmic consciousness or Brahm. This is essentially the philosophy of the non-dual nature of the creation and the basis of Vedantic canons.

We can take another example to understand this phenomenon of the world having its origin in one single source—the ‘dot’, the Bindu, and then extending to reveal itself in its full bloom and vibrancy, and finally retracing itself back into the dot or the ‘self’ from where it had started out in the beginning on its journey of adventure should it wish to find its place of origin. Suppose one wishes to draw a line on a paper. The first point where the pen touches the paper is the metaphoric ‘dot’ or Bindu, and this is then stretched to become a line of whatever length one wishes. Can anyone draw a line without first making a dot? So it is safely deduced that the line is actually an extension of the single dot or Bindu, that the line consists of uncountable number of dots that add up to appear in the form of the line, and that the dot or Bindu is the parent-source of the entire line. When this ‘stretched dot’ known as the line ever wishes to retrace its step and find its source of origin, it is obvious that it would

come back to the point called the dot which was made when the tip of the pen had first touched the paper. Similarly, if the line wishes to know its true nature it would discover that it is nothing but a series of dots.

Every modern man who has encountered the computer with its astounding and stupendous abilities knows the basic fact that the machine works on a series of zeros and ones; it knows no other language except the zero and the digit one. Likewise, a wise and enlightened man knows nothing else except the Atma and Brahm. The entire edifice of creation revolves around these two units as far as he is concerned. But does this mean that there is duality? No, never, for he learns that the Atma and Brahm are the same entities at different planes of existence, the former at the micro level of existence and the latter at the macro level of existence.]

24. When the spiritual aspirant reaches this exalted and most divine state of existence of self-realisation which is tantamount to Brahm-realisation, all distinctions between his independent existence as a man and the universal nature of the Atma that transcends all physical boundaries created by the gross body are erased for ever, and consequentially he becomes one with the universal and all-pervading Consciousness known as the supreme Atma or Soul. In other words, he loses his independent and separated existence and merges with the universal Atma that has no separate and alienable existence. He becomes a personified Brahm himself.

It is such a mysterious state and form that defies definition—it cannot be said to have any light, and at the same time it cannot be said that it has no light. [The Atma is said to be ‘self-illuminated’, but can anyone physically ‘see’ this light? The answer is ‘no’. But not being able to see this light does not imply that there is no light in the Atma because otherwise a self-realised man would not have the so-called ‘light of wisdom and enlightenment’ that is so unique to him. Drawing an example from the physical world and cited in verse no. 15-16 above and verse no. 25 below, the fact that one cannot see the light of the lamp burning inside the clay pot as long as the lamp is covered by this pot does not mean that the lamp is not burning. Another instance would be the firewood cited in verse no. 14 ½ of this Canto 3 above. The fire element is always and intrinsically present in the firewood, and this is the reason that this wood has the word ‘fire’ prefixed to it. But can anyone see the latent fire present inside this wood? Since the fire is not actually visible, does it mean that it is not there in the firewood?] (24).

25. In this supreme state of enlightenment, only the realisation of the Truth prevails. This Truth has no particular name or form; it cannot be delineated and defined, and it is one of its kind in existence. It is indistinguishable from this creation though it remains invisible. The aspirant should visualise his self-illuminated Atma residing in his own bosom as the lighted lamp inside the clay pot—hidden from view but nevertheless giving out a subtle light that emanates from it and radiates out in every direction. [Refer verse no. 16 ½ of this Canto 3.] (25).

26. This exalted Atma is symbolically like the wick of a lighted lamp which has a flame the size of a thumb. Its light is bright and without any smoke. It is illumination and brightness personified. It is eternal, infinite, imperishable and truthful. The spiritual aspirant should always remember and concentrate his attention on this Atma resident in his bosom (26).

27-28. Essentially the Atma is inherently wise and enlightened, but when it assumes a gross body to live in, it comes under the corrupting and tainting influence of Maya (ignorance-induced delusions). Consequentially, this Atma begins to imagine that it has the three states of existence in this world—the Jagrat (waking state), the Swapna (dreaming state) and Sushupta (deep sleep state)¹. With this faulty thinking, it becomes a victim of the bad influences of Maya.

When the good effects of his numerous past lives (here meaning ‘when he is fortunate to have come in contact with wise men and has had the opportunity to study or hear the scriptures’ that) create a conducive environment that fosters right thinking, breeds wisdom and inculcates the desire to know the truth and analyse the situation threadbare, the man begins to wonder what his faults were that had led him into this quagmire of birth and death in the first place, given the fact that his ‘true self’, the Atma, is supposed to be free from life and death, and that it has no physical body. Then why has he come to such a sorry state of existence? He ponders on the eternal spiritual question—‘who am I, what are my shortcomings or faults, and how come I have come to live in this gross world’? (27-28).

[Note—¹See also verse no. 20-23 above of this Canto 3. Refer also to (a) Shukla Yajur Veda—Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad 2/1/16-20, 4/3/9-38. (b) Krishna Yajur Veda—Brahm/Amrit Bindu, verse no. 11; Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 11.]

29. ‘During the waking and dreaming states of existence, it appears that I am doing so many things. But what happens during the deep sleep state?’ [During the waking state, the man does so many things with his gross body in this physical world, while in the dreaming state it is the subtle mind that makes him do so many things in the imaginary world of dreams. That is why in both the cases the man is doing something or the other—whether real or imaginary. But in the deep sleep state of existence, the mind becomes defunct, and consequentially there is no activity in spite of the fact that the consciousness does exist in the same body and radiates in it. This is proved by the fact the body does not die, and all its internal functions—such as the working of all its internal organs as the heart, liver, bladder, kidneys, lungs etc.—continue uninterrupted during this deep sleep state as if the man was awake and active. So what is that which lives in this state of deep sleep?]

This question haunts him and he keeps on contemplating upon its answer. [And upon deep analysis and study of the scriptures he comes to the conclusion that the entity which remains alive and active during this phase of deep sleep is called the ‘consciousness’, and it is this entity that is his true ‘self’.] (29).

30. Even as a bale of cotton is reduced to ashes immediately on contact with fire, the worldly ignorance and its attendant delusions are eliminated as soon as the light of wisdom and enlightenment emanating from the pure consciousness lightens up the inner self of the man. This ends all his torments and miseries pertaining to ignorance, delusions and the world (30).

31-32. In this way, when the darkness of ignorance that this gross material world and its delusions are metaphors for are eliminated by the light of true knowledge and wisdom, its place is taken over by the brilliant light representing this truthful knowledge and wisdom. And this knowledge is about the self-illuminated Atma which is pure and uncorrupted, which is untainted and immaculate, which is

eternal and truthful, and which is Consciousness personified. [When the world is eliminated, it implies that the gross body consisting of the gross organs of perception and action is also eliminated. These gross organs are the five organs of perception—ear, eye, nose, tongue and skin, and the five organs of action—hand, leg, mouth, anus and genital. It is through these that the Atma interacts with the world during the waking state of existence. Their removal from sight means that for all practical purposes the physical gross world has been done away with.]

This true knowledge and wisdom are the torch bearers of enlightened state of existence. It removes every trace of darkness and veils of all kinds that cover the glorious light of the Atma and prevent its shine from coming out. True knowledge also enlightens the creature about his distinct identity which is separate from the gross body called the Anna Maya Kosh consisting of the organs of perception and action, as well as the subtle body consisting of the vital winds called the Pran Maya Kosh and the mind-intellect complex called the Mana (mind) and Vigyan (intellect). Therefore, since the creature's 'true self or true identity' is the pure conscious Atma, it follows that both the gross and the subtle components of his existence are eliminated if one were to trace this 'true' identity. [When the creature is asleep, he dreams. During this stage of his existence, the outside body is asleep but the mind and its sub-conscious remain as active as before. The intellect was active when the man was awake in this world and was thinking actively, but it has a hidden role to play here in the dreaming world as well because it is the intellect that decides what the man would remember and learn that forms the basis of the data stored in the mind in the form of memory which his sub-conscious relies upon during dreams. So by erasing or eliminating the role of the mind and intellect altogether, the subtle body which covers the Atma is also removed.]

With the removal of these two bodies that had been covering the Atma like the clay pot covering the lighted lamp (as described in verse no. 15-16 and 25), it is obvious that the light of the Atma would shine through and illuminate the entire inner self of the spiritual aspirant just like the light of the lamp lighting up the surrounding area after removal of the clay pot covering it (31-32).

33. Hence, an enlightened man who is steadfast in his spiritual pursuit, who remains perpetually focused on his Atma during the course of his routine life and manages to do the same thing at the time of his death is able to obtain 'Jivan Mukti', i.e. he obtains freedom from this mundane and tormenting life while he is still alive in this world of artificiality and delusions, a world that is illusionary and entrapping like the mirage of the desert, a world that is like a dark swampy quagmire of contradictions, predicaments, miseries, misfortunes and confusions from which it is too difficult to extricate oneself easily.

Therefore, such an aspirant is deemed to be most wise and enlightened; he is deemed to be most lucky and fortunate; he is privileged and exalted; he has attained complete fulfillment of all his spiritual aspirations and desires (33).

34. An aspirant who has obtained this eclectic and exalted state of Jivan Mukti while he is alive in this world and goes about his routine life while remaining focused on his Atma would obtain the eternal state of liberation and deliverance of his Spirit called the state of 'Videha Mukti' (literally freedom of the Spirit from the limitations or bondage of the gross body) at the time of his death when his Pran and Atma leave the gross body effortlessly and merge seamlessly with their

cosmic counterparts just like the air inside a clay pitcher emerging from it and merging seamlessly and without creating even a ripple of movement into the air present outside this pitcher when it is broken (34).

35. That which remains at the end when all that is untruth and falsehood are eliminated is called the Brahm. This Brahm is without a beginning or end; it is perpetual, ever-present, eternal and infinite; it is imperishable and un-diminishing; it is majestic and magnificent, great and grand. It is steady, constant, unwavering and unmoving. It is free from the tainting effects of the five elements that create such perceptions as taste, smell, words (speech), touch and hearing. It is without any faults and blemishes of any kind whatsoever, it being absolutely immaculate and pure.

This is the teaching of this Upanishad; it is its tenet and canon. Amen!
(35).

-----Shanti Paath-----

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Chapter 28

Pancha Brahm Upanishad/Panchbrahmo-panishad

This Upanishad is one of the revealed ones as it was first preached by Lord Shiva to sage Gaalav (refer verse no. 33). Later on, this metaphysical knowledge was passed on in the form of a discourse that was given by sage Pippalaad when he was approached by sage Shaakalya with the question—‘what or who was produced in the beginning of creation’ (verse no. 1).

The entire creation is envisioned as a three dimensional complex matrix made up of five primary elements that are divided and sub-divided into a crystal-lattice structure having different levels or planes of grossness or subtlety. There is no clear delineation between any two units of this crystal; it is not possible to draw a clear line to demarcate the elements and their divisions and sub-divisions so much so that each unit of this matrix is indistinguishable from the other as they subtly merge into one another to give a homogenous nature to the entire structure. This crystal-lattice like arrangement of the various components of creation ensures that there is one primary and supreme entity at the center of the entire structure, and it is called Brahm or pure cosmic Consciousness. Around this central core there is a complex structure of various manifestations of this single Brahm which in simple terms would mean the same Brahm appearing in different forms depending upon the spiritual perspective from which it is viewed. It is like seeing the same crystal from different angles.

We can view this creation as a vast empire divided into five primary states with almost independent Kings, and each of these states again sub-divided into several provinces and districts each with its own headquarters and chieftain, having certain degree of operating independence. But inspite of this hierarchy and structured feature, all the units owe their allegiance the single Emperor and are deemed to be ruled over by him; they must obey his orders and proclamations. They are all under

the overall command and supervision of the Emperor. It is this Emperor who is central to the administrative hierarchy resembling a pentagon with five subordinates under him, here called the five primary Gods, who guard the five cardinal points of the empire, here symbolising the entire creation. All these Gods are actually operating on behalf of Brahm, and are deemed to have unquestioned authority over the realm under their domain. From metaphysical view point, Brahm had revealed himself into five primary elements, and as creation evolved and progressed, these elements representing Brahm had assumed various levels of grossness or subtlety, and had acquired various names, external features, special characteristics and defining attributes depending upon the needs of the situation and circumstance. But they are nevertheless the same non-dual Brahm revealed in each of these forms, they are all the same Brahm playing different roles—this is the essence of the philosophy of Advaita Vedanta, the doctrine of ‘non-duality’.

Now according to this Upanishad, Brahm had first revealed itself into the five principal Gods, and then each of them had metamorphosed into more forms which formed the basis of evolution of the complex creation as we know it to be. The five primary manifestations of Brahm are as follows—Saddyojat, Aghor, Vamdeo, Tat-purush and Ishan (verse no. 1). The different forms into which they metamorphosed have been described in detail in verse nos. 5-23.

The five forms are only a matter of perception, for basically they are the same non-dual supreme Divinity revealed in all these forms. An enlightened and wise spiritual aspirant should visualise all these five forms in his own self as the pure consciousness known as the Atma, because the Atma is also a personification of that Divinity, and thereby be rest assured that his ‘self’ is a personification of all these five forms of Brahm.

The fact that there are basically five elements in creation and all of them have any relevance and importance because of the one cosmic universal Consciousness known as Brahm that is present in all of them and which binds them together into a living world that is very vivid, lively, dynamic and vibrant entity is behind the naming of this Upanishad as ‘Panch Brahm’—i.e. the five forms of Brahm. Everything that exists has this five-faced Brahm at its core, as its essence, as its heart, as its soul or Atma. Each face or aspect of this world is actually one of the other face or aspect of Brahm; without this Brahm, the entire structure would be simply non-existent.

Iconographically, this Panch Brahm is depicted as the five-faced Shiva, called ‘Panchaanan’, symbolising the composite authority and powers of the Supreme Being at one place. The face that is turned towards the zenith is called ‘Ishan’; the one facing north is called ‘Vamdeo’; the one to the east is ‘Tat-purush’; the south facing face stands for ‘Aghor’; and the one to the west side is known as ‘Saddyojat’. This image of Panchaanan Shiva has ten arms, fifteen eyes, is seated on a bull, wears an elephant hide around the waist and the tiger skin on the upper part of the body, has matted hairs and a tall crown. His weapons are Shakti (thunderbolt), Khatvanga (a magical wand) and a Trident. He also holds an Akshmalā (the prayer rosary), a fruit (symbolising his power to grant boons and blessings), a snake (indicating his fearless and venomous nature that would tolerate no nuisance), a Damaru (the hand held drum indicative of the cosmic Naad, the cosmic primordial sound that existed at the beginning of creation as well as the thunder and rumble of dooms day), and the Utpalā flower (a blue species of lotus; *nymphaea cerulean*). The other remaining hands are held in Abhaya Mudra (the posture giving fearlessness to his devotees) and Vara Mudra (the posture that grants boons and blessings).

The Upanishad has 43 verses and concludes with honouring this divine entity known as the Atma as a personification of the Supreme Being known as Brahm, and then goes on to enumerate the spiritual benefits obtained by studying this Upanishad. Like many other Upanishads of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, this Upanishad is also dedicated to Lord Shiva.

-----Shanti Paath-----

Please see appendix no. 1 for the meaning of this Shanti Paath.

1. Once, when asked by sage Shaakalya¹ ‘what was created first in the beginning of creation’, sage Pippalaad² replied—‘The first revelation of Brahm was called ‘Saddyajat’—meaning the ‘first born’.

Shaakalya asked—‘Is there any other form in which this divine entity (Brahm) revealed itself?’

Pippalaada answered—‘Yes, there is, and it was called ‘Aghor’—literally meaning ‘one who is formidable and awe-inspiring’.

Shaakalya asked again—‘Is there any other form of this revelation?’

Pippalaada replied—‘Yes, it was named ‘Vamdeo’—which is one of the eleven names or forms of Lord Shiva, and which literally means one who is unconventional in all respects, one who is at odds with the established norms and traditions’.

Shaakalya persisted—‘Is there still other forms in which this Divinity revealed itself?’

Pippalaada said—‘Yes, and it was called ‘Tat-purush’—literally meaning ‘that Purush’, or ‘it is that same Purush’, referring to the Viraat Purush or the macrocosmic gross body of Brahm’. [Here it means that all the forms of the revealed cosmic Divinity are nothing but the same Supreme Being in all these manifestations. The Viraat Purush is considered as the invisible, almighty, supreme, all-pervading, all-encompassing and all-incorporating vast and macrocosmic revelation of Brahm. It is from this Viraat Purush that the rest of this creation has evolved.]’.

Finally Shaakalya asked once again—‘Is there any more form of this divine entity?’

Pippalaada replied—‘Yes. There is one more form which is the one that inspires all these other forms of the Gods; or is the cause of all these forms coming into being. That form is called ‘Ishan’—literally meaning an ‘insignia, an emblem and a symbol’, and which is one of the various names of Shiva. [Here it means that all these forms are governed and inspired by the same Supreme Being who is the Lord not only of these divine entities created at the time of creation but also of all and every individual unit of creation that would come into being from these initial revelations from that time onwards. Since the Gods are supposed to rule over this entire creation and control all its functions, it follows that this first-born God, i.e. the Viraat Purush or the Tat-purush, is the de facto supreme Authority that is the deemed Lord of creation. This revelation of Tat-purush embodies all the stupendous powers and magnificent overriding authority of the cosmic Consciousness called Brahm from which all the different units of creation have emerged. This first born image of Brahm had all the authority, majesty and powers of Brahm inherently present in it; it was a symbol of Brahm’s supremacy, authority, divine powers and cosmic might.]’

This form of Brahm is the lord and ruler of the entire creation—the past as well as the future. It is the almighty Lord God of all in existence³ (1).

[Note--¹Sage *Shaakalya*—He was called Shaakalya Vidagdha. The appendage ‘Vidagdha’ means one who is arrogant and haughty. He was so arrogant that he enjoyed breaking the words of the Sanhitas (i.e. the collection of Vedic hymns) of the Rig Vedas as mentioned in Nirukta-6/28. Hence he was also known as ‘Padapaathkaar’—one who relishes breaking or unnecessarily finding faults with Vedic Sanhitas. Therefore he must have been an expert grammarian. His arrogance and haughtiness proved to be his undoing because this is the precise reason why he was killed as a result of a curse of sage Yagyavalkya in the court of king Janak when Shaakalya tried in vain to defeat Yagyavalkya in metaphysical debate as mentioned in Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 3, Brahmin 9, verse no. 26 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition. Yagyavalkya’s annoyance with him is evident in the preceding verses—3/9/18, 25. This establishes the time of this great sage as being in the Treta Yuga, the second era of the Hindu 4-era celestial cycle. It was the era when Lord Vishnu had incarnated as Lord Ram who married Sita, the daughter of the enlightened king Janak referred to in the above cited Upanishad.

Notwithstanding this negative trait in his character, it is nevertheless true that Shaakalya was a sincere student of the Upanishads and one of the most respected sages of his time. He never hesitated in approaching other contemporary sages and seers to quench his thirst for knowledge as is proved in the present Panch Brahma Upanishad which revolves around the answer which Shaakalya got when he approached sage Pippalaada and asked him the question regarding one of the greatest mysteries of existence—‘What came into existence in the beginning of creation?’

²Sage *Pippalaada*—This sage perhaps got his name as he might have been used to eating a lot of Pipal, the fruit of the Pipal tree (the Indian Fig—*ficus religiosa*) or a kind of long pepper called by this name. He was a great teacher of metaphysics, a master of the doctrine of the Upanishads, and one of the greatest exponents of their philosophy. He has taught many sages and seers of the period, such as Shaakalya in the present case, wherein he describes the fundamental unity of creation and affirms that the five forms in which the Divinity exists are basically the revelation of the same Lord, and to the six sages Sukeshya, Shaibya and others in the Prashna Upanishad of Athara Veda tradition wherein he answers their six questions to their satisfaction. He was taught about the spiritual wisdom pertaining to the life after death by Nachiketa who had himself got this knowledge from Yam, the God of death, as narrated in Katha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda. Pippalaada was present on the bed of arrows on which Bhishma, the legendary patriarch of the epic Mahabharat period, lay prior to his death when he had taught wisdom to Yudhisthir. [Refer Mahabharat, Shanti Parva, 47/9.] This shows that Pippalaada was a contemporary sage of the Mahabharat period.

When the two facts—one, that the Panch Brahm Upanishad was preached by him to Shaakalya who had died in the court of king Janak, the great scholarly king of the Treta era of Hindus, during a debate with the great sage Yagyavalkya when the latter cursed him for being arrogant and haughty of his knowledge as well as for showing irreverence and impertinence as narrated in Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 3, Brahmin 9 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, and second, that Pippalaada was present in the Mahabharat war period that occurred in the later half of the third era called Dwapar, the era of Lord Krishna, it is easy to conclude that this sage had a very long life, easily straddling at least two eras, i.e. the Treta (Ram’s era) and Dwapar (Krishna’s era) if not three, i.e. Sat Yuga which was the first era, till Dwapar Yuga which was the third era.

It is believed that he was the son of Dadhichi and his wife Suvarka. The wife of Pippalaada was called Padmavati. His son was known after him as Pippalaadi, and he was taught by the great sage Jabal which forms the text of the Jabal Upanishad of the

Sam Veda tradition. It is a mythological legend that he had ordained Shani, the malefic God who casts evil eye, to spare children below 12 years.

The Padma Puran describes another sage with this name who had become very arrogant because of special powers that he had acquired due to Tapa (severe austerity and penance), but later he was chastised by the creator Brahma. (Refer Padma Puran, Chapters 60-62.)

³Basically, this Upanishad, like all of them without exception, espouse the doctrine of one non-dual Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness which is the only single point source, the fountainhead from which all that exists, whether visible or invisible, whether small or colossus, whether consequential or inconsequential, have come into being, and into which they would collapse to dissolve and merge once and for all, leaving no trace, at the time of conclusion. All the forms of Divinity mentioned in this verse are but one or the other form of this singular Brahm. If the five words used to name them are studied carefully, we come to the conclusion that they are simply epithets to describe one or the other aspects of this single cosmic divine entity. For example, 'Saddyojat' means the 'first born' and as such would refer to the Hiranyagarbha which preceded the Viraat Purush. This Hiranyagarbha is the subtle body of the supreme Brahm at the macro level of creation, and it is from this that the Viraat Purush representing the gross body of Brahm at the macro level of creation was born. The word 'Tat-purush' on the other hand refers to 'that Purush', 'that Supreme Being' who is envisioned as a cosmic Male, the Viraat Purush, who, according to Vedanta, is the macrocosmic gross body of Brahm. This Viraat Purush is known by different names, for instance as Vishnu, and various other names. Since the rest of the creation has emerged from this single Viraat Purush, it follows that even the Gods have emerged from him—a matter of fact as even Brahma, the creator, had emerged from the navel of Vishnu atop a divine lotus sprouting out of it, and it is this Brahma who had created everything else that exists in this world.

In essence, the idea is to understand the basic tenets and doctrines enshrined in the philosophy of the Upanishads and decipher their hidden spiritual and metaphysical meaning in the correct perspective, in the correct context, and with the correct wisdom, not allowing oneself to get bogged down getting too confused by the perplexities created by numerous versions of the same eternal Truth as espoused by various philosophers who had interpreted and explained it in different ways, or as presented by the various Purans and later day interpretations of the primary scriptures. For instance, according to the various versions in the Purans, the single Hiranyagarbha (the cosmic subtle body of Brahm) is known by different names—such as Brahma the creator, or as Vishnu the sustainer, and even as Shiva the concluder. Then there are instances in the Krishna Yajur Veda Upanishads themselves when Lord Shiva is treated as the Supreme Being himself, and the other two Gods of the Trinity, i.e. Brahm and Vishnu, as manifestations of Shiva. There are instances when the Viraat is sometimes called Brahma and at other times as Vishnu, leading to a lot of confusions. The word 'Purush' literally refers to a 'male', and hence all the primary Gods of creation who are deemed to be revelations of the Supreme Being known as Brahm are in male form. The basic idea is that there is no basic difference between any of these forms of Brahm; these different forms are just a way adopted by the same Supreme Being to delineate his own authority into separate segments so that the working of the creation can be carried on in a clock-work like precision without overlapping of functions and clash of authority. For example, Brahm in his manifestation as Brahma the creator performed the task of creation, as Vishnu oversaw the proper upkeep of what had come into existence, and as Shiva ensured that things remained in check and old order paved the way for new by ending the old, or causing its death, so that space can be made for the newer, brighter and more developed forms of creation to come into existence and have adequate place to establish it. This is why we say that the creation 'evolves' and 'develops' and 'grows' because the older order gives rise to newer, better, more developed and more

adoptable generation. This progression is at the core of the theory of 'evolution of species'.

Now, let us analyse the significance of each of these names. The first revelation of Brahm is known as *Saddyojat*—the 'first one'. Now, at the macrocosmic level of creation from the Vedantic view this would refer to the Hiranyagarbha, the subtle body of Brahm, and from the Puranic view as Brahma the creator from whom the rest of creation was created. In physical terms it would be represented by the 'earth' element because whatever was created first needed a base to stand upon and be established. Therefore, *Saddyojat* refers to the powers of Brahm to create and make a beginning. Iconographically, this form is represented by the face of Shiva facing west. This form has been described in verse nos. 5-6 of this Upanishad.

The second form of Brahm is called *Aghor*, the formidable and awe inspiring one. He symbolises the power of the water element and rules over it—i.e. he is the Lord who is not only responsible for preservation and nourishment of the creation just like water which also shows this grand virtue of sustenance, preservation, nourishment and protection of life, but the irony is that the same water can be ferocious, devastating and uncompromising when it decides so. This fearful and unforgiving nature of water is evident when one considers the severity of damage caused by severe ocean tsunamis, floods and storms like those that would occur during the time of the dooms day, or like the ones that have already been witnessed in recent years when they have wiped out entire towns and villages and caused widespread havoc. In other words, the Aghor Brahm symbolises the preservative forces of Nature represented by the water element on the one hand, and at the same time reserves the power and authority to conclude its own creation mercilessly should it decide to do so. Iconographically, Aghor Brahm's face points towards the south because in the context of the Indian land mass the vast Indian Ocean is to the south of the country. This form has been described in verse nos. 7-9 of this Upanishad.

The third form is known as *Vamdeo*—basically because Lord Shiva's general demeanours are unconventional and at odds with the way the world normally likes to live. He is a renunciate par-excellence and lives completely submerged in perpetual meditation, not at all bothered by the formalities, the niceties and the attractions of this material world. This life style would be treated as unconventional and odd by the less-enlightened creatures of the world who remain submerged, neck-deep, in enjoying the material comforts and pleasures of this world. So it is natural they would call him 'Vamdeo'—the odd, weird, strange, unconventional and an anomalous form of God. This would be very evident if Shiva is compared with Vishnu and Brahma, the other two Gods of the Trinity. Vishnu is very much involved in the upkeep of this world because it is part of his duties—as he is the protector, sustainer, preserver and nourisher of this creation. Brahma also remains neck-deep involved in this creation—because had it not been so he would never have explored means to create creatures who would copulate to propagate themselves. It is only Shiva who remains aloof from this swamp. Further, the word 'Shiva' itself means 'one who is auspicious, beautiful, truthful, enlightened and eternal'. Iconographically, the face of Shiva pointing to the North is called Vamdeo. This form of Brahm is a symbol of the fire element and stands for the power to purify, to clean, to absorb, to embrace everything that comes in contact with it and to burn all their impurities just like the fire that burns all impurities and brings out the inherent natural shine in an entity besides accepting everything that is offered to it, whether it is pure or impure. This ability of the fire to purify and clean things is made evident when impure gold is heated before its impurities can be removed. In the philosophy of Yoga, the heat generated by various exercises is able burn all the impurities present in the body that impede its normal functioning, thereby making the body healthy and robust. When a spiritual aspirant does Tapa, i.e. when he observes severe penances and austerities, the heat generated by this practice also helps to burn all his spiritual garbage and clean his 'self', his soul, and prepares the way for his salvation and emancipation. This form of

divine Brahm is said to rule over the fire element, and has been described in verse nos. 10-14 of this Upanishad.

The fourth form is called *Tat-purush*—literally ‘that Purush’, the cosmic Male form of Brahm known as the Viraat Purush at the macro level of creation. At the physical level, it is represented by the air element because the Viraat Purush is all-pervading, all-encompassing, omnipresent and omnipotent like the air element which also possesses these virtues. Iconographically, he is depicted as facing east—primarily because the wind blowing from east to west across the plains of India, phenomenon known as the Monsoon in the Indian sub-continent, which sucks in the moisture-laden rain clouds from the ocean and transforms them into life-sustaining rains in the context of the Indian land mass. This rain is like the divine ‘sperm’ provided by the Supreme Being to infuse life and vitality on earth and is a synonym for rejuvenation and vibrant life forms. This form of Brahm is described in verse nos. 15-18 of this Upanishad.

Finally, the fifth form of Brahm is the best and the most exalted form known as *Ishan*—literally the form which is symbolically the flag bearer, the symbol and emblem of Brahm’s supreme sway over the entire creation as well as a mark of Brahm’s unequivocal, irrefutable and unalienable power and authority over it. The only God who has been called ‘Maha Dev’—the Great Lord—in the scriptures is Shiva; even Vishnu and Brahma do not have the privilege to be honoured by this title. Therefore it follows logically that this supreme Authority is Shiva. *Ishan*—which is Shiva’s one name—is also called *Sadaa Shiva*, the eternal, auspicious and truthful Being; he is the one who gives liberation and deliverance to the creature and lives high in the citadel of the Zenith where the legendary heaven is said to be situated. At the micro level of creation, this form of Brahm refers to the sky element which harbours each single unit of creation that exists, as nothing lives outside ‘space’. This face of Shiva has been depicted iconographically in images as facing upwards—towards the Zenith, signifying the highest level of spiritual quest and the most exalted nature of this form of Brahm. The allusion to the sky element also symbolises this citadel along with the fact that one who lives high up in the sky is the senior most God who rules over and controls the entire creation from his high abode, i.e. the Zenith or heaven. Further, the sky is regarded as the subtlest of the five elements of creation and the nearest analogue to Brahm. This form of Brahm is described in verse nos. 19-23 of this Upanishad.

The reader is advised to refer also to Kalagni Rudra Upanishad, verse no. 3 of Krishna Yajur Veda. This is Chapter 10 of this volume.

It would be interesting to note that the five elements mentioned here are listed in the increasing order of subtlety—e.g. the ‘earth’ element is the grossest and so is at the bottom of the pile, while the ‘sky’ is the subtlest and at the top. The other three elements such as ‘water’, ‘fire’ and ‘air’ are in between them with the grossest of the three, i.e. the ‘water’, being closest to earth, followed by the less gross and more subtle ‘fire’ element which leaps up towards the sky when lighted indicating its natural propensity to go higher towards the sky indicating its subtler and lighter nature as compared to that of the water element. Finally there is the ‘air’ element which is so subtle that it fills the entire space of the sky, almost having the same degree of subtlety as the sky element. It would be noted here that water too has a tendency to go up and higher in the sky, but only in its lighter form as steam and water vapour, and not as a liquid that is earth-bound in rivers, oceans and wells etc. The water that the clouds carry is moisture, and it goes up not on its own account but because it is whipped and pushed up by its companion called the wind element when it lashes the surface of the oceans and seas. Since the earth is the grossest there is nothing below it, and since sky is the subtlest there is nothing beyond it, nothing transcends it!

The Saddyojat form of Brahm is related to the earth element because it is the earth that harbours life in all its vibrant forms; it is the ‘mother’ of all creation; it is

the symbolic 'creator' of the gross visible world. The earth harbours the secrets of life in its vast bowls, it fosters and nourishes life, and everything living in this world would ultimately die and merge into this earth. This is a metaphoric way of saying that everything originates in Brahm, is nourished and sustained by Brahm, and would finally collapse into and coalesce into Brahm.

Next comes the water element. Earth could not have produced anything without the aid of the miraculous ability of water to initiate, and then sustain and nourish life. Prior to appearance of plant and animal kingdoms on the surface of earth there was only water; water came before life came. This stupendous and miraculous ability of water is represented by Brahm in his Aghor form—the formidable and awe-inspiring power to create, sustain and conclude, all rolled into one supreme Authority.

The third form of Brahm is Vamdeo and it is represented by the fire element. The word 'Vam' has a negative connotation in Sanskrit and it generally refers to an entity that is opposing in nature, that is at odds with the usual temptations and worldly charms that are part of Nature's attempt of keeping the wheel of creation and destruction rotating endlessly. Brahm is 'Vamdeo' because as the fire element he is uncompromising and unforgiving by nature. He is opposed to all forms of inauspiciousness, unrighteousness and evil, and punishes those who are evil and sinful. These virtues of Brahm are reflected in the fire element because on the one hand the fire spares none, it would burn everything that comes in contact with it without a second thought as to its worthiness or unworthiness, but on the other hand there is a subtle positive side or aspect to this negative tendency of the fire to burn relentlessly and indiscriminately—it purifies an entity and burns its impurities as proved by the fact that gold is purified by putting it into fire. In ancient tradition, a man's truthfulness was proved if he could subject himself to the rigorous 'fire test' as was done by Sita, the honourable wife of Lord Ram, at the end of his war with the demon king Ravana in the epic story of Ramayan. So, the fire element exhibits both these characteristics of Brahm—to be indiscriminating and uncompromising in its punishment on the one hand, and purifying and cleaning on the other hand. This is in addition to the universal fact that the fire element is the most revered and pure form of creation, and the deity representing the fire, the Fire God, is also the most feared, most powerful and the most holy amongst the pantheon of Gods.

The fourth element is the air or wind element representing Brahm as the Viraat. The word 'Viraat' means vast, colossus, infinite and large. It refers to a macrocosmic entity that fills everything in creation and from which every imaginable form of life has emerged. The Upanishads and Purans dealing with the process of genesis of creation describe how the creation has evolved from this Viraat which is nothing but the macrocosmic gross body of the supreme transcendental Brahm. Now, the other name of the air element is 'Pran', literally meaning the vital spark of life. It is the Pran or the vital winds present inside the body of the living being that keep the otherwise dead body alive and active. The creature's body is a microcosm of the cosmos; it is visible revelation of the Viraat Purush (Aiteriyo Upanishad of the Rig Veda tradition). Since the cosmos is filled with space known as the sky element, and since the air element fills the entire space of the sky, it follows that the vital winds or Pran present inside the body of the individual creature is actually a microcosmic picture of what prevails at the cosmic level. Again since Pran is synonymous with life and is another term used for the air element which fills the vast space of the sky, it is also synonymous with the Viraat Purush because the latter is the all-encompassing and all-pervading gross body of Brahm. Just like the Viraat Purush the air element is central to all forms of life in creation; it pervades everywhere and nothing that lives is outside the purview of the air element. The importance of Pran vis-à-vis other elements of creation has been explained in Chandogya Upanishad of the Sam Veda tradition in its Canto 5, section 1, and in Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition in its Canto 6, Brahman 1. The air element can be regarded as the

Viraat personified to signify the fact that all forms of life sustained by the air element are a visible manifestation of the Tat-purush, 'that Purush'.

The fifth and the last element is the sky—the subtlest of the five. The supreme Brahm has everything implanted in his own self; he bears every single unit of creation; nothing exists outside the parameter of Brahm just like nothing exists outside the boundary of the sky. The sky encompasses and encloses everything in existence just like Brahm, because nothing exists outside of Brahm; every unit of creation is a revelation of Brahm. Since Brahm harbours the entire creation in its own bosom and the sky harbours everything that exists in its space, the analogy is most apt and very evident. This form of Brahm is known as Ishan as it stands for the overriding authority and supremacy of the cosmic Divinity known as Brahm. This sky element is an emblem and insignia of Brahm, and wherever there is sky the presence of Brahm is deemed. This Ishan form of Brahm has his realm spread into infinity because the sky stretches into infinity. Nothing transcends or supersedes Brahm much like the fact that nothing is found beyond the reach of the sky.

The case of one Brahm revealing in so many forms and assuming as many names can be understood if we take a simple everyday example of the 'water' assuming so many forms and names—viz. ocean, river, rivulet, stream, brook, lake, pond, puddle, well, rain, cloud, ice, glacier, vapour, moisture, steam, mist, dew, nectar etc. Then we have the water which is cold, hot, warm, boiling, frigid; water in a cup and a pitcher; water that is salty, sweet, clean, dirty, murky; water that flows in a river, that is static in a pot, that heaves as huge ocean waves, that is boiling in a pan, that is solid as ice and floats as huge glaciers, that is raining from the sky, that is swirling in a whirlpool etc. Taken fundamentally, all of them are nothing but molecules of water consisting of two atoms of hydrogen and one atom of oxygen. This basic truth about water would not change inspite of assigning numerous names and epithets to it.]

2. How many classes or sections does it have? How many parts or divisions does it have? How many Shaktis (power, strength and authority) does it have or displays? All these things are very mysterious and esoteric, and therefore they ought to be kept secret. [That is, they should not be revealed to unauthorized persons—i.e. it should not be taught to those who are not competent intellectually and lack the required mental abilities and aptitude to comprehend them. This is because such knowledge must be put in the correct hands, for it might prove catastrophic if given to wrong persons just like the secrets of the atom bomb must not be given to an ordinary person, or every Tom, Dick and Harry cannot be taught the intricacies of the medical science—for a scalpel in the wrong hands would be no less lethal than a knife in the hands of a murderer.] (2).

3. Salutations to that Great Lord (Maha Deva) named 'Maha Rudra' (Lord Shiva) (3).

4. Lord Mahesh—the great God—had first taught this eclectic knowledge (to Pippalaad) (4).

5-6. [These two verses describes the first form of Brahm—Saddyojat.]

Oh Shaakalya! Listen about the most mysterious, enigmatic and esoteric entity that exists in this world—listen carefully. It is known as 'Saddyojat' Brahm.

Every sort of mystical powers and authority that exist in this creation, each single unit of creation, each single factor that make up the pieces of the mosaic that complete the composite picture that is acknowledged as this 'world', is a manifestation of the multifaceted and astoundingly varied personality of the majestic, the stupendous and the supreme cosmic Authority known as the Saddyojat Brahm.

Some of these majestic manifestations of this single Brahm are the following—the Mahi (earth—one of the five elements of creation, the grossest and most evident of the elements; the one which acts as the foundation and base of everything that lives), Pusha (one of the twelve names of Aditya, the Sun God; here symbolising the source of light, heat and energy that injects, fosters and sustains life on earth), Rama (Goddess Laxmi standing for all material wealth in existence), Brahma (the creator of this physical world as well as of the knowledge that exists as he had also created the Vedas which are repositories of all knowledge), Trivit (the triad or triumvirate of creation; the three symbolic corners that enclose the entire creation like the three corners of the triangle—the Trinity Gods such as Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, the three Gunas such as Sata, Raja and Tama, etc.)¹, the Swars (notes of sound which form the basis of the spoken word and which are represented by the vowels and nasal sounds of the Sanskrit language), the Rig Veda², the Grihapatya fire (the holy fire lit in each household and is one of the three divine fires)³, the various Mantras (mystical spiritual formulas consisting of syllables, letters, words or phrases having divine powers), the seven Swars (notes of classical Indian music which are used to recite the hymns of the scriptures—viz. Sa, Re, Ga, Ma, Pa, Dha, Ni), the Varnas (classes in society) such as those who are yellow-complexioned or fair-complexioned⁴, all the activities in this world—called Kriya, as well as the strength, the vitality, the stamina and the ability to carry out these activities—called Shakti symbolising dynamism of Brahm* (5-6).

[Note—¹The *triad or triumvirate* of creation has many connotations as follows—(a) Creation, sustenance and conclusion.

(b) The Trinity Gods—Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva the concluder.

(c) The three worlds called Triloki—terrestrial, subterranean and celestial; also the Bhu Loka or the earth where we live, the Bhuvha Loka or the sky immediately above the earth where those creatures which fly live, such as the birds, as well as where the spirits live, and Swaha Loka or the far away heaven where the Gods live.

(d) The three Yugs or Eras —Sat Yug or the age when righteousness and virtuousness was at its zenith, Treta Yug when Lord Ram had made his manifestation, and Dwapar Yug when Lord Krishna came.

(e) The three chief human pursuits —love, wealth and duty.

(f) The three qualities that a creature possesses and which determine his temperament and behavioural pattern —‘Sata’ which is the most auspicious noble and righteous of the three qualities, ‘Raja’ where worldly passion and desire are predominant factors, and ‘Tama’ where lowly qualities marked by perversion, evil and sins are the dominant feature.

(g) The three chief tribes or classes into which the human race was divided by the ancients —the Brahmins who were the learned class, the Kshatriyas who were the warrior class assigned the task of giving protection to the society, and the Vaishyas who did commerce and took care of the societies material needs.

(h) The three primary colours —black, red and yellow.

(i) The three primary scriptures —the Rig Veda, the Sam Veda, and the Yajur Veda.

(j) The Trivrikram— the word ‘Tri’ is a prefix meaning ‘three’, and ‘Vikram’ means ‘brave, courageous, bold, heroic, powerful, valorous, valiant, strong, best and excellent’. It also refers to Vishnu because he has all these qualities. According to the Puranic concept, Trivikram refers to Lord Vishnu in his manifestation as the dwarf mendicant called Vaaman who had begged the demon king Baali for land measuring three steps as charity. When Baali had agreed, Vaaman revealed his true identity as Vishnu, who was the Viraat Purush who encompassed the

whole creation in his own body. So, in one foot Vishnu measured the whole earth, in the second, the whole sky, and in the third the king's head was measured, symbolically defeating and subjugating him. So, Trivikram refers to the Viraat Purush or Lord Vishnu from whose navel even the creator Brahma was produced aloft a divine lotus with a long stem, and the holy river Ganges emerged from the toe nails of his divine feet. According to Vedas, this Viraat Purush is a manifestation of the supreme, transcendental, attributeless, all-pervading and all-encompassing authority of the universe, known as Brahm. Rig Veda, 10/90/4, states that this Brahm has three legs (Tri) established in the heavens. The macrocosmic male, called Purush, is its first manifestation; from this Purush came into being this creation consisting of 'those who eat food' (the living creatures of the zoological realm) and 'those who do not eat' (the plants and vegetables of the botanical realm). These three — the Viraat Purush, the living creatures and the non-living things — formed the three legs of Brahm.

(k) The three Divine Shaktis-- The three cosmic energies referred here pertain to the three forms that the supreme Brahm had taken for the purpose of creation. 'Brahmi' is the energy with which Brahma creates, and its relevant subtle counterpart here is the power to wish and aspire for and expect something. 'Rudrani' is the cosmic energy by which Shiva/Rudra ends this creation, or brings to a conclusion the creation which Brahma had made possible. 'Vaishanvi' is the cosmic energy by which Vishnu sustains and nourishes the creation, and its subtle counterpart is taking actions and doing deeds because without actions and deeds, the creation cannot be sustained. For all these activities—creation, sustenance and conclusion, knowledge, wisdom and intelligence are needed because success in any of these requires the requisite expertise and the ability to use and apply it judiciously.

In other words, Brahma makes this creation possible by wishing to do so in his mind. If the creation is righteous and virtuous, it is sustained and nourished by Vishnu, but if it goes wayward and starts committing evil and sins, Rudra takes charge and uses his energy called 'Rudrani' to destroy that evil part of the creation. Extending this logic further, we deduce that when the evil tendencies in the world will almost eclipse or outweigh the good qualities, Rudra would completely annihilate the creation, but the remnants of good elements left behind will help Brahma to re-start the cycle of creation once again.

The 'triad of powers and strengths' called the Trishaktis that a man possesses are the following—(a) the power to wish and have determination, called 'Ichha-Shakti', because it is only when one wishes to do anything and has the determination to do so that he actually does anything at all and strives hard to get success in it; (b) the power, strength and empowerment obtained as a result of acquisition of knowledge, wisdom, erudition, enlightenment, sagacity, scholarship and expertise. This is called 'Gyan Shakti', simply because merely wish and determination wouldn't suffice if a person does not have the required knowledge and skill, the expertise and wisdom to accomplish his objectives successfully, and (c) the actual ability to carryout his plans to their successful completion, i.e. the ability to do deeds and perform, to take actions and enter into enterprise, called the 'Kriya Shakti', because simply sitting and procrastinating endlessly wouldn't give success unless there is assiduous activity and diligent effort, no matter how wise a man is and how determined he might be. Besides these three, the following are also called Trishakti or the potential powers present in a man— (a) to

have influence, impact, affect and sway upon others, (b) to have enthusiasm, zeal, flourish, drive and courage, and (c) to have a good advise in this world as well as the support of divine intercession or intervention of Gods who should be benign and favorably inclined towards him. Further, the three Goddesses— Kali (the black complexioned goddess of war), Tara, and Tripura also known as Tripur Sundari, are also called the Trishaktis, or the divine cosmic energy which has revealed itself in the form of these three divine Goddesses. These Goddesses are the various manifestation of Parvati, the divine consort of Lord Shiva. Parvati is usually referred to by one single epithet— Shakti—which literally means energy, vitality, strength and powers.

(l) The 'Trividya' or the triad of knowledge pertaining to creation has many hues or shades of meanings as follows— (i) It refers to the legendary rewards of righteousness— 'Artha' or material well being and prosperity, 'Dharma' or possessing righteous qualities, being virtuous and noble, and 'Kaam' or being successful in fulfilling all desires; (ii) the creation, sustenance and annihilation of creation; (iii) the three qualities called 'Sata' or noble, 'Raja' or mundane, and 'Tama' or mean and base; (iv) the three classes of society —viz. Brahmin or the learned class who are generally teachers and priests, Kshatriyas or the warrior class, and Vaishyas or the trading and farming class; (v) the three periods of time —the past, the present and the future; (vi) the three states of existence of pure consciousness —the waking state called 'Jagrat', the dreaming state called 'Swapna', and the deep sleep state of existence called 'Sushupta' of the creature; (vii) the three types of bodies of a creature— (a) the gross body consisting of the five organs of perception, e.g. eyes, nose, tongue, ears and skin, as well as the five organs of action, e.g. the hand, the leg, the mouth, the anus, and the excretory organs, (b) the subtle body consisting of the mind intellect complex, and (c) the causal body consisting of the pure conscious Atma. (viii) The 'Trividya' is that knowledge which is enshrined in the three Vedas— the Rig, the Sam and the Yajur. This Trividya has been dealt widely in the different Upanishads.

(m) According to the revered sage Adi Shankaracharya's commentary on Shwetashwatar Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 7, the *three fundamental aspects of the world* which give the latter three distinct characteristic forms are (1) 'Bhokta' or the one who enjoys or suffers, or the consumer who finds pleasure in the objects of this material world as well as the one who has to suffer the consequences of his actions, i.e. the living creature, (2) 'Bhogyā' or that which is enjoyed or suffered from, or consumed in one form or the other, i.e. the material objects of this consumable world, and (3) 'Niyantā' or the one who controls and rules over the other two, i.e. the Supreme Being.

(n) The Triad of Ishwar or the supreme Lord of all that exists, Jiva or the living being or the creature, and Prakriti or Nature—these also form the apex of the triangle which is called the world. [Refer verse no. 9, canto 1 of Shwetashwatar Upanishad.]

(o) According to Dhyān Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 36, of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, the Supreme Being (Brahm) resides in the Triad of creation. Let us see what this verse says in this connection—"36. A person who is aware of the presence of the supreme transcendental Being, the Supreme Being, in all the three places¹, the three paths², the three forms of Brahm³, the three Akchars or letters⁴, the three Matras⁵, as well as in the 'Ardha Matra' or the half-syllable⁶, is the one who is deemed to be truthfully wise, erudite and enlightened about the fundamental tenets of the Vedas and the essence of their teachings (in the form of the great sayings called the Mahavakyas and other maxims and axioms of the scriptures)." {¹The *three places* where Brahm resides are the three states in which consciousness exists, viz. the

waking state, the dreaming state, and the deep sleep states of consciousness. The three places also refer to the three worlds called Triloki—viz. the terrestrial world represented by the word ‘Bhu’, the sky above the earth represented by the word ‘Bhuvaha’, and the heavens represented by the word ‘Swaha’. Besides these interpretations, the three places refer to the three planes of time—viz. the past, the present and the future. ²The *three paths* are the following—the two extreme paths, one that leads to his pomp, reputation, glory and fame, and the other that causes just the opposite to happen, leading to his ill-fame, ignominy and degradation, and the third path is the median one of moderation marked by detachment, dispassion and non-involvement. According to some versions, these three paths are represented by the three aspects of the fire sacrifice by which the Supreme Being is worshipped, viz. ‘Dhum’ or the aspect of the fire sacrifice when there is smoke and much sputtering and crackling of the firewood before it catches fire properly, ‘Archi’ or the aspect of the fire sacrifice when the flames are burning brightly and brilliantly, and ‘Agati’ or the concluding part of the sacrifice when some firewood or other offerings remain half-burnt or incompletely burnt, leading to either smoldering pieces of leftovers or the residue of the extinguished fire. ³The three forms of Brahm are the following—the ‘Vishwa’ representing the gross form of the visible world in which the individual creature lives in his waking state of consciousness, the ‘Viraat Purush’ representing the gross form of the invisible cosmic parent body in its cosmic plane of waking state from which all the individual creatures of this world have come into being, and ‘Brahm or Ishwar’ which that entity from which even this Viraat has evolved. Another interpretation of these three forms of Brahm is its manifestation as the Trinity Gods consisting of Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer and protector, and Shiva the concluder. ⁴The *three letters* are the three letters of OM, i.e. A, U and M. These three letters cover in their ambit the entire gamut of creation, viz. ‘A’ covers birth, ‘U’ covers growth and development, and ‘M’ indicated death or conclusion.

⁵The *three Matras* of Brahm are represented by the three phases in which this creation has evolved as a fraction of Brahm. These are called ‘Hrasva’ or the small beginning indicating the primary forms of life such as algae and fungi, the ‘Dirgha’ or the most evolved and wide spread form such higher animals and humans, and ‘Plut’ symbolising the rudimentary forms left after the creation come to the end, or the conclusion of the creation itself. If these are applied to the divine word OM standing for Brahm, then the letter ‘A’ stands for Hrasva, the letter ‘U’ for Dirgha, and the letter ‘M’ for Plut.

⁶The *half-syllable* stands for the incomplete sound of M pronounced at the fag end of saying OM when the mouth is closed, thereby denying the letter ‘M’ to be pronounced with its full glory with an open mouth as in ‘mouth’.

²There are four Vedas—the Rig is said to be the first, followed by Sam, Yajur and Atharva.

³The *holy fires* are the said to three in number and they are the following—(a) ‘Garhyapatya’—the fire of the household hearth; the main fire of the formal fire sacrifice; the fire that every householder is supposed to keep alive and worship regularly and from which the first spark is taken for the rituals associated with religious ceremonies, (b) ‘Dakshinagni’—the fire used as a witness to making charities or any other religious festivity; the fire lit at the site of a sacrificial fire ritual, near its south end, (c) ‘Ahawaniya’—the fire lit to invoke the Gods during a ritualistic sacrifice. The three aspects of fire are said to be the following—the terrestrial fire that sustains life on the earth, the fire of the heavens which is used by the Gods, and the fire of the nether worlds or hell which is used to punish sinners. Worship of the three important fires have been described in *Chandogya Upanishad*, canto 2, section 24, while canto 5, sections 4-10, 19-24 explain their great symbolic metaphysical significance.

⁴The *Varnas* in the society are the following—The Hindu society has been divided into four sections or classes by ancient sages to regulate its functioning by delegation of authority and clearly specifying the jobs each section is supposed to do to maintain order and system in the world, to prevent overlapping of functions and avoid anarchy and chaos. These four sections are—(a) Brahmins¹—the learned and teaching class; a wise one well-versed in the knowledge of the ultimate Truth about the supernatural Being called Brahm. They also presided over religious functions as priests, because these functions were central to life in the Vedic period; (b) Kshatriyas—they were the warrior, fighting, kingly class. They were assigned the job of giving protection to the society, dispensing justice and maintaining general law and order. (c) Vaishyas—they were the trading and farming class responsible for commerce and wealth generation. They provided for the necessities for a comfortable life. And finally (d) the Shudras —the service class of people whose main function was to free the other three classes from the humdrums of daily chores and concentrate their energies to the particular jobs assigned to those classes to which they belonged. {¹The salient features of Brahmins are the following—they should possess these noble qualities—(1) ‘Riju’-be expert in the Rig and the Yajur Vedas, (2) ‘Tapa’-should be involved in doing penances, observing austerities and enduring sufferings for the welfare of the soul and the society, (3) ‘Santosh’-be contented and satisfied, (4) ‘Kshamaa’-to be forgiving and tolerant, (5) ‘Sheel’-to have such virtues as good character, dignity, decorum and virtuousness, (6) ‘Jitendriya’-to have self control over the sense organs, (7) ‘Data’-to be a giver, one who sacrifices his own interests for the benefit of others, (8) ‘Gyani’-one who is well learned, wise, enlightened and erudite, (9) ‘Dayaalu’-to be merciful and compassionate. [Shatpath Brahmin.] An entire Upanishad called Vajra-shuchiko-panishad, belonging to the Sam Veda tradition is devoted to the subject. The eclectic virtues of Brahmins have been expounded in Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 3, Brahmin 5 as well as in Canto 3, Brahmin 8, verse no. 10.]

These four classes of the human race were created from the single father, the Viraat or Brahma. Their origins are indicative of the different jobs that they were assigned so as to enable the creator perform the task of governance just like a king assigns separate jobs to his different ministers. But it must be clearly understood here that each class of the human race was like a part of the body of the Supreme Being, and even as a man feels disfigured and handicapped as well as feels the pain equally if his leg is cut off from the rest of his body as he feels when his arm or head is severed, the Lord feels betrayed and hurt when even one of his sons is subjected to humiliation and pain. The four classes had specific jobs cut for them so that the society could function smoothly.

The Brahmins have their origin from the mouth of Brahma the creator. Since the mouth is used to give advice and teach others, the primary job of the Brahmins was to act as moral guide to their brethrens. The four Vedas, which are repository of all knowledge that exist, were also created from the mouth of Brahma; hence these Brahmins were considered most wise and learned. The arms are metaphors for strength and powers; they are used to protect and help others. Hence, the Kshatriyas, who were created from the arms of Brahma, were those sons of his who would give the needed protection and security to their other brethrens. In order to feed his creation, Brahma had to toil and labour to provide for the maintenance and financial and material well being of the society for merely teaching and protecting would not suffice without some one to take care of the other necessities of life. So he created the Vaishyas from his thighs, symbolising labour, to pick up the mantle of mundane affairs of life. But there must be someone who would do the daily chores, such as tilling the fields, doing the harvesting, washing and cleaning, and all other such odd jobs. This was assigned to the Shudras created from Brahma’s feet symbolising service.

The reasons for classification has been laid out in Niralambo-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 10, which states that—“The skin, blood, flesh, bones and the Atma/soul have no caste, creed, colour or race. These have been conceived as a practical measure to regulate and control our day to day behaviours and interactions with each other.”

The Subalo-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 1, verse 6, and Canto 2, verse 1 describes the origin of these four classes in society.

The Paingalo-panishad of the same Veda, in its Canto 1, verse no. 7 and Canto 2, verse nos. 3, describes how the three basic Gunas of Sata, Raja and Tama were used by the supreme Brahm to create different types of creatures in this creation.

None of these classes were meant to be inferior or superior to one another; they were all parts of the body of the same Brahm. See also Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, 1/4/11-15 which describes their origin in graphic details, and also Aetereyo-panishad, 1/1/4.

Colour of the skin—It ought to be noted here that the genesis of creation as outlined by the Upanishads describe the colour of the skin of the creatures that came into being. The colour of the skin was used symbolically to indicate the dominance of one or the other of the three basic Gunas, the Sata, the Raja and the Tama, in a particular individual that determines to which class of society he belongs, and which formed the basis of this classification which depend heavily on the quality displayed by an individual to become eligible to belong to one or the other class. The Gunas displayed by him holds a greater importance than his mere birth in a particular section.

For example, in Mantriko-panishad, verse no. 5 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition it is said that Maya, which has created this entire world by its delusion creating powers, has the following three colours—white (fair; grey; all the light shades), dark (brown, black, yellowish and all shades of colours that are not essentially white) and blood red (or copper colour). Since the offspring gets the colour of the skin of the parent because the colour often is indicative of the race to which a particular species belongs, there would therefore be creatures having these three basic colours in varying hues and shades. Now what is the significance of these three colours? These *three colours* represent the three basic qualities, called Gunas, present in all the creatures. Even as an offspring gets the colour of the skin of the race to which it belongs, the inherent characters of all creatures are inherited from their mother, and this mother is Maya. The white colour stands for the best category of qualities called Sata Guna, the red colour stands for the second and medium quality called Raja, and the dark colour stands for the meanest quality called Tama. The word Tam itself means ‘dark’ and it stands for the worst type of qualities leading to sinful and pervert nature in a man which makes his life hellish; the word ‘red’ is a metaphor for anger, vehemence, vengeance, agitations, restlessness, short temper, strife, hatred, envy, jealousy and the other such negative worldly characteristics in a person; the colour ‘white’ stands for peace, tranquility, prosperity, happiness and wisdom, all of which are the characters of noble and gentlemanly persons. Refer also Shewata-shwatar Upanishad, Canto 4, verse 4-5; Paingalo-panishad, Canto 1, verse no. 3; Mantriko-panishad, verse no. 5 in this context.

*It would be noted that all the entities listed in these verses pertain to the life on earth. The sun, material wealth, the three Gunas, Brahma the forefather of creation represented by the man, the Rig Veda which was primarily used to do the rituals of the fire sacrifice, the Garhyapatya Agni or the household fire, the Mantra used for rituals etc.—all of them without exception. That is, this form of Brahm, the Saddyojat Brahm, relates to that aspect of Brahm that creates.

See note to verse no. 1.]

7-9. [These three verses describe the second form of Brahm—the Aghor.]

The next form of Brahm is known as ‘Aghor Brahm’. It assumes these forms—Salil (water—the second gross element after earth; the nectar which preserves

and fosters life), Chandra (the moon), Gauri (the divine consort of Shiva; the cosmic Mother), the Yajur Veda which is the second Veda, and the Dakshinagni (the fire lit as a witness to making charities and other offerings at the time of conclusion of a fire sacrifice)¹.

Further, this Aghor form of Brahm is dark in complexion and hence honoured by the epithet 'Nirdhava' (literally meaning the dark colour like that of the dark rain-bearing cloud). [That is why the Yajur Veda that is being referred to here is the Krishna Yajur Veda which is translated as the dark Yajur Veda.] This Brahm has revealed itself as 'Swar' (here meaning the short vowel sounds of the Sanskrit language, such as the letters 'A' as in *son* or *sun*, the letter 'E' as in 'if', the letter 'O' or 'U' as in *full* or *wool*, the letter 'Ey' or 'Ay' as in *may* or *day*). This aspect of Brahm is called 'Sandram' (literally something which is smooth and lubricating; an entity that shows the grand virtues of affection, warmth and friendliness). [In other words, though Brahm depicts dark characteristics as implied by the word 'Aghor', it is nevertheless mild and soothing as indicated by the pleasant sounds of the lower vowels as well as the eclectic qualities of being Sandram.] [7].

Besides this, the entire living world which has a certain name and definite attributes, the world with all its characteristic qualities and special features that help to identity and delineate one individual unit of creation from the other, are symbolically encrypted in the fifty alphabets of the Sanskrit language (including the vowels and consonants). Nothing exists with a name and attribute that does not come within the ambit of these alphabets. All the activities of this world also come within the ambit of the alphabets. [Since the alphabets are the building blocks of the language, everything that can be defined and described must come within this periphery. The visible and mortal world that is describable and definable by words is founded upon single units called the five elements at the physical level of existence, and the alphabets at the subtle intellectual level. Without the alphabets there would be no words, and without words it would be impossible to describe the world meaningfully and intelligently, as well as to classify it into various segments for the purpose of study and analysis. This entire world which is 'visible, known, living, describable and definable by words based on alphabets', the world whose deeds and activities, whose characteristic qualities and virtues can be described and known by the use of words, all the auspicious as well as the inauspicious things in existence that can be clearly explained and cited for future reference—they are all manifestations of Brahm. Since this world is a 'formidable and awe inspiring' proposition, it is indeed the 'Aghor' Brahm revealed in this form. All the Vedas are based on alphabets, and so all knowledge that they represent are also founded on alphabets. Since knowledge can be taught and learned through the medium of the spoken and written words which itself is based on alphabets, it follows that the entire intelligent creation is founded on the alphabets; the latter is central to all forms of erudition, knowledge, wisdom and general expertise that helps to regulate the functioning of this colossal world of immense diversity and variations. It is language that helps a man to share his knowledge and experience with others, it is the intelligible use of words and effective use of any language that distinguishes a man from an animal, and all languages are founded on alphabets. Hence the importance of 'alphabets' as a base of culture, knowledge and intelligent existence cannot ever be over-emphasised.]

This Aghor Brahm is possessed with the stupendous powers to preserve and give protection to those who take his shelter, those who are tormented and seek solace by taking refuge with him. [This form of Brahm has alphabets and water as its manifestation because of two simple reasons. One, good advice and words of wisdom

are given by the medium of words which in turn need alphabets and the expertise with language and expression. The spiritual path to liberation and deliverance is shown by the exalted Vedas which are also based on alphabets and words formed out of them. Second, water is a life sustaining and nourishing element, and its association with Brahm as one of its many manifestations is to highlight Brahm's ability to sustain, nourish, preserve and protect all forms of life in this world.]

This Aghor Brahm is able to eliminate all sorts of miseries and fears. He can destroy all evil and malignant forces. He can bestow all the glories and fortunes in the world to the creatures. [This is because a wise man who speaks auspicious words is like a beacon of good hope for the society—removing its miseries, giving solace, helping it to overcome evil and malignant forces, guiding it on the correct path of morality, ethical conduct and good behaviour, as well as generally spreading happiness, a sense of well being and natural goodwill all around.] [8-9]. (7-9).

[Note—¹All these elements of creation and the virtues that they stand for are manifestations of the same cosmic Authority known as Brahm, the Supreme Being. Since the creation has both the good and the bad as its integral part, it follows that on the one hand Brahm is said to be bright as the sun, and on the other hand dark as the darkened disc of the moon. Now let us analyse each of the epithets used to describe Brahm, the supreme transcendental Being, in these verses.

The word *Aghor* means someone who is formidable, fearsome and awe inspiring. All the revelations listed above have an element of 'darkness' inherent in them—the moon has a dark side, the Krishna Yajur Veda is known as the dark (Krishna) Veda, Gauri represents the 'other half', the 'dark half' of Lord Shiva because she represents Maya or the Lord's delusion creating powers, and the lower vowels are a bit muffled sounds as compared to their opposite higher notes or the vowels with a long sound implying that they are not as lively and vibrant as the latter. All these revelations of Brahm are dark in nature in a symbolic way.

Water is known as *Salil*. It is most fearsome and awe inspiring when one sees its ferocious and ruthless form in a deep ocean during severe storms when huge waves rise forebodingly like a wall of death and destruction, or during floods and severe rain-storms on land when water can wipe out entire villages and towns. The dark clouds that thunder, rumble and vent their anger in the form of bolts of lightening are visible manifestations of the darker side of Nature, the quality called *Nirdhava* that Brahm possesses. On the other hand the same water is the well-known nectar of life—soothing, lubricating and rejuvenating, or possessed of the quality of *Sandra* so unique to Brahm. The same thing can be the cause of life in one instance, and the cause of death in another instance. This is the great mystery about Brahm—i.e. it is dark as well as light at the same time. Brahm represents all sorts of forces in existence, both the benevolent ones as well as the malevolent ones. This is because everything that exists is Brahm, and nothing but Brahm.

The *Chandra* (moon) is beautiful to look at, but the same full moon is the harbinger of tides and evil spirits; it is the time when vampires and evil messengers of the night go out on prowl. The dark disc of the moon causes chill in the spine when, for example, one has to cross a dangerous country in the night. Thieves are active during dark nights. No one can rely on the moon for showing direction in the night because not only it changes shape but also its location in the sky—shifting in position every night and even changing its shape and the time of its rising and setting.

The goddess *Gauri*, as the name suggests, is fair complexioned, most affectionate and docile in appearance, but her formidable and merciless nature cannot be underestimated—it was she who had revealed as the most potent of the pantheon of goddesses in her manifestation as goddesses Kaali and Durga, the ferocious slayers of demons in the battle-field. Besides this, Gauri, who represents the 'other half' of Lord Shiva, is Maya or delusions personified, and Maya symbolises darkness. This is the

negative aspect of Gauri. On the other hand the same Gauri is regarded as personified Mother Nature in all her glorious splendour and magnificence, the goddess who is the divine Mother from whom the entire creation has took birth, which is definitely a positive aspect of Gauri.

The Yajur Veda has two versions—the dark and the light, called the ‘Krishna’ and the ‘Shukla’ respectively. Since our present Upanishad belongs to the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, the Yajur Veda referred to here is deemed to be the *Krishna Yajur Veda*. This Veda is more prevalent in the south of India, and this fact is subtly implied in the second type of fire referred to in this verse, i.e. the ‘Dakshinagni Fire’. The prefix ‘Dakshin’ literally means ‘south’ in Sanskrit. Further, Lord Shiva has an Upanishad dedicated to him by this name, viz. the Dakshinamurti Upanishad, which also belongs to the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition. The worship of Lord Shiva is more dominant in the south of India as compared to the north of the country where Lord Vishnu, in his various incarnations, is the more popularly worshipped. This fact that the presiding deity of all the traditions that trace their roots to the south of India is Shiva is exemplified by the mention of the *moon* in the above verses because iconographically a crescent moon is shown to adorn the forehead of Lord Shiva. In fact this entire Upanishad is dedicated to Lord Shiva and his various divine forms.

The *Dakshinagni* is the sacred fire usually lit at the end of a ritual to bear witness while charities, donations or alms are given at the end of religious ceremony. Hence, this fire is not only revered as a holy witness to a noble deed but also feared because as a witness to these noble deeds its testimony is absolutely vital to the ultimate reward for the entire fire sacrifice as any good deed stands fast in the court of law if the witnesses to the deed testify that they were indeed done in their presence. So more than the deed it is the witness that has to be kept in good humour. It is associated with the term ‘Aghor’ and ‘Nirdhav’ because, one, it is a feared witness to charities made at the end of fire sacrifices, and second, it is lit in the last stages or concluding stage of a fire sacrifice when the main fire of the sacrificial pit is dying out.]

10-14. [These five verses describe the third form of Brahm called ‘Vamdeo’.]

The form of Brahm as ‘Vamdeo’ has the following grand virtues—he is a bestower of great knowledge, wisdom, erudition and enlightenment; he is like fire personified (i.e. he has the astounding potential and vigour as possessed by the fire element; he is as powerful and potent as fire, as purifying and rejuvenating as the fire which is the third element of creation after earth and water).

He is illuminated with the light that is a metaphor for knowledge and wisdom. This makes him as brilliant and splendorous as millions of suns (signifying the magnificent as well as the stupendous power of knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment that he possesses) [10].

He is a personification of the virtues of Anand (extreme sense of bliss, happiness and joys, of ecstasy and exhilaration, of beatitude and felicity). The Sam Veda with all its melodious connotations and singing patterns is the revealed form of spiritual bliss and ecstasy. [The Sam Veda is usually sung melodiously, set to beautiful music with all its captivating charm, as opposed to other Vedas which are chanted or recited in unison or even read quietly in seclusion, and therefore it fits in well with the observation that this form of Brahm is a personification of Anand—for music is indeed exhilarating and uplifting for the soul. Music provides spiritual peace and tranquility to the tormented soul. Only a man who is internally at peace with himself can sing like a lark; for others it is difficult to hum a tune as it is rare for a burdened heart to be able to sing cheerfully though a song can act as an antidote to depression and dejection of spirits. Music has a profound soothing and rejuvenating effect on the mind and nerves, and is often used for therapeutic usage.]

Since singing obliges one to have a soothing and melodious voice, a voice which is sweet and pleasant, is mellowed and mellifluous, and which can endure sustained notes and fine tunes while singing, this form of Brahm is a personification of these eclectic and grand virtues. [The word used in the verse is 'Dheer Swar' which refers to the longer sounds or *Swars* of the Sanskrit vowels as opposed to the short sounds as mentioned in verse no. 7 previously. These long vowel sounds are the following—'Ee' as in *feel* or *keel*; 'Oo' as in *boot* or *soot*; 'Aye' as in *my* or *dye*; 'Aou' or 'Ow' as in *now* or *cow*. The word *Dheer* means steady, courageous, resilient, persistent, tenacious and sustainable. So the basic sounds of music that are represented by its various notes and tones and which can be sustained over a period of time are called 'Dheer Swar' in the context of the Sam Veda chanting because this particular Veda is based on music forms for its rendition. A melodious, pleasant, welcoming and sweet voice is the best gift that a man possesses; it endears him to everyone and at all places and time. Further, singing of the Sam Veda requires special skills, and all these qualities would distinguish a man from the rest. In other words, Brahm is not an ordinary God, but it is the sweetest, the most skilled, and the wisest entity in creation. The long vowel sounds indicate the ability of Brahm to sustain this creation over long periods of time along with the fact that, like the long-drawn breath and notes of music, the creation can be stretched and elongated as far as Brahm wishes it to expand. Song also implies that Brahm has infused an element of sweetness and pleasantness in a world that is otherwise a bitter and miserable place to live.]

He is revealed in the form of the Ahavaniya holy fire, the best of the fires. [This fire is lit at the beginning to invoke the Gods and welcome them, hence it is like the Herald of good and auspicious intentions in creation.] [11].

Since Gyan is a personified form of this Brahm, it is very potent and powerful in slaying one's enemies (represented by ignorance and delusions). It is empowered with great authority, strength and potentials in this respect.

This Brahm is 'Avyaya', i.e. it is imperishable, undiminished and infinite; it cannot be delineated and done away with. At the same time, it is a personification of unmatched dynamic powers of creation known as 'Shakti', i.e. it is a fount of divine cosmic energy having stupendous strength, great powers and astounding potentials.

His complexion is Shukla (white) in colour. [This word is indicative of, one, semen which is a metaphor for vitality, potency and stamina, symbolising its ability to create and propagate the creation, and second, the Sata Guna which is the best, the most auspicious and noblest virtue in creation. This word 'Shukla' also refers to the Shukla Yajur Veda. Compare this stanza with verse no. 7 above.]

In spite of the fact that he is such an exalted entity, he has the low quality called Tama in him. [This is because if we are expected to take it for granted that everything in existence is Brahm personified, then it obviously includes the darker side of creation along with the brighter side. The darker side is symbolised by the word 'Tama'—meaning dark, while the brighter side is symbolised by the word 'Shukla'—meaning white. In other words, Vamdeo Brahm possesses the unique and often paradoxical qualities that defy understanding. It is not without reason that Brahm has not been able to be defined even by the Vedas, and they threw up the towel to surrender, saying 'Neti Neti'—not this not this, or neither this nor that. In other words, the Vedas tried their best to and attempted every means to describe what Brahm is, but failed miserably in their attempt. When they almost declared a certain form of Brahm as the authentic form and the final description of Brahm, they were confronted with another form which was equally truthful form of Brahm, and this was

an infinite cycle. So they concluded that it is impossible to have any specific definition of Brahm, that it was impossible to assign any definite attribute to Brahm and fix it as the latter's characteristic quality. They discovered that Brahm encompasses every conceivable description and would fit into every imaginable epithet. So while it is true that Brahm is revealed in the form of the knowledge contained in the Krishna Yajur Veda for example, then it is equally true that Brahm is also revealed in the form of the Shukla Yajur Veda. Similarly, Brahm is both Aghor as well as Vamdeo. Brahm is represented in equal measure by the Tama Guna symbolised by the dark colour as much as the Sata Guna represented by the white colour.]

He (Vamdeo Brahm) is completely enlightened, wise and realised. No knowledge escapes him. He is a personification of these auspicious virtues [12].

He (Vamdeo Brahm) is not only the regulator and controller of the three worlds, but also has revealed himself in the form of these three worlds. [The three worlds are the ones revealed in the form of the three words uttered by the creator at the time of creation—viz. 'Bhu' referring to the terrestrial world, 'Bhuvaha' to the world above the earth, i.e. the sky, and 'Swaha' meaning the heavens where the Gods live. These three worlds also symbolically refer to the three states in which the consciousness exists—viz. the Jagrat or waking state, the Swapna or the dreaming state, and Sushupta or the deep sleep state which correspond to the Vishwa, Taijas and Pragya forms of existence.]

He is a bestower of all good fortunes and auspiciousness to all the creatures in creation. He gives the rewards to all according to the deeds done by them [13].

He is honoured by the eight 'Akchars'. [That is, he is praised by a Mantra having eight letters or syllables. This Mantra is 'OM Namoha Mahadevaye'.] It also means that he has revealed himself as the eight elements¹ of creation that are 'imperishable, eternal and infinite' by nature—i.e. they are 'Akchar'.

This supreme Divinity lives in the heart that is symbolically like a divine lotus with eight petals. [This vision of the heart as a lotus of eight petals is expounded in the Upanishads dealing with Yoga and Tantra.] [14]. (10-14).

[Note--¹According to the definition of Prakriti as described in the standard Sanskrit-English Dictionary of Sir Monier Monier-Williams, M.A., K.C.I.E., the *eight* fundamental Elements or Tattwas are the following—one Avyakta (that supreme entity that is un-manifest and untangible but nevertheless at the basis of everything that exist) + one Buddhi (intellect) + one Ahankar (the inherent nature of having ego and pride) + and five Tanmatras or the subtle bodies consisting of the five sense perceptions, such as the faculties of seeing, hearing, touching, smelling and tasting. These are also called the Prakriti or nature of an individual creature at the micro level as well as of the creation at the macro level.

According to the philosophy of Vedanta, these *eight* fundamental Elements or Tattwas in creation are the following—earth, water, fire, wind and sky constituting the gross body of the creature, and the two other subtle elements consisting of the Mana (mind and intellect) and 'Ahankar' (ego, pride) which constitute the subtle body of the creature.

See also note to verse no. 1.]

15-18. [These five verses describe the fourth form of Brahm called 'Tat-purush'.]

The form of Brahm that has been described as 'Tat-purush'—literally 'that Purush'—is manifested in the form of the air element; the latter is the symbolic body of Brahm. [The 'Purush' here refers to the Viraat Purush who is the macrocosmic gross body of Brahm. Refer verse no. 17 in this context. He is all-pervading and all-

encompassing, all-powerful and omnipresent like the air or wind element. At the same time, this Purush is invisible and imperceptible but nonetheless all-important like the air element without which life is impossible to imagine. The air is the second subtlest element in existence after the sky element, and therefore occupies the second place away from Brahm—just like the Viraat Purush who represents the macrocosmic gross body of Brahm and who is two steps away from Brahm, the first place being occupied by Hiranyagarbha which is the subtle body of Brahm.]

This form of Brahm (i.e. as the air), in association with the five forms¹ of the subtle fire element, controls the effectiveness of the various Mantras and infuses these Mantras with their stupendous mystical and dynamic powers. [The Mantras are basically letters or words that are injected with astounding powers that represent cosmic dynamic forces of Nature in coded form, which when decoded and harnessed can produce magnificent and magical results—both in terms of obtaining spiritual benefit as well as to gain temporal rewards. The Mantras need the force of the vital winds present inside the body, called the Pran, in order to be empowered and activated. They are said to embody the five fire elements because they are ‘very hot, powerful, potent, unrelenting, unforgiving and effective like the fire element’ when employed for any purpose. The Mantras have to be ‘said’—uttered, chanted, recited or spoken aloud—to make them effective in a religious ceremony, such as the fire sacrifice. Speaking and hearing needs air, either as the breath which creates sound in the throat and empowers the man to chant the Mantras, or as the medium through which sound travels in space. Therefore, the Mantras are said to be wearing the air element, or that the air element forms the body that carries the Mantra much like the gross body of the creature which carries its soul or Atma.] [15].

This form of Brahm is revealed in the form of all the fifty letters of the Sanskrit language—inclusive of the vowels and consonants. The Atharva Veda is also its manifestations. [Every form of Veda needs words to be expressed and preached, and therefore the need for letters. Since the Vedas are repositories of all knowledge, they are embodiments of Brahm, who is the eclectic virtues of wisdom, erudition, sagacity, knowledge, enlightenment, expertise and skill personified. The Atharva Veda is the fourth Veda.]

He is the Lord of all living beings, and the entire world is his body [16].

His countenance/complexion is red like blood. [‘Blood’ is a symbol of life and its vibrant energy. The colour ‘red’ is regarded as the auspicious colour in Hinduism, and along with yellow and green form the metaphoric colour for auspiciousness, vitality, virility, vibrancy and potency. That is why it is used as a dot worn on the forehead by married women as well as Brahmins and other noble classes in Hinduism. It is a sign of their higher status—not caste-wise but in practical terms to indicate that they are religious people and believers who follow the tenets of good living as laid down in the scriptural canons.]

He is the fulfiller of all wishes and aspirations; he is the eliminator of all torments and miseries. He is the only cause that is behind the coming into existence of this creation, is responsible for its sustenance and protection, and is the one cause of its final dissolution.

He is the bearer of all Shaktis, all the dynamic forces of Nature, visible or invisible [17].

He is established in and symbolises the fourth state of existence of consciousness, called the Turiya state, which goes beyond the other three states (called Jagrat—the waking state, Swapna—the dreaming state, and Sushupta—the

deep sleep state of existence). That is why he is honoured and lauded by the grand and majestic epithet of 'Brahm'.

He is the one who creates everything in existence so much so that he is the one who is served and praised by such exalted Gods as Brahma the creator, and Vishnu the sustainer and protector of creation [18] (15-18).

[Note—¹The five forms of the divine fires are the following-- The *five holy fires* have been elaborately described in *Chandogya Upanishad*, canto 4, section 10 to 13. There are five formal divine fires—(a) 'Garhyapatya'—the fire of the household hearth; the main fire of the formal fire sacrifice; the fire that every householder is supposed to keep alive and worship regularly and from which the first spark is taken for the rituals associated with religious ceremonies, (b) 'Dakshinagni'—the fire used as a witness to making charities or any other religious festivity; the fire lit at the site of a sacrificial fire ritual, near its south end, (c) 'Ahawaniya'—the fire lit to invoke the Gods during a ritualistic sacrifice, (d) 'Sabhya'—the fire of the Vedic period which was continuously lit, and (e) 'Awasathya'—the fire of the later Smriti period.]

19-23. [These five verses describe the fifth form of Brahm called 'Ishan'.]

The fifth form of the supreme transcendental Brahm known as Ishan should be regarded as the one who inspires the greatest of wisdom and enlightenment in the creature. He is the Lord who is personified as 'Buddhi'—the higher level of the mind, the 'intellect and intelligent thinking' (that distinguishes an ordinary man from an enlightened, wise and erudite one who is analytical and balanced in his approach to the problems of life, and who would rather ponder and peep deep into things to unravel the secret truth hidden behind their external façade which might be very misleading if the mind is not applied to external appearances).

He is merely a witness to what is happening around him. [That is, the supreme Brahm is dispassionate towards everything. He would not take sides with anyone, and would judge the creature and determine his destiny in a cool fashion according to the latter's deeds and actions. In his manifestation as the intellect of the creature, he remains neutral and disassociated with the deeds and actions of the body and what happens in the surrounding world so that the information collected by the mind can be dispassionately analysed by it and a well-considered judgment be given. The intellect is supposed to be unbiased and uninvolved like a judge in a court of law to ensure that the decisions and deductions that a man makes are up to the mark, free from any bias and pre-conceived ideas.]

He is manifested in the form of the sky element; is as invisible and without any specific attributes as the sky. [The sky is the subtlest of the five elements that came into existence, and is the nearest analogue to Brahm. Brahm has all the qualities typical of the sky—viz. the sky is vast, fathomless, infinite, colourless, taintless, all-pervading, all-enclosing, omnipresent, attributeless, indefinable, and beyond reach. Everything that exists is within the boundary of the sky, for there is nothing beyond the space of the sky. All these qualities are applicable to Brahm.]

He is revealed in the form of the cosmic all-pervading ethereal background sound called Omkar or Pranav that permeates throughout the space of the sky; the sky is pregnant with it. This Omkar was the seed from which all forms of Swars (sounds and languages, the power to speak and the faculty of the mind that governs speech) were born. That is, Brahm is revealed in the form of the sound element that originates in the space of the sky and then spreads out in it to completely fill it and gradually fade away into the vast bowls of the sky, leaving no trace behind whatsoever¹. [The implication is this—If everything that exists is within the periphery of the sky representing Brahm, then it must have a point source of origin just like the sound

which originates from one given source, spreads out to cover the entire space available to it, dissipates its energy and then fades into oblivion or disappears into the same space of the sky from which it originated, without leaving a trace. No one can hear that sound any more. Likewise, the world originates from this Brahm, evolves and develops into its present and future forms that covers the entire space of the sky, and then collapses and merges into this singular Brahm represented by the open space of the sky when it (the world; the creation) has run its full course and dissipated all its energy. It is like a line drawn on a piece of paper. It starts with a dot or point, is stretched to whatever length one wishes it to elongate, and then re-traces itself back to its root or point of origin to the 'dot' where the tip of the pencil or pen had first touched the paper.] [19].

He embodies all the divine forces of creation called Gods—or conversely, all the Gods are his manifestations. He is calm and quiet, tranquil and serene—in fact, he not only epitomizes these virtues but transcends them. [This is because he is present in the period when the creation has ended and before the new wave of creation starts. This is the period of silence and peace that cannot be achieved once the process of creation starts. Life is characterised by hustle and bustle, by sound, activity and movements. So the only time when complete peace and non-activity is obtained is the intervening period between the end of this creation and the beginning of the new creation when there is no activity whatsoever. The three basic sounds of OM, i.e. 'A', 'U' and 'M' stand for the three primary stages of creation—emergence, development and conclusion respectively. When the Mantra OM is pronounced, the mouth closes, and it remains closed till one pronounces again. This therefore would indicate the period of complete rest and peace. This is why emphasis is laid on silent repetition of this Mantra, i.e. repeating it without loudly pronouncing the letters, because that ensures a permanent closure of the mouth which in turn would mean a perpetual state of rest and peace. This is metaphoric way of saying that after realising the truth of creation a wise person becomes silent and remains quiet. This is another way of saying that upon self-realisation or Brahm-realisation, an enlightened man becomes rested and peaceful. He no longer thirsts for knowledge and peace as he has accessed both.]

He is manifested in the form of the first signs of life represented by the first alphabet of the Sanskrit language, i.e. the letter 'A' as in the words 'son or done'. [There is another connotation of this—the letter A is the first syllable of the word OM representing the ethereal cosmic sound called Pranav. To pronounce this letter, one has to open one's mouth, which is a metaphoric way of saying that the creation of the world has just took off.]

Similarly, he is manifested as the sky which forms his body, and therefore is as vast and colossus, as measureless and fathomless, as eternal, infinite and imperishable, as taintless and attributeless, as all-pervading, all-encompassing and omnipresent, and as majestic and grand as the sky. Nothing exists that is beyond Brahm in the form of the endless and infinite sky element. Besides this, he is as subtle and indefinable as the sky element. He survives this creation and precedes it like the sky which remains in place even after this world comes to an end, and it is from this sky that it re-emerges in the next phase of creation [20].

He is the controller of this creation having five aspects, facades or facets. In fact, all these five are symbolic faces of the same cosmic all-pervading Brahm who is supreme and transcendental². In other words, the entire creation is a manifestation of this all-incorporating and all-encompassing Brahm [21].

This supreme 'Panch Brahm' concludes his own creation revealed in his own likeness and which is his own body, both at the macrocosmic level of creation as well

as at the microcosmic level, by withdrawing it into his own self (like the octopus withdrawing its arms or a snail drawing in its tentacles). He concludes the expansion of his own Maya (which is the delusion-creating power of Brahm and revealed as Prakriti or Nature) and remains perpetually established in his eternal self [22].

The primary form of Brahm, i.e. Ishan, is supreme. It transcends all the other manifestations in which he has revealed himself, first as the five-faced or five-faceted Panch Brahm, and then expanded his own self to form the five-folded or five-faceted creation resembling a three-dimensional pentagon².

He shines with his own light (like the sun); he requires no extraneous source of light to shine. The radiance and splendour that emanates from him is self generated and effervescent. It comes out uniformly from all parts of his divine body in equal intensity—whether it is the periphery or the center. That is why he is called the self-illuminated and self-created Supreme Being [23]. (19-23).

[Note--¹The first evidence of life was represented by the sound that was produced due to vibrations created in the cosmic ether present in the primordial space. The energy generated by these vibrations was the first spark that set off a chain reaction. Since sound needs a medium to travel, this space was deemed to be filled by the cosmic fluid, the ether, that metamorphosed into the primordial jelly as time progressed, which in turn transformed into the cosmic embryo, the Hiranyagarbha, lodged in the cosmic womb represented by the vast bowls of the sky. That is why the infant born from it was called Viraat—one that is vast and colossus like its parent. Silence is the opposite of life that is vibrant and boisterous; silence is eerie and tantamount to death—that is why we have the phrase ‘the silence of death’. So therefore, Omkar or Pranav marks the presence of a vibrant and robust life full of vibe and energy—which are metaphors for the creative and energetic aspects of Brahm.

²The creation has been visualised as a pentagon, with the overall structure resembling a shrine—with the two vertical lines of the pentagon as its walls, the base as the floor, and the two slanting lines meeting at the top as the sloping roof of the shrine. The apex point of the pentagon is like the top of the shrine, the pinnacle of the structure where usually a flag or cupola is placed. This point is represented by Ishan Brahm, the form of Brahm that acts as the flag or insignia atop this shrine, thereby symbolically establishing its supremacy and authority over the entire structure known as creation.

From the philosophical point of view of Vedanta and metaphysics, the five faces of Brahm represent the five aspects, facades or facets of creation and are symbolisms of the entire gamut that is known as this creation, with all its glories and warts. We shall now have a bird’s eye-view of what these ‘five symbolic aspects of Brahm’ stand for.

(1) Panch Maha Yagya (the five great sacrifices)—The entire life of a religious and pious spiritual aspirant is regarded as one big wholesome fire sacrifice, and thus it is ordained that he must diligently perform the five *Panch Maha Yagyas* as the components that would complete this holistic sacrifice in its entirety. They consist of five great noble deeds that a householder is ordained and expected to do that have the same sanctity and holiness as doing a formal fire sacrifice. They are the following—(a) Brahma Yagya—study and teaching of the Vedas and other scriptures that enlighten the man about the ultimate Truth known as Brahm, (b) Deva Yagya—the performance of fire sacrifices in which offerings are given to the sacred fire which are meant for the divine Gods and are done to honour them, (c) Pitri Yagya—paying homage to the spirit of dead ancestors, offering oblations to them and doing religious activities for the peace of their souls, (d) Service to mankind called ‘Jiva Yagya’, and (e) Bhut Yagya—service to all the creatures including animals, insects, plants etc., such as giving them food, shelter and protection, i.e. taking general care of them. These five sacrifices have been described in *Ashramo-panishad*, verse no. 3.

(2) The five sacraments—They are the five deemed sacred sacrifices as follows--(a) doing *Japa* which is repeating/chanting/reciting of the divine Mantra called the Gayatri Mantra which is especially prescribed for renunciate ascetics (see verse no. 14 below), (b) doing *Yoga* or meditation and contemplation upon divinity, (c) doing *Tapa* or observing austerities, doing penances, suffering hardships for spiritual enhancement, having noble thoughts and following virtuous path inspite of all the hurdles and inconveniences, (d) doing *Swadhyaya* or self study which entails the deep study of the scriptures and contemplating upon their teachings as well as meditating upon the Atma which is pure consciousness and the pure self, and (e) endeavouring to acquire *Gyan* which is the truthful knowledge about the ultimate Truth and Reality in the creation, a knowledge that would help to dispel the dark veil of ignorance and delusions that surrounds the creature from all the sides, almost suffocating and pinning him down.

(3) According to another version, these Panch Brahms are the five manifestation of the Supreme Being, and they are Sun God, Vishnu the sustainer and protector, Shiva the concluder and annihilator, Ganesh the most revered deity in the Hindu pantheon who is invoked at the beginning of any auspicious effort, and Shakti or the divine Goddess personifying the stupendous energy in Nature.

(4) Again, since everything in existence has been created from the five basic elements, it follows that Panch Brahm also refers to the *five sheaths or Koshas* that surround the pure conscious Atma which is the truthful identity of the creature. These five Koshas are the following--‘Annamaye Kosh’ or the food sheath, ‘Pranmaye Kosh’ or the vital wind sheath, ‘Manomaye Kosh’ or the mental sheath, ‘Vigyanmaye Kosh’ or the intellect sheath, and ‘Anandmaye Kosh’ or the bliss sheath. These sheaths cover the Atma or pure conscious self like various coverings or shrouds wrapping any object. They are also called the five Kalaas of Man.

The *Annamaye Kosh* is that which was created by the intake of food, was nourished and developed by food, and at the end it finally disintegrates into the basic ingredients that constitutes food and merges with the earth element from where the food has derived its original ingredients. This forms the gross body of the creature.

The *Pranmaye Kosh* consists of the five vital winds (Pran, Apaana, Vyan, Udaan, and Samaana) along with the five organs of action (hands, legs, mouth, excretory and reproductive).

The *Manomaye Kosh* consists of the mind and the five organs of perceptions (ears, eyes, nose, tongue and skin), while the *Vigyanmaye Kosh* consists of the combined apparatus made of the intellect and these five organs of perception.

A combination of these three sheaths, i.e. Pranmaye Kosh (vital wind sheath), Manomaye Kosh (the mental sheath) and Vigyanmaye Kosh (the intellect sheath) is what is known as the ‘Ling Deha’ of a creature, or the ethereal form of the corporeal body. This is the subtle body of the creature.

The sheath in which the pure conscious self is not aware of the ‘Ling Deha’ is called *Anandmaye Kosh*. This forms the causal body of the creature”.

These five sheaths are called the ‘Panch Kosha’.

(5) Life in this creation is sustained by the wind or air element, as is evident from the fact that it is possible to survive for a reasonable time without water and food but one immediately suffocates to death if there is no air. These vital winds or air element takes five principal forms, called the *Panch Prans* which are personifications of the magnificent abilities of the supreme Brahm to sustain life in a quiet and subtle manner. These primary and principal vital wind called *Pran* lives in a subtle form in the subtle space of the heart (and keeps this organ functioning); the vital wind called *Apaana* lives in the region of the anus (and is responsible for excretion of the residue from the intestines); the *Samaana* wind is found in the navel region (because it is from here that all the nerves and veins in the body radiate out from the nerve center or core called the ‘Nabhi Kand’, and ensure that nutrients and other essential supplies are equally distributed in the body); the *Udaan* wind lives in the region of the throat

(because this wind is synonymous with the notion of 'getting up' or 'rising', so it symbolises the creature's state of wakefulness when he speaks out, and at the same time it helps it to 'raise' and spit out cough present in the lungs); and *Vyan* spreads through the body (as it helps in maintaining equilibrium). These vital winds have been described in Amrit Naad Upanishad, verse no. 35-38 of Krishna Yajur Veda. These five manifestations of the wind or air element are also called the five 'Kalaas of Pran'.

(6) *Panch Varga* consists of the following group of subtle elements that constitutes the body of all living beings—viz. (a) the Mana or mind along with its other companions (i.e. the mind, the intellect, the Ahankar or the sense of ego, pride and self righteousness), (b) the Pran or vital winds that sustain life in the body and its various forms (such as Apan, Vyan, Samaan, Udaan etc.), (c) the ability of the creature to have Ichha or to have desires, wishes, passions and aspirations, along with their astounding powers and potentials, (d) the three Gunas or qualities that are inherent to all the living beings and which determine the character and behaviour of the individual, such as the quality called Sata (which is the best of the three qualities and gives rise to noble aspirations and makes the creature righteous and upright), Raja (which is the medium quality creating worldly passions and the tendency to delve into things worldly) and Tama (which is the lowest quality creating a sinful tendency and a predominance of inertia and indolence), and (e) the various deeds broadly classified into those that are righteous, noble and auspicious, and those that are the opposite.

The Sarwasaaro-panishad, verse no. 7 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition describes them.

(7) They are the five Gods worshipped by Hindus. They are Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer and protector, Shiva the concluder, Aditya the Sun God, and Ganesh the son of Shiva and the God who is worshipped before all other Gods in the Hindu pantheon of Gods.

(8) The five elements called the Panch Bhuts—earth, water, fire, air and sky. The Yogtattva Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition verse nos. 85-99 describe the various elements, their location in the body and their patron deities. Refer also Sharrirako-panishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 1-2. The Mantras pertaining to these elements are mentioned in Kalagni-rudra Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, verse no. 3. They are the following--'Agniriti Bhasm' for the fire element, 'Vayuriti Bhasm' for the air or wind element, 'Jalmiti Bhasm' for the water element, 'Sthalmity Bhasm' for the earth element, and 'Vyomriti Bhasm' for the sky element.

(9) The five sense organs of perceptions—ears, nose, eyes, tongue and skin.

(10) The five sense perceptions, called Tanmatras—hearing, smelling, seeing, tasting and feeling.

(11) The five organs of action—hands, legs, mouth, anus and genitals.

(12) The five states of existence of the consciousness—Jagrat or waking, Swapna or dreaming, Sushupta or deep sleeping, Turiya or post deep sleep, and Turiyateet or the transcendental state beyond Turiya which corresponds to ultimate enlightened state of perpetual Samadhi.

(13) The five auspicious times, called Panchaanga, when fire sacrifices could be held. The word literally means 'the five limbs' and these five limbs are the following—Vaara or the day of the week—the solar day, Tithi or the lunar day, Nakshatra or the lunar mansion, Karana or half of Tithi, and Yoga or the time when all auspicious signs are in conjunction, or when the sun and the moon together accomplish 13 degrees and 20 minutes of space.

(14) The Panch Bhedas or the doctrine of five-fold differences which pertain to the branch of Vedanta philosophy called the 'Dvaitya Vedanta' whose strongest exponent was Madhavacharya (1238-1317 A.D.). According to this theory, Brahm is different from the Jiva, the living being, as well as the Prakriti or Nature. All the Jivas are different from one another and from the Prakriti. All the objects that evolve out of

Prakriti (Nature) are also different from one another. It therefore recognises five aspects of creation—(i) Brahm or the Supreme Being who is also known as Vishnu the sustainer and protector of creation as well as its concluder and creator, (ii) Maya which is the indescribable and inconceivable cosmic power that Brahm employs to create delusions and which has revealed as Laxmi, the divine consort of Vishnu, who presides over all worldly assets, (iii) Prakriti or Nature in its all-encompassing connotations, (iv) Jiva or the individual soul or the individual creature, and (v) the inanimate world of non-living things.

(15) The five types or kinds of living beings (people)—These term has many variations. In the Rig Veda, 10/53/4, the five types of creatures that the Hota priest appeals to accept his offerings—The Devtas (Gods), Manushya (human beings), Pitras (spirits of dead ancestors), Pashus (animals) and Pakshis (birds).

According to another interpretation, they are the four Varnas or classes in the society and the sub-class, viz. Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, Shudras and Nishads (boatman and hunters).

(16) The Mantra of five syllables—(a) The five syllable Mantra dedicated to the Lord Shiva in his form as ‘Panch Brahm’ is the following—‘OM Namaha Shivaye’. [Na + Maha + Shi + Vaa + Ye = 5; the word OM is used as a salutation only.] (b) The five syllable Mantra dedicated to Vishnu is the following—‘OM Vishnave Namaha’. [Vi + Shna + Ve + Na + Maha = 5; the word OM is used as a salutation.]

(17) The five cardinal rules of political conduct—Mitrabheda or breaking of friendship, Mitralaabh or making of friendship, Kaakolukiye or to the attempt to forge friendship between two natural enemies, Labdha-prashmanam or to lose something that was acquired with difficulty, and Aparikshikt-karitam or the results of inconsiderate and reckless action.

(18) The five modes of offering worship to the deity—offering of Gandha or sandalwood paste or fragrance, offering Pushpa or flowers, offering of Dhupa or incense, offering of Dipa or lighted lamp, and offering of Naivedya or sweet foods.

(19) The five holy fires--(a) ‘Garhyapatya’—the fire of the household hearth; the main fire of the formal fire sacrifice; the fire that every householder is supposed to keep alive and worship regularly and from which the first spark is taken for the rituals associated with religious ceremonies), (b) ‘Dakshinagni’—the fire used as a witness to making charities or any other religious festivity; the fire lit at the site of a sacrificial fire ritual, near its south end), (c) ‘Ahawaniya’—the fire lit to invoke the Gods during a ritualistic sacrifice), (d) ‘Sabhya’—the fire of the Vedic period which was continuously lit) and (e) ‘Awasathya’—the fire of the later Smriti period).

(20) The five Tormentors--The five ‘tormenters’ are the following— (a) Avidya (ignorance); (b) Asmita (vanity, ego, pride, arrogance, hypocrisy and haughtiness; according to the philosophy of non-duality, to regard the Atma and the subtle body consisting of mind-intellect complex as one); (c) Raag (attachment, infatuation, desire etc.); (d) Dwesh (ill-will, enmity, malice, hatred, confrontationist attitude etc.) and (e) Abhinivesh (fear of death)—अविद्या, अस्मिता, राग, द्वेष, अभिनिवेश. Refer Adhyatma Ramayan of sage Veda Vyas, Lanka Kanda, canto 10, verse no.61.]

(21) The five Vikaars or faults or shortcomings or imperfections of the body—According to *Mandal Brahmin Upanishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, Brahmin 1, section 2, verse nos.1, there are following—viz. (1) Kaam (worldly lust, desires, passions and yearnings), (2) Krodh (anger, indignation, wrathfulness), (3) Asthma or obstruction of breath, (4) Bhaya (fear of physical harm), and (5) Nidra (sleep, lethargy, indolence, drowsiness, sluggishness and lack of alertness especially when doing some important or dangerous work requiring concentration of mind, vigilance and alertness of the faculties) (verse no. 1).

(22) The five phases through which the creation passes—conception, creation, expansion and development, existence and sustenance, and conclusion or end.

(23) Panchak—The combination of Daan (giving of alms, making of charities and donation), Laabh (gain or profit or reward), Bhog (enjoyment and sufferance),

Upbhog (consumption) and Virya (semen and potency; virility, stamina, strength and vigour).

(24) Panch Kaval—The five mouthfuls of food that are set aside before one begins to eat, and are meant for the dog, some lowly person, a leprosy patient, a sick man, and a crow. This has a symbolic importance—it teaches the man to take care of the downtrodden and the underdogs of society as much as he takes care of himself because the same Brahm that resides in the body of the person who has sat down to eat a gourmet meal also resides in the lowest of the lowly in this creation.

(25) Panch Ganga—The five holy rivers of India, viz. Ganges, Yamuna, Saraswati, Kirnaa, and Dhutpaapaa.

(26) Panch Nad—The five rivers that flow into the Arabian ocean—viz. Satlaj, Vyas, Ravi, Chenav and Jhelam.

(27) Panch Gabya—The five things regarded as sanctified and used during fire sacrifices and other religious ceremonies—milk, curd, clarified butter called Ghee, cow's dung and cow urine.

(28) Panchaamrit—A concoction made of five things considered as holy and auspicious as nectar, and hence the name 'Panch Amrit' which is prepared by mixing the following five—milk, curd, clarified butter, sugar/treacle and honey.

(29) Panch Kanya—The five women mentioned in the Purans who are regarded as eternally chaste, and therefore called 'Kanya', literally 'a virgin girl'—Ahilya, Draupadi, Kunti, Tara and Mandodari.

(30) Panch Gaur—The five sub-castes amongst the Brahmins who inhabited the area north of the Vindhya Mountains—Saaraswat, Kaanyakunj, Gaur, Maithil and Utkal.

(31) Panch Dravid—The five sub-castes of Brahmins who lived south of the Vindhya Mountains—Maharashtra, Tailang, Karnaat, Gurjur and Dravid.

(32) Panch Jan—The following five categories of creatures—Gandharva (a semi-god), Pittar (spirit of dead ancestor), Deva (higher Gods; the creatures with auspicious nature), Asur (non-Gods; the demons; creatures with inauspicious nature) and Rakshas (flesh eating demons; the ogres and cannibals; those who are cruel and merciless).

(33) Panch Tikta—The five bitter herbs used for their medicinal properties—viz. (i) Kantakir (a prickly plant; the silk cotton tree; *solanum jacquint*), (ii) Saunth (dried ginger), (iii) Kuta in all its three forms (e.g. one called Kutaj—meaning the medicinal plant with the name *echites unitedysenterica*; the second called White Kutaki—meaning the plant called Helle Bore or *picrorhiza kurrrooa*; and the third called Black Kutaki—meaning the plant black Helle Bore or *hellborus niger*), (iv) Chiraayataa (wormwood plant; *gentiana cheratta*), and (v) Giloya or Guruch (a medicinal creeper that grows around the Neem tree—the *margosa* tree).

(34) Panch Naath—The five holy pilgrim sites where five forms of Lord Vishnu are established—Badrinath in the northern Himalayan mountain range, Dwarkanath on the west coast, Jagganath on the eastern coast, Rangnath in the south of India, and Srinath in the western part of India (in the state of Rajasthan).

(35) Panch Pallav—The leave of the following trees which are regarded as sanctified and used in religious ceremonies—'Aam' or mango, 'Jamun' or the rose apple tree which is a kind of black plum, the two types of the wood apple tree—viz. 'Bel' or *aegle marmelos* and 'Kaith' or *feronia elephantum*, and 'Bijaura Nimbu' or lime, especially the variety called *citrus medica typica*.

(36) Panch Paatak—The five great sins are the following—killing a Brahmin, getting intoxicated by drinking wine, theft, sex with a teacher's wife, and company of such people.

(37) Panch Maha Vrat—These are the five great vows, e.g. non-violence and no-killing; truth and non-pretension; not stealing or even eyeing other's property; celibacy, abstinence and self control in all matters; and non-acceptance as well as non-expectation.

(38) Panch Ratna—The five gems such as gold, diamond, blue sapphire, ruby and pearl.

(39) Panch Shabda—The five types of sounds—that made while chanting or reciting the hymns of the Vedas, that made by heralds, that made at the time of cheering victory or applauding any success, that made by blowing the conch shell, and that made by the musical instrument called Nisan, i.e. the kettle drum.

Thus we see that the term Panch Brahm would include a wide swathe of various hues of existential life in this world. The fact that these five forms of Brahm known as 'Panch Brahm' are nothing but one single Brahm revealed in these forms to carry out the complexities of the varied tasks associated with the governing of creation is clearly laid out in verse no. 26-27 below.]

24. Remaining stunned and under the magical spell cast by the Great God Shambhu's (Shiva's) Maya (delusion creating powers), even the exalted Gods and other learned creatures are unable to have any idea who that Great God is. They are unable to know anything about him or get acquainted with the reality of this Great God who is the universal Guru (moral preceptor, wise and learned teacher and expert spiritual guide) for the entire living world.

These Gods are not able to fathom or know any truth about this Great Lord who is the cause of all that exists, including these Gods themselves, and is the Supreme Being of creation.

The truthful cosmic and divine form of that supreme Lord called the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic all-pervading but most subtle and sublime form of the Supreme Being known as Brahm, who is the Lord of everything in existence, cannot be seen or perceived in the ordinary way inspite of the fact that he is self-illuminated and omnipresent everywhere. [That is, though something that gives out its own light, for example an electric bulb, can be seen from a distance even in dark, this Viraat Purush is not visible to the naked eye because he has no physical attributes and characteristic features.]

But no, it would be wrong to say that the supreme Lord is not visible, for wise ones see him in his universal and omnipresent form as revealed in the shape of this visible creation! (24).

25. That Brahm who illuminates or lights up this creation, i.e. the Brahm from whom this creation has emerged and who has ensured that it becomes clearly visible to even an ordinary creature not an expert of metaphysics or spiritualism, and in whom this creation would finally collapse and dissolve at the time of its conclusion, is most tranquil, serene and peaceful. That Brahm is indeed an embodiment of tranquility, peace, serenity and calmness. That Brahm is the ultimate citadel of creation, the highest point of all spiritual endeavours, and the so-called final frontier! (25).

26. That which is known by the five names such as Saddyojat etc. as narrated previously in this Upanishad is nothing else but this same Brahm who is also known as 'Panch Brahm' because of this fact that it is five-faceted or has five aspects to its holy and exalted existence. In other words, it is the same indivisible, immutable, uniform, universal and non-dual Supreme Being who has manifested in five forms (as enumerated in this Upanishad) in order to perform distinct functions of creation and carry on with the process of initiation, sustenance, propagation and conclusion of creation in an orderly manner. But essentially all these five forms of Brahm are one—they are the five ways by which the same

entity is viewed or understood. The same Divinity is understood to have five forms according to the needs of the situation, and therefore there is no trace of distinction or dichotomy between them. Any argument against this universal and irrefutable truth about Brahm is untenable and a revelation of the pervert tendency of the mind.

So therefore, whatever is seen and heard in this vast creation is an expansion of this one Brahm in five forms. In other words, everything seen and heard comes within the ambit of the term 'Panch Brahm' which represents one single Divinity known as Brahm, the Supreme Being. This Panch Brahm is the transcendental Supreme Being known as Brahm himself (26).

27. Established in five symbolic forms known by five different names (such as Saddyojat etc. as listed in verse no. 1 above), it is the same Brahm who has assumed these (and their other derivative and auxiliary) forms (as listed in verse nos. 5-23) in order to carry out the complex task of governing this colossus, unimaginably varied and multifaceted creation in an orderly and smooth fashion. [It is like the case of the same person assuming different roles in a drama, and then playing his each role to perfection every time.]

When one understands the secret of this philosophy it is only then that he is able to know not only the present creation as a manifestation of Brahm but also the truth behind the five forms of Brahm called Panch Brahm¹.

That is, such a wise person is able to see and know about 'Ishan', he is able to have access to 'Ishan', the insignia or the emblem that marks the place where the Emperor of creation, the Supreme Being is present. In other words, a wise and enlightened man is able to know the truth about the supreme transcendental Brahm in all his manifestations if he understands the esoteric meaning of the enigmatic term 'Panch Brahm' (27).

[Note—¹As has been laid out in note to verse nos. 19-23 and in the 2nd part of the introduction to this Upanishad, this world is visualised as a metaphoric pentagon, and everything that exists and all tasks that are done in this world fall within its boundary. The pentagon has five corners, symbolising the five turrets of this castle, or the five towers built at five outer fringes of a city which are like five check points where five chieftains or commanders reside to control the area within. These five corners are also comparable to the five cardinal points of a temple where five consecrated deities are placed for formal worship. All these five points are equally important and vital, for if one is breached or dishonoured or defiled, the entire aura of holiness around the edifice of the temple falls apart. The same thing is applicable here—all these five forms of Brahm perform some specific duty and have an important place in the cosmic scheme of creation. They are like the five angels overlooking the smooth and proper functioning of things. All have to be kept in equally good humour and equally respected because they wield equal powers that are vested in them by the supreme Authority of creation known as Brahm on whose behalf they function.]

28. Hence, if a wise, erudite and enlightened man is able to decipher the basic secret behind the enigmatic form of Brahm known as 'Panch Brahm', he determines that this vast creation is quintessentially a uniform manifestation of this single universal cosmic Divinity known as Brahm who is non-dual, supreme and transcendental. Therefore he concludes that his own body consisting of the five elements is also like the Panch Brahm, and his 'self' that resides in this physical body as the pure conscious Atma, is Brahm personified.

[The gross body of the creature is constituted of the five primary elements—viz. earth, water, fire, air and sky. Since each of these elements are manifestations of the single Brahm, it is natural to deduce that anything made from these elements would also be a revelation of Brahm. Therefore, the gross body is the external form of Brahm. The Upanishads describing the genesis of creation describe how the gross body of the creature is a microcosmic form of the macrocosmic Supreme Being—refer Aiteriyo Upanishad of the Rig Veda tradition. The pure consciousness that resides in this body is the counterpart of the cosmic Consciousness called the supreme Atma, the ‘Parmatma’, and therefore the former is called the Atma, the microcosmic counterpart of the cosmic Parmatma.]

That is, he is convinced about the truth of the spiritual doctrine taught by the scriptures, which is ‘So-a-ham’—i.e. ‘that is me’, or ‘it is I’¹.

[In other words, an enlightened and self-realised man understands that his ‘true self’ known as the Atma is none but this Brahm. His body made up of five elements is but a manifestation of the Panch Brahm, whereas the essential thing in this body, i.e. the consciousness residing inside it, is the Brahm whose manifestations are each of these five elements that constitute his body and mark his physical worldly existence. This realisation is the climax of spiritual enlightenment.]

When he has attained this exalted state of wisdom and understanding, he is able to taste the nectar called Amrit that drips from Brahm—i.e. he is able to enjoy the spiritual bliss and ecstasy, the sense of beatitude and felicity that comes with attaining the highest eclectic state of Brahm-realisation (28).

[Note—¹The concept of ‘So-a-Ham’ has been elaborately described in (i) Sam Veda = Yogchudani Upanishad, verse no. 83. (ii) Krishna Yajur Veda = Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse no. 34, 78-79; Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 131-133.]

29. A person who gets to understand and know the truthful divine and sublime form of Brahm in a holistic manner is able to obtain spiritual liberation and deliverance; he obtains emancipation and salvation. There is no doubt about it (29).

30. Lord Shambhu (Shiva) has a Mantra of five syllables¹, and he is a personification of the transcendental supreme Brahm. This Mantra has the Sanskrit alphabet ‘Na’ in the beginning and the letter ‘Ye’ at the end. This Mantra should be repeated to please and worship the supreme transcendental Divinity known as Brahm (30).

[Note—¹The five syllable Mantra of Shiva is ‘Namaha Shivaye’= Na + Maha + Shi + Va + Ye = 5. Here it implies that each of these syllables stands for one or the other five aspects of creation that the Panch Brahm represents. The Mantra means ‘I bow most reverentially to Lord Shiva’.]

31. Everything in existence should be regarded as a manifestation of Panch Brahm and given due respect. One should have a divine and holistic view of creation, and be wise and enlightened enough to universally and uniformly see this Panch Brahm in each unit of creation without exception (because it is the same entity assuming different roles, different characteristics, different attributes, virtues and colours to meet the varying demands of the situation and the ever-changing dynamism of the continuously evolving creation that never remains the same in any two given points of time) (31).

32. A person who studies this scripture espousing and extolling the divine and holy spiritual virtues of Panch Brahm with full devotion and faith is able to become a

living embodiment of Panch Brahm himself. He becomes one like Panch Brahm and attains nearness to this divine Being.

[This is because once he is convinced of the truth that whatever exists around him is Brahm personified in that particular form, he would be seeing, hearing and interacting with Brahm each single moment of his life. What more, since he would be convinced that his own 'self' is also Brahm he would no longer see Brahm in the outside world or in some distant heaven or in some far away pilgrim site, but here in his own bosom. He need not go to a temple to worship Brahm, he need not please the external world to honour Brahm, for his own 'self' is Brahm personified! Thus this Upanishad is amongst the great ones espousing the philosophy of 'Advaitya Vedanta', the eclectic philosophy of non-duality.] (32).

33. This divine knowledge was most graciously imparted to sage called Gaalav by the Emperor of creation and the most benevolent and munificent Lord Shiva himself. After that, the Lord vanished from sight as he dissolved and merged imperceptibly in the Atma (the universal Soul, the cosmic Consciousness) (33).

34. [Continuing his discourse, sage Pippalaada said—] Oh Shaakalya! This knowledge is so comprehensive and potent that by hearing, learning and understanding it one hears, learns and understands everything worth hearing, learning and understanding. By becoming learned in this knowledge and acquiring this spiritual wisdom, one is able to know everything that is known in this world as well as everything else that is not yet known by anyone.

[That is, he acquires transcendental powers that enable him to know things beyond the realm of the physical world, things pertaining to the world beyond the gross and even the subtle world known to human beings. He obtains the so-called 'third eye of transcendental wisdom' whereby he can see things not visible to the physical eye of the gross body.] (34).

35. Oh Gautam (i.e. Shaakalya—because he belonged to the lineage of sage Gautam)! Even as by seeing the rounded lump of kneaded clay one comes to understand and realise the irrefutable fundamental truth and the undeniable reality behind all types of toys, pans and pots etc. made of clay which apparently have no physical external resemblance to their primary source, and appear so distinct and very different from their basic ingredient known as 'clay', one can similarly know about everything else in existence once one comes to know the real truth about Panch Brahm and his essential form as one single non-dual supreme Divinity known as Brahm.

[Here, Brahm is like the clay, the basic ingredient of all things made out of it. Brahm is the basic entity that is used to weave this fabric known as creation, and it completely soaks it from all sides much like sponge put in water or salt dissolved in water. Another example is ornaments made of gold or silver—notwithstanding the intricate design and external shape these ornaments have acquired, their intrinsic value and basic importance is the quality and quantity of gold and silver that is used to make them. If a silver ornament is gold plated, it would still remain silver and not become gold! This is exactly what is meant here. The myriad world seen in all its vibrant colours and fascinating contours is nothing but one Brahm in all these forms. All exteriors and names are misnomers and misleading; they divert the attention of the mind from the reality of the hidden truth.] (35).

36. Taking another example, one can see a rounded piece of iron and learn about its properties. Once done, he would be able to know about the basic properties of all things made of iron. Similarly, by closely observing the nail-cutter one would know how all sharp-edged weapons are able to cut anything into two. [He also understands that all sharp-edged instruments that can cut anything are the same piece of iron known by different names, be it as a nail-cutter, or an iron-saw that cuts wood, or even a knife that cuts fruits etc, or an axe that chops off the thick trunk of a tree.] (36).

37. Once one comes to know about the properties of the basic ingredient used to make anything, he would be able to know and predict the fundamental properties of all other things made of the same ingredient—though all of them are greatly different from one another. Similarly, the action taken by a person in response to any given cause or circumstance at a particular point of time and place would be predictive of how he would react under the same circumstance or when the same cause arises in the future. In other words, it is not possible to separate the reaction or response from the cause; they are correlated (37).

[Note—For example, if one becomes angry when he is disobeyed, he would invariably become angry whenever he is disobeyed. So, it can be safely deduced that to make a man angry he must be disobeyed. Or there must have been someone who disobeyed a man if he is angry, though the direct cause of his anger is not always known and clearly visible.]

38. If anything is treated in its fundamental form and recognised as such, then this treatment and recognition would stand the test of reality and truthfulness. Calling it by another name would be an erroneous and untruthful statement.

[For example, if we call a bangle made of gold as ‘golden’, it would be a perfect truth. But calling it by any other name and describing it in terms of beauty, market price, design and shape would not be saying the full truth about this golden bangle as it would now create an aura of artificiality about its true nature, its essential quality and its intrinsic value.]

Similarly, all things in this world have one root cause (which is Brahm) and to regard them as being separate or distinct from this one root is a fallacious consideration. [For example, the huge tree with its multicoloured flowers, fruits of various sizes and colours, leaves and branches of all sizes and shapes, and roots spreading out in the ground come from one seed which now not visible, but which decides the genetic name of this tree. A mango tree of all sizes and shapes, no matter where it is located, will always be known as a ‘mango tree’, and no other tree. Therefore, this creation having its ‘seed’ in Brahm would be always known as ‘Brahm personified’, and nothing else.] (38).

39. The perception of differences, separation, dichotomy or distinctions that appear between any given two entities in this world are due to errors of perception, flawed knowledge and mistaken identity. This gives rise to perplexities, confusions and doubts. It is not a holistic, right and auspicious way of looking at things; it’s a lop-sided and distorted view. Hence, the cause and essence of this entire world, both the animate as well as the inanimate, is one, and it is pure Consciousness (known as the truthful Brahm). All the rest of the views are false, distorted and erroneous (39).

[Note—A pertinent question arises here—it is alright to accept that all animate world is consciousness personified. But how can inanimate things be so? Well, the answer is simple—we recognise anything as being ‘animate’ or ‘inanimate’ only till the time we have life in our own body, till we are conscious and alive and have the properly

working mind-intellect that has the wisdom and erudition to see and analyse any given two entities and then distinguish between them as one being animate and the other being inanimate. Dead bodies, ignorant and stupid people or those who are insane cannot see any difference between them and therefore cannot distinguish between them. For a dead man or a man who has not the slightest idea of what he is seeing the snake and the rope are the same thing. So we conclude that the basic entity that makes a person aware of the presence of either an animate or the inanimate thing in this world is not the thing itself but the 'consciousness' that is present inside him. It is the consciousness that makes him aware of the presence of the world itself in the first place.]

40. Oh sage! The divine abode of this supreme Brahm is in the body itself, in the heart which is regarded as lotus-shaped¹. There is a subtle space in this heart, called the Hridaya Akash. The heart is like the doorway leading to Brahm residing in this subtle sky.

[The entity that lives in this subtle space is called the pure consciousness or the Atma. The word 'Atma' means something that is the essence and soul of anything, the heart of anything, the core and fundamental nature of anything, the essence of anything. So, since consciousness is the entity that injects life in the body, since without it the body would be as good as a piece of lifeless log of wood, it forms the 'Atma', the central Authority of the body. It is the Atma that is the 'Ishan' as far as the body of the aspirant is concerned.]

Spiritual aspirant desirous of liberation and deliverance for themselves, those who seek emancipation and salvation of their soul, should seek Shiva—as Brahm personified—in this heart. Shiva is 'Sat-Chit-Anand' personified². [Sat = truth; Chit = consciousness; Anand = bliss and joys infinite, beatitude and felicity unbound.] (40).

[Note—¹Refer verse no. 14 also. Refer also to the Krishna Yajur Veda's Dakshin Murti Upanishad, verse no. 25, and Dhyana Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 93/1-93/15, as well as the Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 8, section 1, verse no. 1 of the Sam Veda which describe the heart as a lotus where the Atma resides.

²The concept of 'Sat-Chit-Anand' has been elaborately described in Krishna Yajur Veda's Rudra Hridaya Upanishad, verse nos. 26-27, and Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 6.]

41. Shiva, as Sat-Chit-Anand personified, always lives in the heart. He is a constant witness of all that is happening. That is why the heart is regarded as the doorway to liberation and deliverance from the traps that have been laid out by this delusory and cunning world of artificiality to ensnare the creature in its tentacles.

Verily, this is the teaching of this Upanishad; this is what this Upanishad says and affirms. Amen! (41).

-----Shanti Paath-----

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Chapter 29

Pran Agnihotra Upanishad/Pranagnihotro-panishad

The name of this Upanishad has two components—Pran and Agnihotra. The second word ‘Agnihotra’ refers to the offering of oblations to the consecrated sacred fire, while the first word ‘Pran’ refers to the vital and primary life giving and life sustaining forces of Nature present in the individual’s body. Therefore, this name assumes two connotations—one, to offer oblations to the sacred fire to pay obeisance to and honour the all-important Pran and Fire which are deified forms of the vital life giving and life sustaining forces in Nature, both at the cosmic level as well as at the individual level of creation (verse nos. 6-14), and two, to honour the Supreme Being, who is the Lord of the entire creation including the Pran and Fire, and who has empowered Pran with its stupendous and magical ability to inject life even in the inherently inert and dead entities such as the gross body of the mortal creature, by offering this Pran itself as an oblation to him. At the macro level of creation, this Supreme Being is called Viraat or Vaishwanar, and at the micro level he is called the Atma (verse nos. 15-18).

Verse nos. 21-22 especially are very explicit in describing how the human body can replace the venue and other fine details of the fire sacrifice done in the external world; they draw a parallel between the human body and the pit where the sacred fire for the fire sacrifice is lit. They describe this similarity in great detail by incorporating various components of a fire sacrifice, explaining how the human body perfectly fits in the scheme of things and seamlessly replaces the venue and other details of the physical fire sacrifice done in the external world—complete with the worship altar, the implements and other things needed to perform the various rituals, making of offerings, oblations and libations, the participants such as the different priests, the attendants, the patron and his family members, the post, the rope and the sacrificial animal et al. This Upanishad is a sort of an anti-thesis to the practice of holding elaborate fire sacrifices involving large amounts of wealth and outlay of time.

There is a Vedic Sukta (a hymn used for special prayer) called ‘Krishi Sukta’ which praises agriculture as a means of producing food which not only sustains life in this mortal world but even the Gods also by means of the offerings made during the fire sacrifice. Its relevance in the context of this Upanishad cannot be underestimated because the food eaten by the body is the only viable means of its sustenance as well as of the different Gods residing inside it. This Krishi Sukta is included in this volume as appendix no. 5.

This Upanishad presents an enlightened and philosophically evolved or matured view of the entire process of doing the fire sacrifice meant basically to honour the cosmic Divinity and the dynamic forces of Nature personified as benevolent and munificent deities, and to seek their blessings and intercession. Instead of doing this fire sacrifice externally with a lot of elaborate rites and rituals, this Upanishad propounds and espouses the eclectic and highly evolved doctrine of doing them internally, offering all the oblations and offerings to the supreme Lord residing in the body of the worshipper himself (verse no. 15). It is to honour the supreme Brahman who resides nowhere else but inside one’s own self as the truthful Atma, the pure conscious soul, that this sacrifice is done.

This is a most refined, holistic, convenient, practical, spiritually elevating and enlightened view of the fire sacrifice. This internal fire sacrifice leads to truthful and

meaningful spiritual liberation and deliverance as compared to the external formality of elaborate exercises which become more of a formality and is ridden with artificiality. Refer Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse no. 52-110 which is Chapter 16 of this volume.

It incorporates all the components of a formal fire sacrifice—such as Mantras and Chants (verse nos. 3-6, 8-10, 14), offering of food and water and other oblations, (verse no. 10, 13, 16), and sprinkling of water for the purpose of purification and ablution (verse no. 11) and oblation (9-10, 12)—but these are now centered on the ‘self’ rather than the external world. The offerings are made to the eternal fire of consciousness burning inside rather than the physical fire of the fire pit; the latter is the body itself in this case. The oblations are first offered to the Pran as an honourable deity, and then to the superior Pran in the form of the Atma, the Lord of Pran. The aim or reward sought for doing is to obtain the blessing of the supreme Lord known as Brahm who incidentally resides secretly ensconced in the aspirant’s own heart.

A lot of symbolism is used in this Upanishad which teaches the spiritual aspirant to go nowhere else outside to search the supreme Brahm, but use his own body to do the fire sacrifice in order to obtain the Lord’s divine blessings, and freedom from all his worldly afflictions. The entire gamut of symbolisms involved in this internal fire sacrifice vis-à-vis its external form have been narrated in verse nos. 21-22.

This metaphysical and philosophical approach to the fire sacrifice helps to cleanse the mind and intellect of all forms of delusions that mire them, and prepare them to help the individual obtain the divine and eclectic knowledge of the ultimate Truth and Reality in creation, knows as Brahm, as well as about his own ‘self’ as a manifestation of this Brahm. This wisdom is called true enlightenment, and obtaining of what is known as ‘Brahm Gyan’.

It has been emphasised that self-realisation and Brahm-realisation is a matter of personal experience and obtained by rigorous self effort and self control of the body along with the cleansing of the instrument that enables it to happen, i.e. the mind and intellect complex, both at the grosser level of routing thinking as well as at the subtler level of the sub-conscious, and not merely by becoming an unchallenged expert in different philosophies such as Shankhya etc. In short, this is text eulogizing and espousing the philosophy of Vedanta which lays stress on self and Brahm realisation as the stepping stone for a person’s final liberation and deliverance from this body and world. It espouses the principle of the Upanishads that Truth can be searched by turning one’s attention inwards rather than outwards; this also implies inculcating correct wisdom, right thinking, painstaking research, analytical interpretation, diligent meditation and constant contemplation on the reality and truth, as well as being careful of delusions, pitfalls and distractions, and having the virtues of perseverance and steadfastness in order to reach one’s goal.

A point to note is that this Upanishad resembles the typical texture of the Vedas inasmuch as it is narrated primarily in the form of hymns to invoke the divine cosmic powers during elaborate fire sacrifices. Even the context is also the same—for here also the fire sacrifice is being done, albeit it is not any external sacrifice but an internal one.

-----Shanti Paath-----

Please see appendix no. 1 for the meaning of this Shanti Paath.

1. Now the divine and eclectic metaphysical discussion about two important things related to life and creation, viz. ‘Anna Sukta’¹ (the hymns dedicated to worshipping the patron deity of food who personifies its inherent virtues and its intrinsic qualities) and ‘Sharir Yagya’² (using the body as a means of offering sacrifice internally to the consecrated sacred fire symbolically residing inside it), is being initiated. This knowledge and wisdom transcends all worldly knowledge and wisdom, and it represents the essence of the eclectic philosophy of the Upanishads and the basic spiritual doctrine as espoused by them.

This knowledge is so authoritative and potentially effective that by acquiring it one can attain Mukti from this mundane life and deluding world of artificiality—i.e. one can obtain freedom from the fetters of the inherently deluding and eternally entrapping world of spiritual horrors even without having to do external forms of elaborate formal fire sacrifices, or having to observe numerous religious sacraments, or having to learn and practice the esoteric philosophies of Sankhya³ etc. in order to achieve this spiritual Mukti (1).

[Note—¹The *Anna Sukta* has been described in verse nos. 2-7 below. There is another Sukta called the ‘Krishi Sukta’ which honours agriculture as a means of production of food. This is very relevant in the context of the Anna Sukta and therefore has been included as appendix no. 5 of this volume.

²In the context of the body as a means of doing the fire sacrifice, one should refer to the Sharirako-panishad which is Chapter 20 of this volume. It describes how the individual body of the man is a micro level representation of the cosmos. When the supreme Lord, the Viraat Purush or the creator Brahma decided to initiate the process of creation, he had offered his own body as the sacrifice done in the cosmic cauldron from which the entire creation eventually evolved as a consequence of this sacrifice. The fact that the success of a fire sacrifice revolves around the offering of a ‘sacrifice’ is universally accepted in the scriptures, but from the philosophical perspective of Vedanta, the real and truthful spiritual gain is obtained by sacrificing one’s own ‘self’ instead of using external offerings. The Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda elaborately describes how a horse’s body is used as a symbolic means of this offering in its Canto 1, Brahmin 1, and specifically narrates how the Supreme Being decided to offer his own body as a sacrifice in Canto 1, Brahmin 2, verse no. 7.

As we progress with the reading the present Upanishad we shall learn that the internal offerings made to the fire burning inside the body is done using one’s Pran, the vital winds that provide the vital spark of life inside the body. The Pran here refers to the breath that constantly comes and goes out of the body, and which keeps the fire of life burning incessantly inside the body. The deity that is worshipped through this form of internal fire sacrifice is the Atma, the personified form of Brahm, the Supreme Being, residing inside the heart of the individual creature as his ‘self’. Hence, it is called ‘Pran Agnihotra’—i.e. offering the Pran as an ultimate sacrifice to worship the Supreme Being residing in one’s own body as the ‘self’.

³*Sankhya Shastra*-- This is one of the six great schools of Indian philosophy. It was first propounded by sage Kapil as ‘Shankhya Sutras’. A detailed note on this philosophy of Sankhya Shastra is given as a note of Canto 6, verse no. 13 of Shwetashwatar Upanishad which is Chapter no. 5 of this volume.]

2. The food that is to be worshipped, honoured and consecrated should be respectfully placed on the altar erected on the ground for the purpose of this worship, and the following three Mantras and two Richas should be said.

(a) The three Mantras are the following—‘Ya Aushadhi’, ‘Ya Phalnirya’ and ‘Jivalaa Naghaarishayam’. [These Mantras are given below in verse nos. 3-5.]

(b) The two Richas (a hymn or incantation of the Vedas) are the following—‘Anna-pateya-annasya’ and ‘Ydanna-magnir-bahuda’. [These Richas are given in verse nos. 6-7 below.] (2).

[Note—The food is honoured and shown great respect because it harbours life inside it in a latent form. It is the food that creates the outer sheath of the body, called the Anna Maye Kosh, the food sheath, without which the Atma, the pure conscious ‘self’ of the creature, would have no abode to live in this physical world. Food has the eclectic virtue of being able to first infuse life into an otherwise lifeless gross body, and then sustain, nourish and protect it. It is not the gross aspects of the food that is being honoured here but its inherent subtle and sublime quality of sustaining life that is worthy of respect, because this grand virtue elevates food to the level of Brahm, the eternal source of life and its sustenance. This aspect of food makes it equivalent to the Atma because both sustain life in a gross and fundamentally lifeless body. In this context, the basic life-infusing and life-sustaining virtues of food that are latently present in it in a hidden form are identical to the pure conscious Atma that also lies hidden from view inside the external gross form of the body. Even as a body sans the Atma is worthless, any food which does not have nutritional value is equally worthless. It is the divine power of the food eaten to foster life that is important rather than its external gross form or features because the latter is excreted as stool after the vital forces of life and the life-energy trapped inside the food have been extracted by the creature when he eats that food to sustain his ‘self’.

When a man eats food with the holistic approach of doing a fire sacrifice, he is actually offering each morsel of food eaten as an offering to the Supreme Being residing inside his body as his Atma much like the offerings made to a formal sacred fire during fire sacrifices. During such fire sacrifices, all the food offered to the fire pit are meant for the deity to be worshipped and the fire is only a means of transferring this offering to the deity. In the case of internal fire sacrifice as espoused in the present Upanishad, the food is offered to the Pran, the vital life sustaining forces of life representing Brahm that are present inside the body. This Pran thus becomes the worshipped deity. But even as all Gods and deities are shown due respect as representatives of the Supreme Being known as Brahm, and not for their own sake par-se, this Pran is worshipped on behalf of the Atma, the pure consciousness residing inside the body as Brahm personified. So, the ultimate Authority that is worshipped is the Atma, and the medium of doing this is the Pran. Therefore, the Pran is also offered as an offering during this symbolic fire sacrifice—thereby giving this Upanishad its name ‘Pran Agnihotra’.

Since the food that is eaten is not to satisfy one’s hunger or gratify the senses of taste and pleasure but is a holy offering to the deity, it is first cleaned and duly consecrated by saying of Mantras as done during formal forms of fire sacrifices.]

3. [Verse nos. 3-5 are in honour of herbs and their disease-eliminating qualities which makes life enjoyable, pleasant and comfortable for the man.]

‘Lord Som is the patron deity of all medicinal herbs. [That is, Som is the personification of all the good virtues that are present in herbs which benefit mankind. He embodies all the benefits that are derived from the use of medicinal plants. Soma is the name of a medicinal herb that is used in all religious ceremonies; its extract is used as a consecrated and sanctified drink during fire sacrifices.]

He is the chief amongst those who have a long life of hundred years and retain their potent, strength, vigour, vitality, vibe and stamina throughout their long life.

He is powerful enough to destroy all sorts of numerous diseases from their roots. These diseases metaphorically resemble a huge tree, with hundreds of branches.

[The main disease produces many offshoots and chain of symptoms. If one is cured, the other crops up as if from nowhere much like the case when cutting of one branch of the tree produces another shoot somewhere else, and even at the place where the original branch was chopped off. The best way of cutting the tree is to cut it from its roots instead of from its branches. Likewise, the best way of curing a disease is to find the root of its cause and then taking care of it. From the spiritual perspective, it means that a wise person should first find out the cause of his torments and miseries, the reason why he is trapped in this endless cycle of birth and death and its attendant horrors, the root cause of all delusions and perplexities that have swamped him and trapped him in their web-like tentacles. Once he comes to grips with the cause of all his spiritual problems, he should then endeavour to find the proper remedy for his spiritual maladies so that he can find permanent solution for them. This would be like cutting the tree from its roots.]

All these medicinal herbs having superb powers and potentials to cure incurable diseases have been prepared (created) by Brihaspati, the Guru of Gods.

Let these medicinal herbs grant us freedom from all sins and their evil effects that have revealed themselves in the form of various diseases afflicting us (3).

4. All forms, species and categories of herbs that have been produced (or created) by Brihaspati, whether they bear fruits or not, whether they have flowers or not, let them all give us freedom from the torments and miseries that are inflicted upon us as a consequence of the sins done by us. In other words, our evil deeds and sinful demeanors have manifested themselves in the form of numerous spiritual and other diseases that afflict us (4).

5. All forms of herbs that remain perennially green and vibrant are being accepted by me. Let them protect us from all the elements that cause decay in age and shorten life (5)'.

[Note—The importance of food has been elaborately explained in Chandogya Upanishad of the Sam Veda tradition, e.g. in 5/2/1, 6/7, 7/9 amongst other parts. These verses are a strong appeal to all spiritual aspirants to turn vegetarians in our eating habits and shun all sorts of food that are not based on plants.]

6. [Verse nos. 6-7 are in honour of the fire element inherently present in the food and which makes what is eaten by the creature usable by him.]

'Oh the Fire God! You are the Lord of Anna (food). [This is because fire is needed to cook and digest food. Fire in its basic role as a provider of energy and heat is the inherent vital quality present in the food that is honoured in these verses. This 'fire element' present inside the food as its latent eclectic virtue not only provides energy, heat and vigour to the person who eats this food but also helps the food to be digested and absorbed in the body so that it can be of any use to the latter. That is why cold and stale food is harmful for the body and becomes difficult to digest.]

Please arrange food for us that can give us a healthy life and proper nourishment.

Bless those people who give a lot of food as alms and are charitable in its distribution. [That is, bless those who give food to those who are less lucky to obtain it themselves. In other words, be benevolent, munificent, kind and merciful to those charitable persons who feed others free of cost and operate free food outlets for the poor and downtrodden. One of the best forms of charity is to feed those who are hungry and unfortunate.]

Arrange sufficient food for our dependents such as sons and grandsons, as well as our livestock. [Let none of my dependants suffer from lack of food; let none starve for want of food.] (6).

7. That part of food which is stored away from the prying evil eyes of Rudras and Pishachs¹ (i.e. those who are pervert, evil-minded and have a wicked tendency to either destroy the food or forcefully usurp food belonging to others by use of threat and violence), and which is meant for the subjects (i.e. to feed those who are dependent on us for providing them with food, such as family members, kith and kin, friends, compatriots, guests, servants, livestock et al.)—we offer it to the supreme Lord called Ishan² who is requested to graciously accept this offering and extend his benevolent patronage to the food so that it is protected (from these cruel Rudras and Pishachas) and used for the purpose for which it is meant (i.e. to feed the subjects of the realm who are depend upon stored food for their life, its sustenance and nourishment).

Hence, this offering is submitted to the great Lord Shiva in his form as Ishan’.

Saying this, the word ‘Swaha³’ is pronounced and offering made upon the worship altar (7).

[Note—¹The evil spirits and cruel demonic forces in this world are represented here by *Rudra* which is a very ruthless form of Shiva, and by *Pisacha* who are cruel blood-thirsty ogres and evil spirits. They are metaphors for those people who are inconsiderate, selfish, cruel and merciless, who would not earn food for themselves but thrive by stealing from others either stealthily or by the use of brute force. They are virtual social parasites, being selfish, cruel and uncompassionate to the core. Food is to be protected from thieves and thugs, from marauding armies and vagabonds, from wild animals, insects and birds who destroy food without rhyme and reason. They might not use the food for themselves or get any material benefit by destroying and plundering granaries and fields but do so to satisfy their sadistic nature of deriving pleasure at other’s sufferings; they enjoy when other die of hunger and beg for food when their harvests, granaries, warehouses and larders are destroyed.

²The Panch Brahm Upanishad describes that *Ishan* is not merely one of the eleven forms of Shiva but is the supreme Brahm himself. So this offering is made to the supreme Lord. This Upanishad also goes on to say that Shiva is the supreme transcendental Brahm himself. There are a number of Upanishads which affirm this fact—e.g. the Rudra Hridaya, Dakshin Murti, Rudra etc. all of which are part of this volume.

³*Swaha* is the word pronounced at the time of making offering to the sacred consecrated fire during a fire sacrifice.

The importance of the ‘fire’ has been elaborately dealt with in Chandogya Upanishad of the Sam Veda tradition, and is known as ‘Agni Vidya’—5/4-9. The offerings made to this fire are described in 4/17/4-6, and 4/10-13. The entire Canto 5 of this Upanishad is dedicated to the importance of Pran, the vital spark of life present inside the body as breath and other vital winds, and Fire that provides the much needed warmth and heat and energy that gives strength, vitality and stamina to the creature’s body and helps it to carry on with its normal functions; it is the fire that keeps the spark of life alive and active inside the otherwise inane and lifeless body.]

8. [This verse is to honour Ishan, the supreme Lord who is being invoked and offered food as oblation. This Lord lives inside the inner being of the creature as his Atma, his true ‘self’ which is nothing but pure consciousness and a microcosmic counterpart of the all-pervading and universal cosmic Consciousness known as the Parmatma.]

You are the one who lives in the heart of all living beings as their individual Atma (the pure consciousness or soul) on the one hand, and on the other hand you uniformly pervade throughout the creation and expand infinitely to reach the farthest corners of it. [That is, on the one hand you have an atomic form as the individual Atma, and on the other hand you are as vast and colossal as the cosmos, stretching out from one of its corners to its other remote corner in a uniform manner like an open canvas upon which everything in existence has been painted.]

You personify Yagya (fire sacrifice), Brahma (the creator), Rudra (one of the forms of Shiva, the concluder), Vishnu (the sustainer and protector), Vashatkaar (the special fire sacrifices meant to honour specific Gods and provide them with nourishment from the offering made to the sacred fire), Aapo (water), Jyoti (light symbolising visual illumination as well as the light of knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment), Rasa (essence and juice; it is a metaphor for the most auspicious aspect of anything, the best extract of anything and everything in creation), Amrit (the elixir of life and eternity, of beatitude and felicity), Brahm (the invisible cosmic Consciousness and the supreme transcendental Being), Bhu (the terrestrial world; the earth inhabited by mortal living beings), Bhuvaha (the world of the sky where those who fly live, such as the birds and insects as well as the Spirits), and Swaha (the heaven where the exalted Gods have their abode).

I bow most reverentially before you and pay my sincere obeisance to you (8).

9. [This verse is dedicated to the water element in its personified form as the Water God. It also treats earth in its personified form as the son of Brahm because earth is so kind, graceful and merciful that it sustains all forms of life without complaining inspite of grave provocation and selfish abuse it is constantly being subjected to ever since humans began their reckless and mindless journey of random exploitation of it.]

Oh Apaha! Please clean the earth and remove all impurities from it. Then let this cleaned and purified earth bless me with auspiciousness and well-beings of all kinds. [That is, be kind to first purge this earth of all evil and corrupted influences and then grant it to me as your benedictory gift so that I can enjoy it and the fruits that it has to offer. Water is the only element that helps in cleaning and washing dirt and all types of filth without subjecting the object to any inconvenience. Fire also cleanses and purifies, but its process is very harsh and ruthless on the subject as compared to the water which is soothing and affable by nature. So, here the patron deity of water, Aapo, is being requested to keep the earth clean by washing off garbage and other wastes besides keeping the land properly irrigated and productive so that it is fertile and abundant crops and livestock can flourish on earth, and general life can consequentially be made happy, pleasurable and comfortable for the man. A fertile land would harbour abundant plant and animal life, a healthy environment would foster healthy and vibrant life, and a healthy and well-nourished population can enjoy the fruits of life better than a people battling to survive in harsh conditions. The washing and cleaning alluded to in this stanza has a metaphoric meaning—it is not so much the external cleaning of the body with water that has any spiritual importance as the internal cleaning of the mind and intellect that can lift the ‘self’ to higher level of the spiritual attainment. Even as the wind can lift the water molecules of the water from the surface of the ocean and take them aloft to the sky to form the rain which pours down upon earth as the elixir of life in its new incarnation, the ‘spirit’ of wise men are taken higher to the level of self-realisation and Brahm-realisation from the mundane existence by the vital winds called Pran during the process of Yoga and other methods of spiritual practices. This exalted ‘spirit’ of the enlightened and wise

man that has broken free from its fetters that tie ordinary men to the body and the mundane world than shines like the sun in the sky, showing other less fortunate ones the truthful way of liberation and deliverance. If and when this 'spirit' ever decides to come down on earth as incarnations or manifestations, it is akin to the rain coming down on earth as an elixir of life and eternity in as much as they live amongst the people and show them the path by their own example. So by 'washing and cleaning' it is the internal purging of all sorts of perversions and sinful tendencies of the mind and intellect that is being referred to here. When a man is advised to wash himself to worship the deity he adores, it is a metaphoric way of instructing him to first clean his inner self as a preparatory step to worship the Lord. Further, it is also to teach him that the Lord whom he wishes to worship is not to be found outside but inside his own self—the espousing of the philosophy for which this present Upanishad was conceptualized in the first place. What good is ablutions and scrubbing of the external body if the inner being of the aspirant is full of evil and pervert thoughts, full of filth and muck? How can he ever expect to get spiritual benefit by external cleaning if his inner self is not cleansed?]

Let the Earth who is the son of Brahm ('Brahm Poot') provide me with auspiciousness and cleanliness. [The earth is called the son of Brahm, the Supreme Being, because it has emerged from Brahm as one of the primary elements, called the Bhuts (the others being water, fire, air and sky) at the time of creation. Even as the son bears the father's genes and is assigned the task of carrying forward the family lineage by the path of reproduction, the earth too carries forward this divine mandate of the supreme Father by helping to create and sustain new forms of life from its bowels ever since its inception. Again as the son ensures that his off springs are well provided for and well looked after, earth also ensures that all the creatures are well taken care of and all their material needs are fully met. This is the reason why the earth never complains even after being subjected to random exploitation by men—because it willingly wishes that its off springs, the creatures born out of its own 'soil', are happy and contented even if it has to suffer in the process. This is also why earth is honoured by the grand and respected title of a 'mother' who is very loving and caring for her children, and never curses them inspite of being abused herself by them. The earth carries forward the legacy of Brahm, the supreme creator. Like Brahm who conceives, produces, sustains and finally concludes everything in this creation, earth too conceives everything in its bosom because all forms of life, whether animal or plant, are born out of the soil of earth. The earth sustains them, nourishes them, provides food, shelter and all material needs for them, and looks after them. Finally when the plant or the living being dies, they merge in the earth itself; they fall on the surface and decay into soil, they are cremated and turn into ash which is a form of soil, or are buried in the earth and becomes one with it. Every living entity is born on earth, is sustained by earth, and collapses back into earth and disappears into it to become one with it. Hence, earth exhibits the same characteristics of conception, creation, sustenance, nourishment, development, growth and conclusion as shown by Brahm, the cosmic Creator. Therefore, earth deserves to be shown the same reverence and honour as reserved for Brahm.

Whatever traces of shortcomings and evils such as impertinence, indiscipline, perversions, rudeness, intolerance, arrogance, ignorance and other unacceptable, faulty and negative character traits that may be present in me which are like blemishes tarnishing my inner self and tainting my primarily clean and immaculate self, let the Water God wash them all away from me, purge them from my inner self so as to

make me spiritually clean, washed, refreshed, refined, shining, radiant, untarnished, uncorrupted and untainted.

For this purpose I am offering this oblation to you’.

Making this prayer, the worshipper should say the word ‘Swaha’ and make the requisite offering (9).

10. Having said the above Mantras, the worshipper should sprinkle some water two times on the altar and on the food placed on it for the invited deities. Then the altar is touched by the left hand, fresh water is taken up with the right hand, and the following Mantra is said—‘Amrit-masya-mrito-pastar-ranamasi’. [This Mantra means—‘Oh water! You are an image of Amrit, the nectar of life eternal. You are cloaked and soaked in Amrit’.]

The water is then sipped, and then the following Mantra is said—‘Amritam Praane Juhomya-maashishyaanto-asi’. [The meaning of this Mantra is—‘The thing which is equivalent to nectar and most suitable for making an oblation to the sacred fire has been accepted’. That is, this life-giving sanctified water has been accepted by the Divinity residing in me.]

Saying of this Mantra should be accompanied by the thought that the water sipped (or drunk) is like an oblation made to the sacred fire burning inside the body in the form of the Pran and other vital winds. [The ‘Pran’ is a common term used to describe all the vital winds present inside the body of the creature that keep his body alive, active and functioning properly. It is a metaphor for the vital spark of life present in the body. Usually the term ‘Pran’ is used to mean the breath because life depends upon this single vital wind more than it does on other winds; if a man stops breathing no other winds can keep his body alive and functioning. Thus breath as Pran is the superior vital wind, and therefore is the de facto Lord of the creature’s body. The exalted stature of Pran and its overriding importance vis-à-vis other elements of the body is clearly stressed in Sam Veda’s Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 5, section 1, verse nos. 6-15, and Shukla Yajur Veda’s Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 6, Brahman 1, verse no. 7-14.]

Therefore, the following Mantras are said in succession when water is sprinkled (after first sipping it as described above) as a symbolic offering to the Pran.

The first oblation is ‘OM Pranaye Swaha’—I offer this oblation to the main vital wind called Pran (breath).

The second oblation is ‘OM Apanaye Swaha’—I offer this oblation to the second vital wind called Apan Pran (the wind that moves down in the intestines).

The third oblation is ‘OM Vyanaye Swaha’—I offer this oblation to the third vital wind called Vyan (the wind that helps in maintaining equilibrium and pressure within the body).

The fourth oblation is ‘OM Udanaye Swaha’—I offer this oblation to the fourth vital wind called Udaan (the wind that helps the body to rise and move about, it also helps the body to expel toxic waste gases through the nostrils and mouth in the form of exhalation and cough).

The fifth oblation is ‘OM Samanye Swaha’—I offer this oblation to the fifth vital wind called Samaan (the wind that helps equal distribution of nourishment throughout the body by maintaining proper circulation of blood).

The sixth oblation is ‘OM Brahma Swaha’—I offer this sixth oblation to the Brahma the creator.

The seventh and final oblation is ‘OM Brahm Swaha’—I offer this oblation to the supreme transcendental Brahm.

Let my Atma, my pure self, obtain the nectar-like bliss, happiness, contentment, felicity and beatitude that comes with Brahm realisation' (10).

11. [This verse describes how the sprinkling of sanctified water mentioned in verse no. 10 is to be done.]

The oblations offered to the Pran (by way of sprinkling of water) are done in the following sequence—the thumb and the little finger are used to sprinkle water meant as an oblation offered to the Pran wind, the thumb and the third finger for the Apaana wind, the thumb and the middle finger for the Vyan wind, the thumb and index finger for the Udan wind, and the thumb and all the other four fingers together for the Samaana wind (11).

[Note—It would be noted here that each finger is linked directly to a particular wind. This assumes great significance in the field of Yoga practice where various Mudras are adopted to control the different vital functions of the body along with the harnessing of the vital winds and their inherent energy and strength to obtain success in one's spiritual endeavours. During Mudras, which are the various poses of the hand and body while doing meditation, the thumb is pressed at specific points on one or the other finger, singly or collectively. This pressure of the thumb against a finger helps to exert control over the specific wind that is related to that finger, and the point on the finger determines the location of the body where this wind needs to be controlled or concentrated or manipulated for the purpose of Yoga. This is akin to the technique of acupressure wherein pressure is applied on specific points on the body to help alleviate pains and other bodily ailments. So for example, if the need is to control the Pran wind, pressure is to be exerted by the thumb against the little finger as this finger is directly related to this particular wind. This principal is applicable to all other winds as described in this verse. It is a well organized and scientific method to cure one's self of all ailments that have their origin in disturbed vital winds in the body, which in Indian medical system is called 'Vayu Dosh', the fault of the wind. The pressure of the thumb against the relevant finger helps to modify the functioning of the wind and the part or organ of the body that is controlled by this wind.

According to *Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad*, Canto 2, verse nos. 77-87 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, the ten Prans and their functions are as follows—

“Verse no. 77-78 = Pran, Apaana, Samaana, Udaan, Vyan, Nag, Kurma, Krikar, Devdutta and Dhananjay—these are the ten vital winds which move in the Naadis (the veins and nerves) of the body. Out of these, the first five (Pran, Apaana, Samaana, Udaan and Uyan) are more important, and even amongst them the first two (Pran and Apaana) are considered most important [77-78].

“Verse no. 79-80 = It is the Pran (the first wind) that bears life for the creature, i.e. it is the Pran which enables the creature to move and show other signs of life. Oh exalted sage! This Pran is said to have five subtle habitats or sites where it locates itself. These are—mouth, nostrils, heart, navel and the big toe of the feet. The Apaana wind has the following locations—anus, lower part of the abdomen, upper part of thighs and the knees. [79-80].

“Verse no. 81 = The Samaana wind pervades in the whole body uniformly, the Udaan wind is present in the hands, legs and all the joints of the body [81].

“Verse no. 82 = The Vyan wind stays in the ears, thighs, waist region, heels, shoulders and throat. The other five winds such as the Nag etc. are found in the skin, bones and other parts [82].

“Verse no. 83 = The Pran Vayu (wind) collects the food, water and digestive juices in the stomach and mixes them to form a paste. Thereafter, this paste is separated into different forms once again—the fiber part of the food forms the stool, the water content forms the urine, while the digestive juices form the important fluids of the body such as blood and semen etc. [83].

“Verse no. 84 = The Pran Vayu does all this independently or literally standing all by itself and seeking no help from any other wind. The Apaana Vayu helps in excretion of stool and urine from the body [84].

“Verse no. 85 = The efforts made by the Pran Vayu, the Apaana Vayu and others to accomplish their assigned tasks is aided and complimented by the Vyan Vayu. The Udaan Vayu present in the body helps the latter to rise up or get up from a sitting or reclining position. (This ‘rising’ is a metaphor for spiritual enhancement also.)[85].

“Verse no. 86 = The nourishment and sustenance of the body is done by the Samaana Vayu because it helps in circulation of the blood. Passing of the wind upwards, such as during belching, is done by the Nag Vayu, while opening of the eyes is done by the Kurma Vayu [86].

“Verse no. 87 = The Krikar Vayu creates hunger, the Devdutta Vayu creates sleep etc., while the Dhananjay Vayu prevents the body from getting deformed immediately after death and delays decay of it for sometime [87].]

12. Then the five sacred fires are offered oblations by silently¹ remembering the five Mantras meant for the five types of vital winds, one by one. [This is an important verse because it establishes the link between the five types of Prans, the vital winds, and the five sacred fires.]

So, the first oblation is offered to the first fire represented by the main vital wind called Pran² (breath) by mutely humming the first Mantra (meant for the Pran wind—OM Pranaye Swaha).

The second oblation is offered to the second fire called ‘Ahawaniya³’ by mutely humming the second Mantra (meant for the Apaana wind—OM Apanaye Swaha).

The third oblation is offered to the third fire called ‘Dakshinagni⁴’ by mutely humming the third Mantra (meant for the Vyan wind—OM Vyanaye Swaha).

The fourth oblation is offered to the fourth fire called ‘Garhapatya⁵’ by mutely saying the fourth Mantra (meant for the Udaan wind—OM Udanaye Swaha).

The fifth and final oblation is offered to the fifth fire called ‘Sarwa-Praschitya⁶’ by mutely saying the fifth Mantra (meant for the Samaana wind—OM Samanaye Swaha) (12).

[Note—¹The Mantras are said in a silent manner or mutely hummed as the worshipper is honouring these sacred fires present symbolically in his own body and not outside in the fire pit of the formal fire sacrifice. These internal fires are symbolically kept burning by the means of the five vital winds which are present inside the body. The Garbho-panishad, paragraph 5 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, also asserts that the body of the living organism is called ‘Deha’ or body *because* it harbours the Fire element in it. The body is like the ‘fire pit’ of a formal fire sacrifice, and the Lord that is worshipped by offering oblations to this fire pit would then obviously be the Atma residing inside this body. This Atma is Brahm personified at the micro level of creation.

The Agni Vidya pertains to the metaphysical knowledge of the various facets of the eternal fire element which is at the root of creation—because any form of life necessitates the unavoidable presence of energy, heat and light which are the grand and unique virtues possessed intrinsically only by the fire element. No life on earth is tenable and even imaginable without the involvement of the quintessential fire element. The divine fires have been described to Nachiketa by the God of death, Yam, in Kathavalli or Katho-panishad, 1/1/1-20 of Krishna Yajur Veda. They have also been elaborately described in Chandogya Upanishad, canto 4, section 10 to 13 of Sam Veda tradition.

The five holy fires mentioned in this Upanishad are the following—(i) ²Pran or breath. This is considered as the ‘fire’ from the practical point of view also as it is to

be observed that any fire can be ignited and kept burning only if there is an adequate amount of fresh air; otherwise it would be extinguished and life that depends upon air is suffocated to extinction. It is to be remembered that it is the breath that pumps in air in the body, and if a man is not able to breathe then all the other winds would automatically lose their importance and relevance because no life is sustainable and tenable without fresh air which is here referred to as the 'Pran', and therefore death would ensue. So, the breath, the Pran wind, is the most important aspect of life, and as such is a metaphor for 'fire' inasmuch as it keeps the body alive, energised, charged and ventilated besides keeping it well oxidised and detoxified. (ii) ³*Ahawaniya* is the fire lit to invoke the Gods and invite them to come and accept the offerings during a ritualistic sacrifice. (iii) ⁴*Dakshinagni* is the fire used as a witness to making charities or any other religious festivity; the fire lit at the site of a sacrificial fire ritual, near its south end. (iv) ⁵*Garhyapatya* is the fire of the household hearth; the main fire of the formal fire sacrifice; the fire that every householder is supposed to keep alive and worship regularly and from which the first spark is taken for the rituals associated with religious ceremonies. And (v) ⁶*Sarwa-praschitya* Agni—which is the fire standing as a witness to one doing penitence, atonement, expiation and amends for his past errors, misdeeds and sins. This is symbolic way of burning all past sins along with their results, and thereby becoming purified and cleansed.

See verse no. 19 below for a more comprehensive view of these divine fires.]

13. Having offered these five oblations to the fire in a symbolic manner, the worshipper should eat some food as prescribed. He should visualise that when he touches that food item on its exterior, he is actually touching the divine entity that has no form but is the essence of vibrant life and its accompanying vibe, energy, strength and vigour that is hidden inside that food. That is why food is compared to the Amrit—the elixir that gives eternity and joy. (13).

[Note—He should concentrate not on the exterior looks or taste or texture of the food but peer deep inside it to see the presence of the vital spark of life that is invisibly present inside the food eaten and which gives the food its primary worth. A wise man should realise the importance of food eaten as a provider of nutrition, energy, vitality, vigour, stamina and strength to the body and the Atma that this body carries. The food helps the creature to sustain and foster a healthy life inside the body. He must understand that without food, even the Pran would lose its sheen and importance. Food is a holy entity not to be treated like other material things of the material world meant for physical enjoyment and for deriving pleasure from. It is a sanctified offering made to the Supreme Being known as Brahm while it is offered as oblation to the external sacred fire as done during formal fire sacrifices, and to the Atma residing inside the creature's own body as a representative of this Brahm when food is eaten by the creature.

That is, while eating the worshipper should remember that he is not eating to quench his hunger or satisfy his yearning for gratifying his taste buds and pamper his body, but to accept the essential benefits that the food has to offer to him in terms of its nutritional value as well as in terms of purity of thoughts, all round auspiciousness, and the exhilaration of the spirit that the righteously acquired and sanctified food offers. The importance of food and its importance and metaphoric value as Amrit have been very cleverly explained in Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 6, section 7 of Sam Veda tradition.]

14. After eating, some water¹ is taken in the cupped palm of the left hand and held against the chest near the heart. The worshipper should do Japa (repetition of the Mantras pertaining to the five winds collectively called the Panch Prans², and their

Lord, the chief Pran whom they all serve inside the body, called the Atma) while meditating in this posture.

[Now, the meaning of the various Mantras mentioned in verse nos. 14-18 by which Japa is done is being explained in the following verses one by one.]

‘The chief Pran, the vital spark of life inside the body which represents the vital life forces of Nature, is an image of the Supreme Being known as Parmatma, the Great Atma or the cosmic Soul or the cosmic Consciousness. [This ‘chief Pran’ refers to the Atma of the worshipper, his ‘true self’, his consciousness.] It is surrounded or cloaked in five sheaths called the Panch Vayus (the five vital winds—Pran, Apaana, Vyan, Udaan and Samaan). Let this exalted and revered chief Pran provide me with fearlessness from all the creatures. I may no longer be afraid of anyone. [In other words, let the supreme Brahm give me all round protection, because the Atma is a manifestation of Brahm and the Lord of the body along with the five Prans. The Atma, i.e. the worshipper’s own ‘truthful self’, is a counterpart of the cosmic Self known as Brahm. The Atma lives in the gross body of the individual as a representative of this Brahm whose body is the entire creation at the macro level of creation. This Atma is protected by the five vital winds called the Panch Prans—which are Pran, Apaana, Vyan, Udaan and Samaan. This protective ring of the five Prans around the Atma is like the Emperor being protected by a close inner ring of his bodyguards. Amongst the guards there is a chief guard, the head of the security apparatus, and this ‘head’ is the Pran, the breath, in the case of the vital winds that protect the Atma in the present case.] (14).

[Note—¹The importance of water is emphasised in many other Upanishads, such as Chandogya of Sam Veda tradition—2/4, 5/16, 6/5/2, 6/6/3, 6/8/6, 7/10 etc., and in Brihad Aranyak of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition—2/1/8, 2/5/2, 3/7/4, 3/9/16 etc.

The importance of water and its relationship with food and Tej or energy and heat has been elucidated in Taittiriyo-panishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition in its Valli 3, Anuvak 8.

²The metaphysical aspect of the wind element is the subject matter of discussion of the entire Canto 5 of the Chandogya Upanishad of the Sam Veda tradition. Other parts of this Upanishad relevant to Pran are, inter alia, 1/2/7-9, 1/11/5, 2/4/9, 2/6/1. The Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 4, Brahman 1, verse no. 3 asserts that the Pran is a personification of Brahm.

The Mantras of the five vital winds, the Panch Prans, have been narrated in Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 5, sections 19-23.]

15. Oh the chief Pran! You are an embodiment of the entire universe. [That is, whatever type of life forms that exist in this world are nothing but your manifestations. No life is imaginable without you; you are synonymous with life in all its vibrant hues.]

That is why you are honoured by the epithet ‘Vaishwanar’—the image of the entire world. It is you who has assumed the form known as the Viraat Purush who incorporates the entire creation in his own self. It is the Viraat who stands for the entire creation as it were his own self; the whole creation is in fact a revelation of Viraat Purush. This is the picture at the macrocosmic level of creation. [The Viraat Purush is the all-encompassing, infinitely vast, attributeless and invisible cosmic gross body of the supreme Brahm that exists at the macrocosmic level of creation. It is from this Viraat that the rest of the creation has emerged. Therefore, the creation is an image of the Viraat just like the child is an image of its parents. The word ‘Vaishwanar’ refers to the entire world, the whole creation when viewed from the macrocosmic perspective. Since nothing can survive without Pran (air), it is indeed

the supreme Authority upon which the survival of the whole edifice of creation rests. Say, of what use is a world which has no life—no ‘Pran’—in it?]

At the microcosmic level of existence, that Vaishwanar or Viraat is present in the body of each living being (in the form of the pure consciousness called the Atma as well as the vital Prans that inhabit the body of all living creatures—without both of which the creature would simply not survive).

You are an embodiment of Amrit (the essence, basis and fundamental aspect of anything; the elixir of life and eternity marked by extreme and infinite beatitude and felicity) that is regarded as being synonymous with Brahm¹.

This world that has emerged from you would finally disappear into you at the time of conclusion just like the final offering made to the consecrated fire disappears into it. In terms of metaphysics it can be said that the various Prans present inside the body as representative of this Vaishwanar would disappear into the cosmic Pran at the time of the Turiya state of consciousness² (15).

[Note—¹That is, the most important thing worth identifying in the body is the presence of this Viraat inside it. This all-inclusive holistic concept of treating the individual person’s body as an image of the cosmic Viraat Purush’s body and a microcosm of the colossal macrocosm is discussed in Shaarirako Upanishad which is Chapter 20 of this volume. When a wise person has successfully inculcated this holistic view of the universe, he is deemed to have accessed the elixir of eternal life full of spiritual bliss. That is, he has experienced the presence of the cosmic all-pervading pure conscious known as the Atma inside his own self, the individual’s own Atma which is nothing but the cosmic Parmatma or the supreme Atma known as Brahm personified. The importance of Atma in the context of the cosmic Viraat has been dealt with in great detail in Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 6 of the Sam Veda tradition.

²That is, when the spiritual aspirant rises higher in his spiritual practices and transcends the first three states of Jagrat or waking, Swapna or dreaming, and Sushupta or deep sleep state of consciousness to reach the state of Turiya—meaning the state which has crossed the other states to give liberation and deliverance to the creature, he virtually dissolves his independent identity as a man who has a body and who would wake up from his blissful sleep to suffer from the existential horrors of the external world. Instead, he remains perpetually submerged in the bliss obtained by being a non-entity that has no physical body that suffers. It is the physical body that sleeps or wakes up, it is the physical body that finds rest and peace while asleep, or remains active and gets tired when awake. The Atma is a distinct entity that neither sleeps nor wakes up, and therefore it neither has to find rest nor does it get tired due to physical activity. This can only happen when the wise and self-realised aspirant has realised his true self as the pure conscious Atma which is a fountainhead of bliss and happiness. Such an enlightened man is called Brahm-realised and self-realised.

This is a metaphoric way of saying that all the artificial distinctions between the different types of Prans and Fires are removed, and they all coalesce and merge into one single entity known as the Viraat or Vaishwanar from where they had emerged and then assumed their independent identities at the time of their creation.

The concept of Viraat and Vaishwanar has been elaborately described in Chandogya Upanishad, entire Cantos 5 and 7, as well as in Canto 3, section 13, verse nos. 1-6, Canto 3, section 14, verse nos. 1-3, and Canto 8, section 1.]

16. The consciousness and life giving vital forces in the body are so uniformly distributed in it that they are even present in the tip of the big toe of the foot which is considered as the remotest part of the body.

In order to derive the nectar of life from the food that is eaten (i.e. to derive the full benefit of food in the form of the nourishment and all the essential elements

present in it that are needed to sustain a healthy body and happy life), I offer water to you at the end (i.e. I drink water in gulps or sip it as an oblation to the Pran at the conclusion of its worship)¹ (16).

[Note--¹It is this reason why water is needed to be drunk at the end of meals. It is a common thing and obvious thing to do. The reason is that without water, food is not digested, and it is the water that helps to dissolve its vital nutrients and then take them to the tissues of the body for absorption and use by the body. It is the water that then helps to eliminate waste and toxic matters in the form of urine which helps to get rid of liquid toxins and to soften solid waste so that it can be eliminated as stool. Refer Chandogya Upanishad, 5/2/2, 6/8, 7/10.]

17. The Viraat Purush or the supreme Brahm in the form of the Atma (i.e. as the pure consciousness residing in the body of the aspirant as his true self) has special divine attributes that are characteristic of it. It makes such rare efforts that only it can make. Those who have a worldly view of things cannot even think or imagine of how the Atma works or behaves¹.

A wise and enlightened man who has become self-realised and has understood the esoteric secrets of this Atma (that it is not an ordinary entity but the Supreme Being himself residing in the body, and that the body is not the truthful identity of the spiritual aspirant but it is this Atma which is pure consciousness) does the fire sacrifice in a symbolic manner daily by offering oblations to the Supreme Being with his Prans. This form of constant and regular fire sacrifice is called 'Pran Agnihotra'². [That is, he offers his each breath as an offering to the sacred, divine Being residing in his inner self as the Atma much like one offers oblations to the worshipped deity while doing a formal fire sacrifice. His breathing process assumes the form of a continuous offering to this Lord. Even each morsel of food that he eats or each gulp of water that he drinks is a form of oblation in this symbolic fire sacrifice. These offerings are made to the supreme Brahm residing in the heart of the worshipper as his Atma. The body is merely a carrier of this Atma; it is a medium by which this Atma is worshipped. Since the body harbours all the five principle elements of creation, such as the earth, water, fire, air and sky, it is a microcosm of the cosmos that has evolved from these elements. The Atma in this context would be the counterpart of the cosmic Ishwar or Ishan (verse no. 8) who rules over the entire world. Since the body also harbours all the five forms of the vital winds that sustain life in this creation (verse no. 14) along with the sacred fires (verse no. 10), all that is eaten and drunk are like sacred offerings made to the fire pit of the formal external fire sacrifice done in order to honour the Lord of creation. In the case of the internal form of the fire sacrifice, the deity to be worshipped is the 'self'. One should very closely follow the hidden meaning of this verse and not get confused. The performer of this fire sacrifice is the 'self', the deity to be worshipped is also the 'self', the fire pit is the body, the sacred fire is the fire burning inside the body that keeps it alive and active, i.e. the Pran, the offering to the sacred fire is the food eaten, and the oblation or libation offered to the deity is the water drunk by the worshipper. The 'self' is the Atma which is the true identity of the worshipper, and hence it is the one who performs this fire sacrifice. Since this Atma is the Parmatma personified, it is the deity worshipped by this process, and hence it is the 'self' that is worshipped! The different patron Gods of a formal fire sacrifice are Indra (the King of Gods), Varun (the Water God), Marut (the Wind God), Agni (the Fire God), Aditya (the Sun God), Chandra (the Moon God) etc., and all of them are represented by the various organs of the body that are sustained as a result of the food eaten and water drunk with the holistic view of doing a fire sacrifice because all these Gods had taken up residence in various

organs at the time of creation (refer Aiteriyo Upanishad of Rig Veda). The body of the creature is a microcosmic representative of the Viraat Purush (refer Aiteriyo Upanishad). This is very holistic, all-inclusive, spiritually enlightened and philosophically highly evolved way of doing a fire sacrifice.]

Since the individual forms of Pran have their origin in the cosmic Pran known as the Vaishwanar or the Viraat Purush or the Parmatma (see verse no. 15), it follows that they are his off springs. A wise and enlightened person makes the sacrificial offerings with this eclectic and holistic view. [That is, he would be symbolically offering his own sons as the sacrifice if he would just realise that his Prans have the same importance as the son has for him. This is the highest and ultimate form of sacrifice that a man can make.] (17).

[Note--¹Worldly people eat and make merry; they eat to keep the body healthy so that they can enjoy the comforts and pleasures that the body derives from this world through its organs of perception and action; they eat to gratify their taste buds and their natural urge to enjoy food and its taste. So they can not think of the vital winds, the consciousness and other subtle elements of creation that constitute this body. It is beyond their sphere of comprehension to understand the working of the Pran and how they are differentiated into different types and then merge into one indivisible unit. They eat and drink not for the purpose of sustaining the Spirit in their body, or harnessing the energy and strength of food and drink to make efforts to break free from the fetters of this body and find liberation and deliverance from it. In short, they ridicule the idea of worshipping water and food as embodiments of the supreme God. They forget that the term 'God' is not limited to some awe inspiring deity living high up in the heaven to wield the baton of fear and punishment for disobedience from high up there in order to make his flock obey him. But the supreme Lord is very much present inside the body of the worshipper, and it is to this resident deity that this food and water is being offered. So when the food eaten and the water drunk are shown respect, it is not a nonsensical rite but a very wise act on the part of the enlightened man. This act of his would also ensure that he shows due respect to food and water, and not waste them or cause any form of misuse of them.

²As long as the man is alive, he continues to breathe silently. All other winds also continue to do their respective duties silently, without any fuss and raising a hue and cry. If a man is enlightened enough and fully conversant with the philosophy of the fire sacrifice meant for the supreme Brahm as propounded in this Upanishad, he would be unconsciously even doing a constant fire sacrifice and offering a constant stream of oblations to the Lord while he breathes and while his vital winds continue to do their assigned functions. This is his silent prayer and silent fire sacrifice. He need not sit for a specified time in front of a physical fire to offer his oblations to the supreme Lord. And neither does he need to offer specially cooked food or specially procured drink to the supreme Lord by offering them to the fire pit, as whatever he eats and drinks becomes his offering to the eternally burning Vaishwanar fire present inside his own body. This is the holistic approach to the fire sacrifice.

The term Agnihotra literally means offering oblations to the sacred fire. It is usually of two types—one that is done daily and completed in a month's time every year, and the other that is done throughout one's life. These are related to the external forms of fire sacrifices and the deity that is worshipped is the Fire God. The first type of Agnihotra is done by a Brahmin in the month of Basant according to the Hindu calendar which corresponds to the Spring season, by Kshatriyas in the month of Grisma corresponding to the Summer season, and by Vaishyas in the month of Sharad corresponding to the Fall or Autumn season. The second type of Agnihotra is done twice a day—during early hours of the day at dawn, and in the evening hours around dusk.

The type of Agnihotra espoused by the present Upanishad is life-long one because here the Pran or breath is regarded as an offering to the Atma, and a man continuous to breathe as long as he lives.]

18. [Verse nos. 18-19 dealing with the 'fire' element in the body has a striking resemblance to Garbha Upanishad, Para 5 belonging to the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition. This is Chapter 6 of this volume.]

I symbolically do the fire sacrifice in my own body; I transfer all the external components of the fire sacrifice into my body'. [That is, with the holistic and philosophically enlightened view of doing the fire sacrifice as laid down in this Upanishad as a whole, the worshipper no longer depends upon external fire sacrifices to honour the Supreme Being. He is now comfortable with the same exercise done internally in a symbolic manner. It is not only very convenient for him but spiritually more uplifting and beneficial.]

The body is said to have four types of subtle fires¹. They are not burning or raging in physical terms or in a visible form—but only in a symbolic and subtle form (18).

[Note—¹The four types of fires present in the body are the following—Ahawaniya, Dakshinagni, Garhyapatya and Sarwa-praschitya Agni. They are described below in verse no. 19. It is to be noted here that the fifth fire is Pran as mentioned in verse no. 12, but since it is a form of the wind element and not directly related to the fire element except in a symbolic manner, it is excluded here. Besides this, Pran is being offered as an oblation to these fires as described in verse no. 17 above, and this is why it is not included in the list of the fires burning inside the body.]

19. [This verse describes how the cosmic fire resides in the individual body in different metaphoric forms, and what its five names are.]

(The *first* symbolic fire in the spiritual aspirant's body is this--) Out of these four divine Fires, one is called 'Suryagni' (or Surya Agni) which literally means the fire resembling the fierce fire burning inside the cauldron of the Sun, and which is treated as being equivalent to and synonymous with the Sun. It is astoundingly splendid, blindingly dazzling, very bright and most radiant like the Sun; it is as potential, as powerful, as bright, as splendid and as radiant as the Sun. It has thousands of scintillating and simmering rays radiating out from it in every direction to cover the entire area of the sky¹.

This subtle macrocosmic invisible form of the Fire symbolically resides in the head of the body of the spiritual aspirant (in the eye and the Agya Chakra), and is also called the 'Darshanaagni'².

(The *second* form of the fire element is mentioned now--) The subtle macrocosmic invisible form of the Fire lives in the mouth of the individual in the form of the 'Ahawaniya Agni'³.

(The *third* symbolic fire in the spiritual aspirant's body is this--) The fire that is inherent to the gross body of a living being, the fire that keeps the body uniformly warm and pervades throughout it is called the 'Sharir Agni'. It consumes the body as the latter ages, and is itself weakened as the body progresses in age. It devours the gross body just like the sacrificial fire devours the offerings put into it⁴.

(The *fourth* form of the fire is the following--) The fire that subtly lives in the heart of all mortal living beings is called the 'Dakshinaagni' or the sacred fire that is lit to witness the charities and donations made during formal fire sacrifices. It is compared to half disc of a moon which goes on declining as time progresses⁵.

(The *fifth* symbolic fire in the spiritual aspirant's body is this--) The fifth form of the sacred fire in the body is called the 'Koshtagni' or Kosta Agni. This refers to the fire burning in the intestines that create hunger and thirst, and help to properly digest whatever is eaten, licked, sucked or drunk. This fire is called 'Garhyapatya Agni' and it lives in the navel⁶ (19).

[Note—¹According to the Upanishads, the Sun has many connotations—it is a visible manifestation of Brahm, complete with its stupendity and astounding magnificence; it is the cosmic eye of Brahm that lights up the world for the latter in his manifestation as the Viraat Purush, the cosmic gross body of Brahm; it is a visible embodiment and a personification of the supreme Brahm's stupendous glory and divine magnificence. No life is possible on earth, which is deemed to be the base and center of all visible life in this creation, without the presence of the Sun; the Sun regulates life in this world by controlling the seasons, the day and the night, and by providing the world with light, heat and energy which are essential ingredients for even the primary forms of life to survive. The Sun is the cosmic cauldron in which the Viraat Purush had performed the first fire sacrifice in order to initiate the process of creation, and therefore it is the cosmic 'fire pit' where the eternal sacred fire is burning and to which the worshipper offers oblations during the fire sacrifice done on earth. The Sun is a personification Fire God as well, and this is an obvious fact given the Sun's vivid form and nature as an eternal ball of cosmic fire.

²The term 'Darshanaagni' assumes an important meaning here. The Sun God took up his abode in a man's eye at the time of creation according to the Genesis of Creation as described in Aiteriyo Upanishad of Rig Veda, Canto 2, verse no. 4. Sight has two connotations—one is the physical seeing of the material objects of the gross world that is the function of the gross organ of the eye, and the other is the ability to see deep into the reality and peep behind the exterior to see the reality that is hidden behind the visual apparent. The former is referred to as seeing from an ordinary man's point of view, while the latter is the actual way of seeing things as done by a wise and enlightened man. So, while the Sun lights up the physical gross world for an ordinary creature to see it, it also provides him the symbolic light of wisdom and insight into the actual truth and reality that is not seen by the external eye of the body. This ability to see the hidden truth is done by the so-called 'third eye of wisdom' also symbolised by the Sun and the light that it provides.

Darshanaagni literally means the fire that enables the creature to see this world and which is itself seen in a subtle form everywhere, or which makes something visible because of its inherent shine—which in this case would be the component of conscious life present in the entire living world. It also means the sublime philosophy that enables one to have this holistic and grand view of the Atma and the world around him.

Now, 'fire' is an element that has light, heat, warmth and energy as its intrinsic virtue. Light is a metaphor for knowledge, wisdom, erudition and enlightenment; heat, warmth and energy are closely related with life with all its vibrancy and vitality. So, the eclectic virtues the fire element that metaphorically keeps the mind and intellect alive and active, that keeps the Atma active, energized and empowered so as to think wisely, intelligently, analytically, discriminatingly and rationally, are symbolised by the fire element in its manifestation as the Darshanaagni, or the ability of the creature to see the world in its true form.

Since erudition, sagacity, wisdom and enlightenment are associated with this so-called third eye of wisdom located in the forehead, an enlightened, wise and Brahm-realised man is deemed to have developed a holistic non-dual view of creation and has realised the eclectic truth of the doctrine that his true self is the Atma which is self-illuminated, which is nothing but pure consciousness, and which is a personification of the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm, the Supreme Being who pervades and permeates uniformly in the entire created world. It follows that

such a wise person sees his own Atma in all the other units of creation without exception. He sees no distinction between his own self and the other person standing in front of him. This is the classical non-dual or Advaitya philosophy of Vedanta.

This self-illuminated consciousness known as the Atma is evident everywhere in this life—and this is possible due to its inherent light that effuses out from it because of the eternal fire element present in a subtle form in the Atma. This fire resident in the Atma is called the ‘Darshanaagni’ or Darshan Agni because on the one hand its inherent light, energy and life-infusing abilities enables the Atma to live and interact with the world, and second it provides illumination to the external world as well as sufficient wisdom to the individual man so as to enable his Atma to see, interact and understand about this world. In fact, the inherent illumination and wisdom that is very characteristic of the self-illuminated Atma is known as the Darshanaagni present inside the latter because the term ‘Agni’ or ‘fire’ is associated with light, illumination, energy, dynamism and vibrancy related with all forms of life which are the hallmarks of the Atma. [It is the ‘fire’ that is inherently present in the Atma that enables it to live and shine in this world. The grand characteristic of the Atma as being ‘self-illuminated’ is also due to the presence of this fire element in it. The gross body of the creature is a lifeless entity, and the fact that this body shows signs of life is due to the presence of this Atma inside it. Much like the case of the moon showing light because it is able to reflect the light of the sun falling on its surface, the body of the creature shows life and activity as well as intelligent behaviour because of the presence of this eternal source of light and wisdom inside it as the Atma. The physical eyes of the body cannot see anything if it was not for the Atma which provides the quintessential spark of consciousness to the body as proved by the fact that the eye of a dead body does not see anything. Even the mind and the intellect see anything and make sense of it only as long as the Atma wishes them to do so as is evident from the fact that the same thing is interpreted in different ways by different people. This is because their Atma sees them differently depending upon the baggage of Vasanas and Vrittis (inherent passions and inclinations) that the Atma is burdened with due to its past involvement with this material world, as well as the level of erudition and wisdom that the Atma had developed over time. It is the ‘fire element’ present in the entity known as the Atma that provides the latter the required impetus and energy vital spark of life to remain conscious and alive. Like the body of the Sun God in the form of the visible disc of the celestial sun that shines dazzlingly because of the eternal fire burning inside it, the Atma of the creature also shines and gives light to the world because of the inherent presence of the fire element in its bosom. Even as it is impossible to imagine the sun without the fire present in it, it is equally incongruous to ever think of the Atma, the pure consciousness present inside the body of the individual, without the fire element that is inseparably associated with it. Again, just like the fire of the sun lights up the world for the Viraat Purush to see at the macro level of creation, it lights up the world for the Atma of the individual creature, which is the real identity of the latter, at the micro level of creation.]

Anything is seen in this world because it is lighted; no one can see anything and nothing is visible in the absence of light. The Sun is the cosmic candle that provides the world with sufficient light so that it is made visible to the Atma, the living entity present inside the individual’s body that actually sees anything.

It has been said elsewhere in the context of the genesis of creation that at the time of the world coming into being, the Sun God was created from the eyes of the Viraat Purush (ref. Aitareyo-panishad, Canto 1, verse no. 4) and subsequently took up residence in the eyes of the man’s body (ref. Aitareyo-panishad, Canto 2, verse no. 4). This is a clear reflection of what is being said here. This is also depicted in the presence of the divine all-penetrating and all-seeing ‘third eye of wisdom’ located in the center of the forehead in the Agya Chakra.

This fire symbolises the astounding powers of the mind and intellect that lights up the entire world for the creature. This fire enables the man to see, visualise,

imagine, research, ponder, contemplate, analyse, deduce and determine; it helps him to have foresight and hindsight; it makes him a visionary and a man who can predict something or some event based critical analysis; a person who can forecast based on his hunch and intuition. Such divine and mystical abilities come because of the presence of the Surya Agni in the head. As to the question why some can do this and some can't, the answer lies in the covering around this symbolic Sun just like the cloud in the sky covering the sun makes it shine brightly at one place and remain invisible at other place.

The word 'Darshan' means philosophy, view, idea, thinking and belief; it also refers to the art of seeing things not visible apparent, the ability to deeply contemplate and ponder. So, this fire is called Darshan Agni because it empowers the man to have these unique and divine abilities.

³The Ahawaniya fire is the fire that helps him to use his voice to invoke the Gods as well as welcome people. This is the fire that helps him to invite knowledge when he eagerly seeks the company of wise and enlightened men. In the context of the internal form of the fire sacrifice which is the subject matter of this Upanishad, it is the Fire God present inside the food eaten, water drunk and air breathed (verse nos. 6, 9-10, 12) who is being invited by the worshipper to take his exalted seat in his mouth. When the fire sacrifice is done, the Gods are invited using this Ahawaniya fire. The presence of this fire in the mouth distinguishes living creatures from those who are not alive. And this is the fire which enables one to speak and eat—because these are some of the functions of the Ahawaniya fire.

This is evident from the fact that during fire sacrifices the Mantras and hymns used to invoke the different deities are chanted or recited aloud, and not hummed silently. To speak, voice is needed, and for it sufficient energy and strength of the vocal cords are also necessary. Food is eaten by the mouth, and it is this food that provides energy and stamina to first learn and then chant the hymns.

The Ahawaniya fire is lit during the fire sacrifices to respectfully invoke Gods, and invite them to come and participate in the sacrifice and accept offerings made to them. The word 'Aavaahan' in Sanskrit means to invite, invoke, to pray respectfully with the intention of welcoming. Since one uses one's mouth for these purposes, the fire in the form of the strength, energy and vigour of the spoken word and the power of speech residing in the mouth is called Ahawaniya fire.

In ordinary life also, we welcome guests with welcoming words, i.e. we 'invite them' or make an 'Aavaahan', which are spoken by the mouth. It is like invocation of Gods during ceremonies. Similarly, to praise someone and laud his efforts we need to speak by the mouth. Further, it is the speech and the spoken word and the tenor in which these words are said that can rouse emotions and stoke passions, and these are some of the many instances which can be cited to establish that the Ahawaniya fire lives in the mouth.

It has been said elsewhere also in the context of the genesis of creation that at the time of the world coming into being, the Fire God was created from the mouth of the Viraat Purush (ref. Aitareyo-panishad, Canto 1, verse no. 4) and subsequently took up residence in the mouth of the man's body (ref. Aitareyo-panishad, Canto 2, verse no. 4).

⁴The Sharir Agni literally means the fire that resides in the body like the inherent fire element present inside the firewood in a latent form. It is equally distributed in all the parts and organs of the body, but remains imperceptible and latent.

Even as the fire latently present in the firewood gradually burns the wood from the inside though it is not lighted externally, and this is the reason why the firewood becomes dry, thick and hard as all its moisture content and soft pith are baked dry by the heat of its hidden fire. Likewise, the body becomes drier, thinner and weaker, the glaze of the outer surface of the skin gets progressively reduced and the body develops wrinkles and folds, and it presents a general picture associated with old age. That is why as a man becomes old, the heat, energy, stamina, vigour and strength of

his physical body declines. It should be noted that this slowing down or aging does not affect the other fires as narrated above. It is a normal thing to observe that older the man is the wiser and more prudent he becomes, he develops greater insight and intelligence, he is said to be more mature in mind and thought, he is deemed to be more experienced—indicating that his Darshan Agni is kicking and alive. Similarly, he speaks wiser words which are even respected by Gods, his invitations are seldom rejected, and he is usually invited to speak on special occasions as compared to young adults—implying that his Ahawaniya Agni is full of vibe and energy.

The instance of the firewood would help to illustrate how this fire imperceptibly burning inside the body consumes it. As the firewood gets older, it shrinks in size, loses its greenery, and becomes drier, harder and more solid. This is indicative of the fact that it is being burnt from the inside.

There is another interpretation of this stanza. Even as the fire latently present inside the firewood remains dormant till it is ignited, but once done it would reduce the wood to ash as compared to ordinary wood which might escape total annihilation if lighted because the fire would only burn its outer surface and the wood begins to emit smoke as it does not have an internal fire to support its burning, the body of a person who does Yoga and by which his internal fire has been ignited gradually becomes thinner as all his superfluous flesh is melted away and all the gross parts of the body get charred and reduced to ashes in a gradual manner so much so that the ignited internal fire would ultimately reduce his body to ashes, an aphorism for the body disintegrating into its five primary constituent elements such as the earth, water, fire, air and sky, so that his Atma, or his pure conscious 'self', and his Pran, or his vital forces of life, would easily escape from this disintegrated body without his making any effort to free himself from the fetters of this gross body. This would be his 'Kaivalya Mukti', the only kind of one-way liberation that would deliver his 'self' from the shackles that tie his Atma and Pran to this body, and consequentially he would also be freed from this mundane life and deluding world of material sense objects in which he was forced to live because it is the body that links the Atma to this world. On the other hand, ordinary wood begins to emit smoke soon after it is lighted and the fire would die out soon because this wood lacks the internal fire to support the external fire, leaving half-bunt and blackened piece of log that has lost its greenery and charms. Likewise, ordinary people become diseased and their bodies begin to show signs of decay and weakness, losing its sheen and charm as they progress in age. Such people have to suffer in old age due to the decrepit condition of the body which only helps to inflict torments upon the Atma instead of providing it with succour and solace.

In the context of the present Upanishad wherein emphasis is being laid on Pran Agnihotra, i.e. offering of the vital winds as symbolic offering to the sacred fire burning inside the body to pay obeisance to the Supreme Being residing inside the body as the Atma, this Sharir Agni and its ability to reduce the gross body to ashes assumes a great significance. Those who observe self restraint over the organs of the body, those wise ones who do Pran Agnihotra, i.e. those who offer their own life and their self as the ultimate sacrifice to the Lord in a holistic manner, those who are enlightened enough to understand the spiritual and metaphysical nuances of the eclectic philosophy of 'Pran Agnihotra' as espoused and enunciated in this Upanishad—their body is cleansed of all the world-related impurities because they are destroyed by burning in the severe of penance and austerity that the body is subjected to, its artificiality is burnt and reduced to ashes just like the case of the firewood when ignited. Nothing is left behind except the ashes; no vestiges of the earlier life are left behind to become a burden for the soul. This ensures that the Atma is permanently liberated from the prison of the body and the world in which this body forces the Atma to live, and since the body-like prison has been burnt down and reduced to ashes it symbolises permanent freedom because it is a metaphoric way of burning the bridge as one flees from the enemy so that he can never be caught!

⁵This Dakshinaagni fire is lit at the end of the fire sacrifice to bear witness to the charity made during the conclusion of the fire sacrifice. As old age catches up with the wise man, he begins to do auspicious deeds and gives charities; he involves himself in noble activities. Since all sorts of desires, whether noble or ignoble, whether auspicious or inauspicious have their seat in the person's heart, the Dakshinaagni is said to have its symbolic abode in his heart. It is the virtue of a compassionate and merciful heart to be benevolent, helpful and be graceful that inspires the Fire God in his manifestation as the Dakshinaagni to take up his symbolic abode in the noble man's heart. That is why cruel persons are called 'heartless'—not because they do not have a physical heart but because they lack these divine glorious virtues. It also implies that such noble acts are worth only when done with the involvement of the heart, and not to save government taxes!

Such auspicious deeds are usually done on special auspicious days decided by the lunar calendar, hence the reference to the moon's half disc. The half disc also symbolises the declining stage of the body when the man realises that it is high time for him to involve himself in nobler aspects of life, and the fact that life is fast ebbing away in his body and he must make the most out of it before it is finally removed from view as a living entity.

⁶The fifth form of the fire is the one that digests food and drink and thereby extracts nourishment from them for the use of the body. It is called Garhyapatya Agni because it resembles the householder's fire lit in the oven and hearth that he uses to cook food and keep himself warm. Since the navel is the center of the abdomen where the main organ of digestion, the intestine, is located, it is symbolically called the site of this fire. Besides this point, another fact is to be noted—the household hearth is usually located in the central part of the house so that the entire house can be kept warm during severe colds.

Another similarity is in the fact that the process of raising a family through the sexual method is employed by the householder and the organs related with this procedure are also located in the lower part of the abdomen around the region of the navel. So the resemblance of the fire present in the lower part of the body and the Garhyapatya fire is very obvious.]

20. Those who remain engrossed in procreation, sensual gratifications and other activities of the skewed and deluded mind are like the lowly quadruped animals. They should atone for their sins and misdeeds arising out of this crooked thinking and realise that their true nature is a much higher form which transcends the three states (of waking, dreaming and deep sleep) in which such lowly creatures exist.

Their true nature and form is like 'Himanshu'—the Moon God¹ (20).

[Note—¹This means that the true form of the man is the Atma which is self-illuminated and glows with the soothing and blissful light like the one emanating from the moon. As compared to the sun, the moon is very soothing and soulful. Its light softly illuminates the realm against the darkness of the night much like the light of enlightenment that illuminates the mind of a wise and self-realised man against the all-enveloping darkness of ignorance and delusions that covers the existential world around him. He no longer thinks merely in terms of waking and sleeping like an animal, but aims his sight on things higher in the spiritual realm. He is like the moon in the dark sky. His presence is soothing, reassuring, comforting, solace and succour providing, uplifting for the soul and the sagging spirit. He might not even speak a word but his mere presence is enough to remove darkness from the life of his followers much like the mere presence of the sun is enough to lift the veil of darkness from the world.]

21. [Verse nos. 21-22 now describe the symbolic components of this metaphoric fire sacrifice done inside the body with their parallels in the external form of the formal

fire sacrifice. These have a striking similarity to Para 5 of the Garbha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition which is Chapter 6 of this volume.]

In this symbolic fire sacrifice involving the spiritual aspirant's own body there is no Yup (the octagonal pillar or post raised at the venue of the fire sacrifice to which the sacrificial animal is tied) or the Rashanaa (the rope by which the sacrificial animal is tied to the Yup). Say, who is the Yajmaan of this fire sacrifice (i.e. who is the chief patron on whose behalf this sacrifice is being done)?

Who is the wife*, the Ritwij¹ (a priest) and the members who participate in a fire sacrifice? [*A fire sacrifice is done by the husband-wife duo, and it is incomplete if the wife does not accompany the chief patron, the husband.]

What is the sacrificial vessel? What is the Havi (articles used to make offerings and oblations)? What is the Vedi (the sacrificial alter where the Gods are worshipped)? What is the Antarvedika (the inner sanctum where the sacred fire is actually worshipped)? What is the Dron Kalash (the wooden pot or trough in which the juice of the Soma plant is kept)? What is the Rath (the ceremonial chariot)?

Who is the Pashu (the sacrificial animal)? Who is the Adhvaryu¹ (a priest)? Who is the Hota¹ (a priest)? Who is the Brahmanaanchi¹ (a priest)? Who is the Pratiprasthata¹ (a priest)? Who is the Prastota¹ (a priest)? Who is the Maitravarun (the friendly Water God)? Who is the Udgata¹ (a priest)? Who is the Dhara (the person who moves the fan and blows air in the fire pit)? Who is the Pota (the grandson)?

What is the Darbha (the Kush grass, *poa cynosuroides*, which is a dark green reed used during religious ceremonies)? What is the Sruvaa (the wooden sacrificial spoon or ladle)? What is the Aajyasthali (the pot to keep clarified butter to be offered to the fire)? What is the Arghaa (a vessel that tapers at the top and is used for making libations of water)? What is the Aajyasthali (the bronze vessel used to keep clarified butter) for the Aajyabhaag²?

Who is the Yaaj (the patron who actually sits through the elaborate exercise lasting for hours on the behalf of the main patron, the Yajman)? Who is the Anuyaaj (the younger or junior Yaaj)? What is Ida (left nostril; here referring to the various Mudras or postures of Pranayam adopted by the priests and patrons while muttering Mantras as part of the sacrificial ritual)? What is the Sukta-vak (incantations; the prayer hymns chanted during the fire sacrifice and while making offerings and oblations)? What is the Shan(g)yor-vaak (a special type of incantation composed according to the poetical style, a Chanda, called 'San(g)yog' which are chanted using the tongue and soft palate at the rear of the mouth)? What is the Ahinsa (the strict vows taken during the period of the fire sacrifice that no one would be harmed and no violence would be done)? What is the Patni Sanyaaj (the meaning of wife accompanying the husband in the fire sacrifice)?

What is the Yup (the wooden post or pillar)? What is the Rashnaa (the rope)? What is the Ishtkaa (the brick used to make the altar)? What is the Dakshina (the fees given to priests; the donations and charities made as part of the ritual)? What is the Avabhrit (the ritualistic bath taken at the conclusion of the fire sacrifice successfully)? (21).

[Note--¹There are four types of *Ritwiks* or *Ritwijis*, or priests who preside over an elaborate fire sacrifice— (i) Hota—he is the priest who offers oblation to the sacred fire; he uses the hymns of the Atharva Veda; (ii) Adhvaryu—this is the priest who chants the hymns of the Yajur Veda; (iii) Udgata—he is the priest who sings the hymns of the Sam Veda; and (iv) Brahma—he is the head and elder class of priest who is a representative of Brahma the creator; he uses the hymns of the Rig Veda.

Each of these chief priests has a hierarchy of assistants or juniors who would help them in the performance of the elaborate rituals associated with a fire sacrifice.

Depending upon their position in this strictly hierarchical setup, the donation received during a fire sacrifice was also divided between them.

There were four categories of priests called *Ritwij* who participated in a fire sacrifice. (a) The first category consists of the chief priests such as *Hota*, *Adhwaryu*, *Brahma* and *Udgata*. They were entitled to the largest portion of donation, and if the cows were to be donated, they had the largest share. (b) The second category of priests were junior to them, and they were called *Prastotaa*, *Pratiprasthaataa*, *Brahmanaanchasi* and *Maitraa-varun*. They worked under the chief priests in that order respectively. Their share of donation was half of what was given to the chief priests. (c) The third category of priests were called *Achaawaak*, *Neshtaa*, *Aagnidhra* and *Pratihartaa* respectively. They were junior to the second category and their share of donation was one-third of what the chief priests got. (d) And finally, the fourth category, i.e. the lowest helpers or the junior most priests who were probably only apprentices were also four types who worked under the instructions of the third category. They were called respectively *Graavastut*, *Unneta*, *Pota* and *Subrahmanya*. Their share of donation was equivalent to one-fourth of what the chief priests got.

The *Hota*—he is the priest who offers oblation to the sacred fire; he uses the hymns of the *Rig Veda*. The *Adhwaryu*—this is the priest who chants the hymns of the *Yajur Veda*. The *Brahma*—he is the head priest who is a representative of *Brahma* the creator; he uses the hymns of the *Atharva Veda*. The *Udgata*—he is the priest who sings the hymns of the *Sam Veda*.

Each of these chief priests has a hierarchy of assistants or juniors who would help them in the performance of the elaborate rituals associated with a fire sacrifice. Depending upon their position in this strictly hierarchical setup, the donation received during a fire sacrifice was also divided amongst them.

²*Aajyabhaag*—this is the name given to the two libations of *Aajya* or melted butter that is offered to the *Soma* (the Moon God) and *Agni* (the Fire God) preceding the principal oblation to the *Darsha* sacrifice or the lighted sacred fire.]

22. [This verse would now answer each of the above questions.]

In this symbolic fire sacrifice involving the spiritual aspirant's own body where there is no *Yup* (the octagonal pillar or post raised at the venue of the fire sacrifice to which the sacrificial animal is tied) or the *Rasanaa* (the rope by the sacrificial animal it tied to the *Yup*), the *Yajman* (i.e. the chief patron on whose behalf this sacrifice is being done) is the person's own *Atma* (his pure consciousness, his soul).

His *Buddhi* (intellect) is his wife (who must accompany him to successfully complete it). The *Ritwij* (priest) is the *Vedas* themselves. The *Ahankar* (ego, pride, arrogance and haughtiness) in him is the *Adharvayu* (priest). The *Chitta* (sub-conscious mind) is the *Hota* (priest). The *Pran* (breath) is the *Brahmanaanchi* (priest). The *Apaan* wind is the *Pratisthata* (priest). The *Vyan* wind is the *Prostota* (priest). The *Udaan* wind is the *Udgata* (priest). The *Samaan* wind is the *Mitravarun* (Water God). The body is the *Vedi* (altar). The nostrils are the *Antahavedi* (inner sanctum). The head is the *Drona Kalash* (pot for keeping clarified butter). The legs are the *Rath* (chariot). The right hand is the *Sruva* (wooden spoon or ladle). The left hand is the *Aajyasthali* (the pot for clarified butter). The ears are the *Arghaa* (a tapering vessel used for making libations of water). The eyes are the *Aajyasthali* (the bronze vessel used to keep clarified butter) for the *Aajyabhaag* (the two libations of *Aajya* or melted butter that is offered to the *Soma* or the Moon God, and *Agni* or the Fire God preceding the principal oblation to the sacred fire). The neck is the *Dhara* (the person who moves the fan and blows air in the fire pit) and the *Pota* (the grandson). The *Tanmatras* (the five sense perceptions—seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling and feeling

anything touch) are the close members of the family who attend the fire sacrifice. The Panch Maha Bhuts (the five elements—earth, water, fire, air and sky) are the Prayaj (members of the extended family who participate). The other persons who participate are like the various qualities and virtues possessed by the aspirant.

The tongue is the Ida (incantations done through left nostril by closing the right nostril along with certain Mudras or postures adopted while chanting Mantras). The row of teeth and the lips are the Sukta Vak (special hymns of the Vedas because incantations of the Vedic hymns or Mantras are done through the mouth). The palate is the Shan(g)yor-vaak (a special type of incantation composed according to the poetical style, a Chanda, called 'Shan(g)yog' which are chanted using the tongue and soft palate at the rear of the mouth).

Mercy, graciousness and compassion as well as peace, serenity and tranquility are equivalent to Ahinsa (non-violence) and Patni Sanyaj (company of the wife because a person finds peace and comfort in the company of his wife).

OM (the ethereal Mantra representing divinity and Brahm) is the Yup (pillar to which the Yajman or the Atma is tied). Asha (hopes and expectations) is Rashanaa (rope).

The Mana (mind) is the Rath (chariot). Kaam (worldly passions, lust, yearnings and desires) is the Pashu (animal that is to be sacrificed). The hairs on the body are the Kush grass. The organs of perceptions are the various pots used to keep different offerings of the fire sacrifice. The organs of action are the Havi (things meant to be offered to the fire as offering). Ahinsa (the vow of non-violence) is the Ishtkaa (the brick used to make the altar). Tyag (renunciation, disinheritance, non-involvement, non-wanting, giving away even the most dearest of possessions in a dispassionate manner, and total dispossession) is the symbolic Dakshina (obligatory donation, charity, alms and the fees of the fire sacrifice). Mrityu (death) is the final rite called Avabhrit (the final bath).

It is only when the fire sacrifice is done with this holistic and enlightened view and mindset that the fire sacrifice is deemed to be successful and fully rewarded, while the Gods are really pleased and they bless the worshipper by taking up their seats in the body to make it holy and sanctified (22).

23. Just like the certainty of obtaining Moksha (final liberation and deliverance of the soul so that it does not have to take birth again; emancipation and salvation of the soul) if one dies in the holy pilgrim city of Varanasi¹, if this Upanishad is read by any Brahmin (or any noble person who is enlightened) he too obtains the same benefit. This Upanishad has the potential to cleanse the mind and intellect, and is certain to provide him with Moksha.

This is a certainty. This is what this Upanishad is about. This is its profound tenet. Amen! (23).

-----Shanti Paath-----

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Chapter 30

Varaaha Upanishad/Varaaho-panishad

The Varaaha Upanishad/Varaaho-panishad has been taught by Lord Varaaha, the Boar incarnation of Lord Vishnu who is the sustainer and protector of creation and the Supreme Being, to sage Ribhu. Hence, it is one of those Upanishads that were revealed by the Lord himself. It espouses and expounds upon the eclectic philosophy of 'Advaitya Vedanta', i.e. the doctrine of 'non-duality and uniformity' in creation which presents a unified and uniform vision of the world rather than a fractured view. It can be broadly classified into two components—the first half is dedicated to an elaborate discussion of this philosophy and how this changes the world view of the enlightened man (Canto 1-3) as preached directly by the Lord, while the second half is an exposition of the same philosophy by sage Ribhu for the benefit of another sage Nidagh on how this enlightened view can be actually realised and practiced by inculcating divine values in life (Canto 4) and by doing Yoga (Canto 5).

Canto 1 narrates that Lord Varaaha was pleased by severe Tapa (austerity and penance) done by sage Ribhu, and when the sage requested the Lord for Brahm Vidya (the divine knowledge of the Truth personified as the supreme Brahm, knowledge that is liberating and delivering for the creature's soul) the Lord lists the long chain of ninety six Tattvas (fundamental principles of creation) and finally concludes that inspite of gaining access to the highest level of metaphysical and theological knowledge the best path of obtaining liberation and deliverance is Bhakti or devotion to God.

Canto 2 deals with the four preliminary disciplines called 'Saadhna Chatushtaya'—viz. the true nature of the Atma as the true 'self', pure consciousness and bliss, how the self-realised person becomes one with the Parmatma, the Supreme Being, how this lead to freedom from the fetters of Karma (deeds and actions), and how meditation leads to dissolution and overcoming of the mind etc. Brahm is the universal Absolute, the unequivocal Truth, and the only Reality in creation. It is the cosmic Spirit and Consciousness of creation that is present uniformly in each single unit of creation, from the single celled one right up to the most complex and colossal one, including the inner being of the spiritual seeker as his 'true self', as his Atma. It has no specific form, shape or colour; it is attributeless and invisible. But at the same time it has revealed itself in the form of the visible world complete with its stupendous variety and astounding diversity as a proof not only of its existence but also of its supernatural powers and qualities.

A wise and enlightened person who can see this Brahm inside his own self as well as in the rest of the creation, who has this grand and cosmic view of Brahm and is convinced of its truth obtains freedom from all ignorance arising out of a distorted and limited view of the supreme transcendental Brahm who is beyond definition and comprehension.

Canto 3 is an extension of Canto 2 and describes the Parmatma or the Supreme Soul as an embodiment of Sat-Chit-Anand (truth, consciousness and bliss). It is stressed here that the best and most effective way of attaining him is Bhakti or devotion.

Canto 4 is divided into two sections like the Vedas—the first section is the Mantras, and the second is the Brahman. There are in all 42 Mantras in section 1 which list the seven Bhumikas (stages of development of wisdom), while the second

section consisting of 43 verses are like the Brahman which give a detailed description of all the stages. It, inter alia, describes the concept of Jivan Mukti, and cites the examples of sage Shuka and Vamdeo as epitomes of this type of Mukti. As for the various Bhūmikas, another Upanishad deals with them also, viz. the Akchi Upanishad which is Chapter 23 of this volume.

Finally, Canto 5 is exclusively dedicated to Yoga and its practice. It describes the various aspects and limbs of Yoga, such as Angas (limbs or branches), Bandhas (control of vital energy of the Pran), Chakras (subtle energy centers in the body), Naadis (nerves), OM and its use for Japa (repetition). This Canto winds up the Upanishad by outlining how the spiritual aspirant can obtain final liberation and deliverance by a judicious mix of the physical exercises of Yoga and the great tenets of metaphysics.

-----Shanti Paath-----

Please see appendix no. 1 for meaning of this Shanti Paath.

Canto 1

[This Canto lists the ninety six Tattvas, the fundamental elements or principles of creation.]

1. OM Salutations! The great sage named Ribhu did severe Tapa (penance and austerity) for twelve long years measured according to the days of the Gods¹. At the end this period, pleased by his Tapa, Lord Varaaha² appeared before him and asked him to ask for some boon—‘Oh Ribhu! Wake up and ask for some boon’.

The sage got up from his meditative trance and respectfully bowed to the Lord, and submitted, ‘Oh Lord! I do not harbour any worldly or material desires or have any sort of wishes that are needed to be fulfilled in this world. I have no worldly passions and yearn for nothing like those persons who are passionate about the world, are overwhelmed by its material charms, and long for its pleasures and comforts. [That is, I do not wish to ask for any worldly boons to be granted to me. I am fully contented, and have no worldly yearnings or material needs.]

All the Vedas, the Shastras (scriptures), the Itihas (ancient traditional histories), the Purans (ancient mythological histories), and all other voluminous texts that give knowledge of everything in existence, along with Brahma the creator and other Gods—all of them assert that true Mukti (liberation and deliverance for the creature and emancipation and salvation of his soul) is obtained by only one method, and that is to have knowledge of and devotion for your true divine form. Hence, please elaborately elucidate for me that eclectic knowledge which would enable me to get acquainted with this truthful divine and sublime form of yours for my spiritual benefit. This knowledge is known as ‘Brahm Vidya³’ because it would enlighten me about the knowledge that would provide me with true liberation and ensure my deliverance’.

Then Lord Varaaha blessed him, assuring him that it would be exactly as he wishes. ‘Alright, so be it. Let me begin to preach you.

This Brahm Vidya—the knowledge of the supreme, transcendental, quintessential and irrefutable Truth of creation that enlightens one about the divine

cosmic entity that is behind the existence of the entire creation, that is the root and the cause of everything that exists, and that is pure cosmic Consciousness known by the name of Brahm—is said by some to consist of twenty four Tattvas (essential elements, units or principles of creation), while some others are of the view that it has thirty six Tattvas, while there are still others who assert that it has ninety six elements (1).

[Note—¹1year of Gods = 36 human years. Therefore, 12 years of Gods for which Ribhu did Tapa would be $12 \times 36 = 432$ human years.]

²Lord *Varaaha*—This is the third incarnation of Lord Vishnu as a boar in which he had killed the demon Hiranyaaksha and lifted the earth out of the flood waters in which it had been submerged. This is symbolic of the Lord's retrieving the world from the deep ocean of sins in which it was plunged over time. The *Varaaha Puran* is dedicated to him.

³The concept of *Brahm Vidya* is dealt with in a number of Upanishads, such as Kaivalya Upanishad, Brahm Upanishad, Panch Brahm Upanishad, Akchyu-panishad, Tejobindu Upanishad, and Brahm Vidya Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda. Basically it means the most eclectic, the most esoteric and the profoundest of knowledge pertaining to supreme transcendental Divinity known as Brahm.]

2. I shall now narrate for you in a sequential form the various Tattvas (essential principles) of that eclectic Brahm Vidya (knowledge pertaining to Brahm). Listen carefully¹.

The Gyan Indris, i.e. the organs of perception, are five—viz. the one with which sound is heard, i.e. the ears; the one with which anything is felt, i.e. the skin; the one with which anything is seen, i.e. the eye etc. [The others being the one with which anything is smelt, i.e. the nose; and the one with which anything is tasted, i.e. the tongue.] (2).

[Note—¹Since the entire creation is a visible manifestation of Brahm, it follows that by understanding the basic Tattvas that constitute the fundamental units of the body of knowledge concerning Brahm, one would be able to get an idea of what really the creation is made up of, and what actually determines the overall character, nature and temperament of this creation as whole as well as of its individual units.]

3. Similarly, the organs of action are five in number—viz. the one related to speech (i.e. the mouth); the hand (which accepts and does deeds), the legs (which is concerned with movement) etc. [The other two are—anus concerned with excretion, and genitals that are concerned with procreation.]

The vital winds, called Vayu, are also five in number—such as Pran (breath), Apaana (wind that moves down in the intestines) etc. [The other three being Udaan responsible for lifting the body, Vyana responsible for maintaining equilibrium and pressure within the body, and Samaan responsible for equal distribution of nutrients and blood circulation.]

The Tanmatras (the subtle senses of perception) are also five in number—viz. hearing of words (as done by the ears); feeling anything touched (as done by the skin); seeing anything and perceiving its colours, shape, size and contours (as done by the eye); tasting anything (as done by the tongue); and smelling anything or perceiving anything by the virtue of its smell in all its variations—fragrances, scents, perfumes or even stinks etc. (as done by the nose) (3).

[Note—Refer Panch Brahm Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

4. The next set of four Tattvas are the following—Mana (mind), Buddhi (intellect), Ahankar (sense of ego, pride, arrogance, haughtiness and vanity), and Chitta (sub-conscious mind; memory and conscience).

So the entities mentioned above are called the twenty four Tattvas by those who are well versed in the knowledge of Brahm (4).

[Note—The Tattvas counted are from verse nos. 2-4 as follows— $5 + 5 + 5 + 5 + 4 = 24$.]

5. There are five Maha Bhuts (the great primary elements of creation) also like these twenty four Tattvas. These five are the following—earth, water, fire or energy, wind or air, and sky or space (5).

6. The body of a creature has been divided into three principle types—viz. gross, subtle and causal. This fact is known by wise and expert persons.

Similarly, there are three principle states of existence—viz. Jagrat or waking state, Swapna or dreaming state, and Sushupta or deep sleep state (6).

[Note—Briefly, the three aspects of the body are the following—The gross body is the external part of the physical body consisting of the five organs of perception such as eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin, and the five organs of action such as hands, legs, mouth, genitals and excretory. The subtle component of this body is the mind-intellect complex which plays an intermediary role between the creature and the external world. And finally there is the causal body which harbours the pure conscious Atma that is the 'cause' of the existence of the creature's life inside this body and the 'cause' of the existence of the world at large.

The three states of existence of this conscious Atma are the following—Jagrat state is the state of wakefulness when the creature remains physically active in this material world of sense objects, perceiving its inputs with the sense organs of perception as listed above, and reacting with the sense organs of action. The Swapna state is when the external gross body is asleep but the subtle body consisting of the sub-conscious mind is very much active; this is the period when one dreams. Finally, there is the state when even the sub-conscious mind goes to sleep, i.e. when there is no dream. This state of consciousness goes beyond the dreaming state and is called Sushupta literally meaning asleep in the true sense when the consciousness has no feelings or senses left in it.]

7. Oh wise sage! The above mentioned Tattvas come to a total of thirty five¹.

Their composite form (which has revealed itself as this creation) is the thirty sixth Tattva² (7).

[Note--¹The 35 Tattvas are arrived as follows—24 Tattvas (till verse no. 4) + 5 (verse no. 5) + 3 types of bodies + 3 states of conscious existence (verse no. 6) = 35.

²The product created by the interaction and numerous combinations of these thirty five Tattvas in various ratios and permutations is distinct from any one Tattva, more than one Tattvas or all the Tattvas taken together. There is no resemblance between the units that are used to build the structure and the final shape that it takes, though the structure would fundamentally be known on the basis of its constituent parts. This finished product, which is at variance from its constituent units, is in the nature of an independent Tattvas, hence it is the 36th Tattva.]

8. All those things that take a birth (and therefore die or perish, and hence are mortal and non-eternal and transitory) have six inherent faults or shortcomings of perception in them.

These faults are the following—(i) That there is an ‘Asti’—i.e. to be in existence. [This is a major fault because whatever that exists in this world is an illusion created by the mind just like the existence of water seen in a desert mirage, ghost in the dark, a serpent in the rope, change in the moon’s surface during the lunar cycle, two or more suns when seen as an image in more than one mirror, the sun or moon being devoured by some imaginary demon during eclipses, the rising or setting of the moon or the sun, etc. There is another interpretation of the term ‘existence’—it is the existence of ‘duality’, the conception that there are two independent entities such as the Jiva or the living creature and the Parmatma or the Supreme Being, or the conception of ‘you’ and ‘me’, or ‘this’ and ‘that’. This is against the fundamental tenet of Vedanta which lays stress on ‘non-duality’ of everything which briefly states that whatever that exists is but one single non-dual Brahm revealed in that form. Therefore, the concept of ‘Asti’ has an erroneous, a fallacious and ill-conceived foundation. Anything founded on errors of perception or misjudgment is bound to be faulty, distorted, and away from the reality and truth.]

(ii) That there is a ‘Jaati’—i.e. birth. This relates to the conception that there is a birth and that things are freshly born or reborn again. [This is a fault also because of two reasons. One, if anything does not exist as asserted by the first clause, then the question of its being born or dying does not arise. And two, even if we were to treat everything as Brahm personified—because it would be difficult to deny things physically seen and witnessed—then it is forgotten that Brahm does not take a birth, for it is eternal, infinite, imperishable and the ‘one without a birth’. Therefore this very conception of having a birth has no sound footing; it is faulty. It is an upshot of faulty perception of the reality of Brahm and Truth.]

(iii) That there is a ‘Vardhan’—i.e. there is increase, enhancement, expansion, growth. This relates to the conception that an entity increases, enhances, grows or develops. [This is a fault because for one, ‘truth’ never grows and develops, it is always constant, universal, uniform and never changing; and two, ‘Brahm’ also does not grow or enhance or develop or in any way change because it is the ultimate Truth in creation, and ‘Truth’ does not change.]

(iv) That there is a ‘Parinaam’—i.e. result or consequence or effect or sequel. This relates to the conception that there is a sequel, a consequence, an affect, an upshot, an outcome, a result, a follow up or a fruit of certain deed that was done in the past. [This arises out of the fundamental error that one is the doer of anything, that therefore there is a consequence, a result or sequel of that deed—either good or bad—which cannot be avoided and must be either enjoyed or suffered. This is a fundamental error of conception because one is not a doer of anything because all deeds are done by the physical body which is not the ‘self’ of the person, for this ‘self’ is the pure consciousness called the Atma that lives as a distinct entity inside the body as its resident. Further, since there is no truth in what is seen in this world, the question of there being a birth, development and an end does not arise, and consequentially the question of anything being a Parinaam of any deed done in the past life also does not arise.]

(v) That there is a ‘Kshaya/Kchaya’—i.e. decay and decline. This relates to the conception that there is a stage called the last stage when there is decay and decline. [This is an error arising out of the pervious errors because anything that is eternal, infinite, imperishable and truthful, for instance Brahm, never decays or declines, nor does anything that really does not exist, like this illusionary world, can ever decay or decline. It is all imaginary, delusory and false.]

(vi) That there is a 'Naash'—i.e. destruction and ruin. This relates to the conception that there is finally destruction or termination. [This fault is a derivative of the earlier faults.] (8).

[Note—This brings the tally of Tattvas to 42 as follows—36 Tattvas (counted till verse no. 7) + 6 Tattvas (verse no. 8) = 42.]

9. The six Urmis or faults of the body are the following—(i) 'Ashana' or hunger, the need to eat, and therefore the need for food (along with all the accompanying problems such as worrying about its production, safety, storage, procurement, cooking, proper digestion etc.); (ii) Pipaasa or thirst, and the desire to drink and therefore the need for liquids to quench the thirst (which create the same sort of problems that are associated with the need for food; (iii) Shoka or grief, distress and dismay (which have a profound negative impact on the overall mental, psychological and general metabolic health of the body); (iv) Moha or to have strong attractions or longing for anything or anyone, to be emotionally attached with anything, to be deluded, to be held under magical spell of anything or to be under its charm, to hallucinate as a result of these emotional faults (all of which makes a man a virtual serf of his emotions and tied down to the object of his adoration, thereby robbing him of his independence and peace, and more often than not becoming the cause of his interminable sufferings); (v) Jaraa or old age and its attendant decline of the body leading to its decrepit and weakened physical state when the body loses its strength, vigour and stamina, thereby becoming a burden on the person; and finally (vi) Mritu or death of the body. All these factors create an immense amount of discomfort and horrors to the person (i.e. to the Atma that is the true identity of the person) to whom this body belongs. [In other words, as long as the person continues to have the erroneous conception that this body is

Then there are six Koshas or coverings or structural features of the body. Now I shall tell you about them. (9).

[Note—This brings the tally of Tattvas to 54 as follows—42 Tattvas (as counted till verse no. 8) + 6 Urmis + 6 Koshas (of verse no. 9) = 54.]

10. The Koshas (mentioned in verse no. 9 above) are the following—skin, blood, flesh, stomach or abdomen, marrow and bones. [As would be evident, these are the components of the gross body of the creature.]

The other six Tattvas relate to the natural habits and temperaments of the creature—such as Kaam (lust, passions, desires and yearnings), Krodh (anger, indignation, wrathfulness, ill-temper), Lobh (greed, rapacity), Moha (attraction, infatuations, attachments, delusions and ignorance), Mada (arrogance, haughtiness, false pride, hypocrisy and ego) and Matsarya (envy, jealousy, malice and ill-will). These are the faults associated with his natural temperament and the state of his mind. (10).

[Note—This brings the tally of Tattvas to 60 as follows—54 Tattvas (as counted till verse no. 9) + 6 Tattvas (of verse no. 10) = 60.]

11. These six faults in a person's character (mentioned in verse no. 10) are called his natural Dushmans or enemies.

There are three types of worlds that the Jiva lives in. They pertain to the three states in which the consciousness exists in this world. They are (i) Vishwa (the gross world as the individual creature perceives it in its waking state of consciousness), (ii) Taijas (the gross world as the individual creature perceives it in its dreaming state of

consciousness), and (iii) Pragya (the gross world as the individual creature perceives it in its deep sleep state of consciousness).

Then there are three types of Gunas or characteristics qualities that are inherent in all living beings which decide his basic nature, temperament and personality traits. These are (i) Sata Guna (the best trait or virtue which is marked by auspicious values), (ii) Raja Guna (which is the medium quality marked by the worldly desires for enjoyment, development and growth), and (iii) Tama (which is the lowest and meanest quality marked by the propensity for being pervert, committing errors, making sins and doing mischief and misdeeds) (11).

[Note—This brings the tally of Tattvas to 66 as follows—60 Tattvas (as counted till verse no. 10) + 3 states of existence of the Jiva + 3 Gunas (of verse no. 11) = 66.]

12. There are said to be three types of Karma or deeds—(i) Praarabdha—deed that is obligatory because of the cumulative effects of one's past life and the latent desires, passions and temperaments that are brought forward from it, inspiring and compelling a person to behave in a certain way and do certain deeds and take actions which his own sibling would abhor; this compulsion is obtained as an inheritance from the past, and over which one has no or least control; (ii) Aagamya—deed that would be needed to be done in the future and about which no idea can be had at the present time, but it may or may not be as result of the present or the past; and (iii) Arjit—that which is done in the present at a given point of time, and which results in the creation and accumulation of effects that would have bearing on the future.

There are five more Tattvas as follows—(i) Vachan—to promise and make vows; (ii) Aadaan—to receive and accept, to come; (iii) Gaman—to go and give; (iv) Visarjan—to distribute and disperse, to dispense and expel, to eliminate and discharge; and (v) Anand—bliss, ecstasy, happiness and joy. [These five Tattvas are variations of the term Karma or deed because they all involve action that the body takes. It is the body of the creature that physically speaks, receives or gives, comes or goes anywhere, eliminates waste from inside it, or enjoys the pleasures and comforts of the sense objects of the material world. The main Principal called the Atma, the pure consciousness that is the truthful identity of the person, is neutral and a resident of this body, and therefore distinct from it. This Atma does not actually and physically do anything, but for all practical purposes it is deemed to be morally responsible and accountable for all the deeds done by the body because it is the 'Lord' of the whole setup. Besides this, it happens only till the time the person thinks that the body is his true identity, and therefore he is deemed to be responsible and accountable for what the body does. Should he disassociate himself from the body and treat his 'self' as the Atma, he is freed from unwarranted accusations of being a doer of deeds.] (12).

[Note—This brings the tally of Tattvas to 74 as follows—66 Tattvas (as counted till verse no. 11) + 3 deeds + 5 Tattvas (of verse no. 12) = 74.]

13. The next set of four Tattvas are the following—(i) Sankalps—to make aspirations, violations, determinations, promises and resolutions; (ii) Adhyavashya—incessant work and enterprise, to continue to do one's tasks and duties assiduously, to remain busy in doing one's work and deeds, and not shunning responsibilities, not being lazy and indolent; (iii) Avimaan—to have pride in one's deeds, abilities and qualities; and (iv) Avadhaarana—to have certainty of views, to determine and deduce firmly without having any doubt.

The next set of four Tattvas are the following—(i) Mudit—to be very glad, cheerful, joyous and happy; (ii) Karuna—to be kind, graceful, merciful and

compassionate, to have empathy and sympathy; (iii) Maitri—to have friendly disposition; and (iv) Upeksha—to neglect and be indifferent. [These set of four Tattvas are closely related to the Tattvas listed in verse nos. 12-13.] (13).

[Note—This brings the tally of Tattvas to 82 as follows—74 Tattvas (as counted till verse no. 12) + 4 + 4 Tattvas (of verse no. 13) = 82.]

14. The following are the divine Gods who constitute the next group of fourteen Tattvas—The patron Gods of various directions, Vayu (the Wind God), Surya (the Sun God), Pracheta (Prajapati—one of the ancient forefathers of creation), Ashwinikumars (the physicians of the Gods and the twins sons of the Son God), Agni (the Fire God), Indra (the king of Gods), Upendra (Vishnu), Mrityu (the Death God personified as Yam), Chandra (the Moon God), Brahma (the creator), Rudra (Shiva), Kshetragya (the different Gods of various realms of creation), and Ishwar (the Supreme Being; the Lord God) (14).

[Note—This brings the tally of Tattvas to 96 as follows—82 Tattvas (as counted till verse no. 13) + 14 Gods (of verse no. 14) = 96.]

15. These are the ninety six Tattvas or elementary units that together—in different permutations and combinations—result in the creation of this vast and multifarious world of immense diversities, and the moulding of its characteristic attributes, deciding its virtues and qualities, and determining the nature and temperament of its individual component.

All these Tattvas are unique in themselves; they are most esoteric, queer, uncommon, remarkable and exceptional. They are so wonderful, stupendous and fantastic that they are difficult to be easily imagined, let alone be comprehended and be analyzed.

They have no faults of their own in them inasmuch as they are 'primary elements' which are pure and free from any kind of tainting effects that are extraneous to their natural state, and are free from any kind of external influences to their primary form. But these individual elements appear to become tainted or effected—i.e. they begin to exhibit characteristics quite divergent from their natural state of existence and quite contrary to what one has learnt about them from the study of the scriptures—only when they combine with other elements to form an entity that does not at all resemble any of these individual elements or Tattvas from which it is built. In other words, the end result of the mixing together of the Tattvas creates an entity that has not the slightest of semblance with the character of its ingredients, but its characters are falsely imposed upon the Tattvas in the belief that the finished product would exhibit the characters of its ingredients. Though this maxim is correct in the general term, but it does not apply when anything is scrutinized closely and analytically.

Therefore, if one tries to deduce the nature and inherent virtues of any given Tattva based on the characteristics of the finished product—the result of the combination of two or more Tattvas—he is bound to make wrong deductions¹ (15).

[Note--¹This is because the product of this combination would vary from the principal ingredients, giving a wrong impression about the fundamental form and nature of these primary elements. The simple example of water would suffice—water molecules consist of atoms of two primary elements, viz. Hydrogen and Oxygen which are primarily in gas forms, but the water as we know it is has no resemblance to either of them because it is liquid. So when one is told that water consists of these two primary elements, one gets a wrong impression about the primary nature and properties of both Hydrogen and Oxygen which are gases in their natural form and

not liquid like water. Besides this, water exists in various physical forms—liquid, solid, vapour, moisture, steam etc., some of which are visible and some not. For instance, one can see water as liquid, solid in the form of ice, and vapour in the form of steam, but can anyone see Hydrogen and Oxygen in their natural form as gases?]

16. Those who worship and have sincere devotion for me and my divine sublime form as Varaaha (i.e. my subtle and sublime primary form as Vishnu, the sustainer and protector, who had assumed this unusual and queer form of a boar for the larger welfare of creation), those who meditate upon and remember this form with devotion and respect—they are freed of all ignorance and delusions. They become Jivan Mukta—i.e. they obtain liberation and deliverance for their souls even while alive in this world (16).

17. Those who are wise, erudite and enlightened enough to know the mystery behind creation with these primary ninety six Tattvas as revelations of one single non-dual Brahm are deemed to be liberated and delivered from the fetters of ignorance and its accompanying delusions (about this world and everything in it) no matter to which Ashram they belong—i.e. it does not matter which school of philosophy they subscribe to or the way of life they prefer to lead. Therefore, it does not matter if they live like a Jati (an ascetic or hermit who keeps long matted hair on the head, and leads a life of austerity and penance), or as a Mundi (one who shaves off the hair and keeps a bald head like a monk or a renunciate Sanyasi), or as a Brahmachari who keeps a Shikha (a householder or student in his pre-household days when he studying the scriptures under the aegis of a wise teacher, or anyone else who sports the tuft of hair on the top of the head; this tuft is worn as a religious sign by all initiated Hindus).

There is no doubt about it. [In other words, erudition, wisdom and enlightenment are a state of the mind, the state of the person's internal being, rather than his external appearances or the physical state of his gross body. The evolved spiritual state of an individual cannot be judged based on his outer appearances, for more often than not the latter is misleading and hides some different truth. A pervert monster can be disguised as a monk, and vice versa. For a truly self and Brahm realised person, the physical appearance and state of the gross body is of no consequence. It is the state of his mind that sets him apart from the herd.] (17).

Canto 2

[Brahm is the universal Absolute, the unequivocal Truth, and the only Reality in creation. It is the cosmic Spirit and Consciousness of creation that is present uniformly in each single unit of creation, from the single-celled organism right up to the most complex and colossal one, including the inner being of the spiritual seeker as his 'true self', as his Atma. It has no specific form, shape or colour; it is attributeless and invisible. But at the same time it has revealed itself in the form of the visible world complete with its stupendous variations and astounding diversity as a proof not only of its quintessential universal existence but also of its supernatural powers and magical qualities.

A wise and enlightened person who can see this Brahm inside his own self as well as in the rest of the creation, who has this grand and cosmic view of Brahm and is convinced of its truth, obtains freedom from all ignorance and their attendant

delusions arising out of a distorted and limited view of the supreme transcendental Brahm who is beyond definition, imagination and comprehension.]

1. The great sage Ribhu said to Ramapati (Lord Vishnu) who had incarnated as Lord Varaaha (Boar), ‘Oh Lord! Please preach me the grand knowledge of Brahm which is known as the ‘Brahm Vidya’.

When requested by Ribhu as above, the merciful Lord who eliminates all the distresses and problems of his devotees, replied—(1).

[Note—Other Upanishads of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition having a direct correlation with the concept of Brahm Vidya are Brahm Upanishad which is Chapter 3, Brahm Bindu Upanishad, Chapter 8, and Brahm Vidya Upanishad, Chapter 16 of this volume.]

2. There are four known mainstream aids or paths¹ by which this great knowledge called Brahm Vidya that you seek can be obtained. This knowledge helps the spiritual aspirant in his pursuit of the eclectic knowledge pertaining to the universal Divinity known as the supreme transcendental Brahm. In the process it also enlightens him about himself and his true identity known as the Atma.

These paths are the following—(a) To have profound Vairagya—i.e. to have great renunciation, total detachment, complete dispassion and absolute non-involvement with anything pertaining to this material world of sense objects, anything that is not eternal and imperishable, anything that is not the truth and real in the spiritual perspective. [This concept has been described in verse nos. 4 and 37 below of this Canto 2].

(b) To strictly adhere to the laws and diligently follow the tenets as laid down in the scriptures and established by tradition that describe how this Brahm Vidya can be accessed. It also entails following and believing in the principles and paths as shown by ancient tradition because they are time-tested and advised by those who had treaded on this path earlier, and therefore are based on real time experience. This also ensures that all the pitfalls and problems that the aspirant can expect to encounter are made known to him in advance along with the precautionary steps that he ought to take or the way to overcome them should he encounter them on the way. The ancient scriptures and traditions have clearly laid down codes to be followed by various Varnas or sections of society, and they have also determined how easily one can obtain an exalted stature in life by honestly following them. Like the more mundane example of a ‘doctor knowing what is best for his patient’, these ancient scriptures and traditions are the best guides one should rely on if one wishes to attain the knowledge of the ultimate Truth, a knowledge that is known as Brahm Vidya, without much effort and confusion.

(c) To do Tapa—that is, by doing hard practice that might involve a lot of sufferance undertaken for a noble cause, observing sincere austerity and doing steady penance, being steadfast and unrelenting in one’s noble pursuit inspite of the greatest of hardships that are encountered, making great sacrifices and forsaking pleasures and comforts in order to ensure that one can reach one’s goal in life. This path of Tapa is indispensable if one wishes to succeed in any venture, be it related to the world or the spiritual. [Even an ordinary student knows how much sacrifices he has had to make to excel in his studies; every householder knows how much he sacrifices for the welfare of his family.]

(d) To serve one’s Guru (a moral teacher, preceptor and spiritual guide) with great sincerity and diligence. This service would naturally please the Guru and he

would be inspired and willing to divulge the greatest of secrets and to teach his trusted and devoted disciple the most esoteric aspects of the body of knowledge in which he is an expert. He would do so out of his love and affection for the disciple, and he would not hesitate to explain the intricacies of the body of knowledge to the best of his abilities. [A wise Guru would have a natural affinity for the student who is obedient and helpful and devoted to him as well as is committed to his studies as compared to those whom he feels are not up to the mark, are insincere in studies, are disobedient and wayward, and therefore the effort needed for teaching them is not the worth. His love and affection for the former type of disciple or student might be even greater than for his own off spring, and he would prefer to pass on his legacy to such an accomplished student instead of to his own son.]

Brahm Vidya is available to an aspirant as a reward of following these spiritual paths or taking the helps of these aids in his spiritual pursuit. These paths are not excluding but inclusive; they are to be followed simultaneously and with due diligence in order to be successful in a comprehensive manner (2).

[Note—¹The four well established and known paths to being acquainted with Brahm Vidya which relates to the divine Principal of creation known as the supreme transcendental Brahm, and which enables the spiritual aspirant to successfully understand the underlying eclectic principles of this Divinity, are the following—(i) Vairagya which broadly means renunciation, dispassion and total detachment from anything that is related to the gross world and its material sense objects, anything that is not eternal and imperishable, anything that is not the truth and real in the spiritual perspective—refer all the Upanishads that deal with the concept of Sanyas, specifically such as the Avadhut Upanishad, verse no. 6. (ii) Control of the Mana (mind)—refer Brahm Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 5. (iii) Doing internal form of fire sacrifice—refer Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse no. 53, and Pran Agnihotra Upanishad. (iv) Meditation and contemplation—refer Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse nos. 78-110.]

3. A true and sincere seeker of this eclectic and divine knowledge known as Brahm Vidya that pertains to the supreme transcendental Brahm is expected to inculcate certain eclectic values in life and have a noble and auspicious mindset in order to succeed. He should abandon the notion that there is a world called 'this world' where he lives at present, and a world called 'that world' where he would like to go after death or the place where Gods etc. live. There is no such thing as this 'mortal world' or 'perishable world' and that 'immortal world' or 'imperishable world'. [Refer Brahm Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 6-10; Brahm Upanishad, verse nos. 2-3.]

A person desirous of obtaining Moksha (emancipation and salvation; liberation and deliverance) should endeavour to cultivate the six grand virtues such as Sham and Dam¹ etc. (3).

[Note—¹The six grand virtues which are like assets are the following--(i) Sham—having self restraint and control; having peace, tranquility, serenity and quietness; being able to suppress desires, yearnings and natural instincts and impulses); Dam—tolerance, forbearance, fortitude); (iii) Upriti—renunciation, detachment, dispassion, indifference and non-involvement); (iv) Titksha—endurance, patience, fortitude, sufferance, equanimity); (v) Samadhan—solution, answer, lack of confusion or doubts, clarity of thoughts and conception); and (vi) Shraddha—having faith, belief, conviction, reverence and devotion).]

4. He should abandon all kind of attractions, attachments, infatuations, longings or a sense of belonging that he might have for anything—i.e. he should develop profound

degree of renunciation as mentioned earlier in verse no. 2 above. He should learn to exercise the greatest of restraint on his self and the organs of the gross body.

Instead, he should be firmly of the view that his true 'self' is nothing else but pure consciousness which is a mere neutral witness of everything, without getting emotionally attached with anything. That is, he should develop the noble and auspicious view that 'I am that pure immaculate cosmic Consciousness which is a neutral witness to everything in this world.' [A witness is supposed to be neutral, unemotional, detached and uninvolved in the happening. This helps him to observe things in the correct perspective and his version is regarded as authentic as opposed to biased witnesses who would see things from a pre-conceived angle and develop a tainted view of the same event. If a witness to an event is not dispassionate and neutral, then he is not worth relying; he is not a true and honest witness. Therefore, a sincere seeker of the knowledge of Brahm should, and is expected to, inculcate the great virtues of complete dispassion for, detachment with and non-involvement in the world and its affairs.] (4).

5. This creation or the visible world created by Manu¹ (i.e. the creator and the forefather of all living beings, including the human race) is a very strange, rare, mysterious, fascinating, magnificent and incomprehensible proposition. Its magnitude and expanse is so astounding that it defies definition and comprehension. [In a way this is expected and natural because the parent from whom this world is born is the supreme transcendental Lord known as Brahm, and the world is a visible manifestation of this Brahm. This fact has untiringly been asserted by all the scriptures in an unequivocal term. Since this Brahm is beyond definition and comprehension, it follows that its manifestation would also be beyond definition and comprehension.]

In this magnificent and colossus world of such astounding diversity and unimaginable variations, the human body is the rarest of rare acquisition. Having had the great privilege of being able to acquire the human body which is considered as the holiest amongst all the forms in which life exists in this world, the Jiva (the living being) should not fritter away this golden and rarest of rare opportunity. He should instead make the best of it by acquiring the best of knowledge pertaining to the great Lord Vishnu (the Supreme Being) through the study and hearing of the Vedas and other scriptures². That is, he should strive to obtain true 'Gyan' as a means to overcome ignorance and delusions which have prevented him from finding a way to break free from the fetters that shackle his 'true sublime eternal self' to the gross and perishable body as well as the equally gross and perishable world of material sense objects in which the creature finds himself living. [Knowledge is empowering and enabling; it helps one to overcome oppression and break free from life-long bondage to ignorance and delusions, and their accompanying horrors. It helps one to obtain emancipation and salvation, freedom and deliverance. Knowledge of Brahm would spiritually liberate the aspirant from the bondage of spiritual ignorance of what constitutes the truth of creation and his own 'self'. He would then discover uniformity and universality of the 'truth' that defines his own 'self' as well as the rest of the conscious world. He would develop such a profound degree of such grand virtues as equanimity, fortitude, compassion, grace, love and universal brotherhood that he would not need to go to some distant heaven in order to find contentedness, peace, happiness and bliss because they would be available to him here in this life itself.]

This way, he should utilise this human body as a means of obtaining liberation and deliverance from the fetters that had been tying his soul for generations to the

cycle of birth and death—i.e. he should endeavour to find Mukti or Moksha; he should endeavour to find emancipation and salvation for his self in such a way that it becomes a permanent form of liberation and delivers him from all the horrors to which he was subjected to in his numerous lives in search for this elusive freedom (5).

[Note--¹ The 14 *Manus*—The fourteen Manus of mythology, who were the forefathers of the entire creation, are the following—(i) Swayambhu, (ii) Swayambhu, (iii) Uttam, (iv) Taamas, (v) Raiwat, (vi) Chaakshusha, (vii) Vaivaswat, (viii) Saavarni, (ix) Daksha Saavarni, (x) Brahm Saavarni, (xi) Dharma Saavarni, (xii) Rudra Saavarni, (xiii) Dev Saavarni, and (xiv) Bhaum (also known as Indra Saavarni).

‘Vaivasvat or Vaivaswat Manu’ is the 7th Manu and the legendary progenitor of the current living beings on this earth. The word ‘Vaivaswat’ means coming from the Sun or belonging to the Sun, or relating to or belonging to Yam (the God of death and a judge of a creature’s deeds done by it during the life time). It also means the planet Saturn as well as one of the Rudras. In the present context of this text, Sri Ram means the Vaivaswat Manu who is the forefather of the human race in general and Sri Ram’s ancestor in particular because he belongs to the Solar race.

The word ‘Swayambhu’ refers to the primal man represented by the creator Brahma as well as the Viraat Purush who were both born from the Lord called Narayan who is deemed to be their father. Swayambhu was the male aspect of creation, and his female counter part was Mother Nature. The word means ‘someone who was born out of his own free will’. So, Viraat Purush and Brahma are generally regarded as Swayambhu, because both were born out of their own free will as a manifestation of Brahm. ‘Swayambhu Manu’ was the first male born on earth and from him the rest of the creation was born.

The word ‘Swayambhu’ also means ‘self-existent’ and refers to Brahm, while ‘Swayambhu Manu’ is Brahma, the ‘self-begotten’ creator of the entire visible creation, called the ‘Prajapati’ who is the Lord and sustainer of the subjects of this creation; he is a representative of the Male aspect of creation, the Viraat Purush, and is primal male par excellence; he is the divine father of the human race. The name ‘Manu Swayambhu’ is especially applied, in the context of the Purans of which Ramayan is a part, to fourteen successive mythical progenitors and sovereigns of the earth and who create and sustain this world through successive long period of time called ‘Kalpas’. The first such mythical progenitor is known as ‘Manu Swayambhu’ as the one who sprung (created or manifested) from the self-existent Brahm. He is regarded as a secondary creator who commenced his work of creating by producing 10 Prajapatis, of whom the first was ‘Light’ called Marichi. To this Manu is ascribed the celebrated code of conduct called ‘Manu Smriti’ and two other ancient Sutra work on Kalpa and Grihya, i.e. the sacrificial and domestic rituals. He is also known as Hiranyagarbha and Prachetaa.

The other five Manus are called Swarochish, Uttam, Taamas, Raiwat and Chaakshush. The 7th Manu is called Vaivasvata Manu the son of the Sun God, and he is regarded as the progenitor of the present race of living beings. He is like the Noah of the Old Testament of the Holy Bible, is said to have been preserved by Vishnu or Brahm in the form of the legendary great fish from being drowned in the great deluge of the dooms day. This Manu is also called as one of the twelve Adityas, the author of Rig Veda, VIII, 27-31, as the brother of Yam (the God of death and a judge of a creature’s deeds done by it during the life time), as the founder and first king of Ayodhya, and as the father of Ila who married the son of the Moon-God named Budha. This makes two great dynasties —the solar and the lunar races to which Sri Ram and Krishna respectively belonged —related to each other. The 8th Manu, or the 1st of the future Manus according to Vayu Puran, III, 2, will be Saavarni, the 9th would be Daksha Saavarni, the 10th would be Brahm Saavarni, the 11th would be Dharma Saavarni the 12th would be Rudra Saavarni, the 13th would be Raviya or

Deva Saavarni, and the 14th would be Bhautya or Indra Saavarni. The life of one Manu is equivalent to roughly 311,040,000 years.

²The knowledge of the Vedas and other scriptures would ensure that a man becomes enlightened about the great and ultimate Truth of existence and becomes aware of the falsehood of everything around in the material world of sense objects. He would use this spiritual knowledge and awareness of the perishable nature of the human body as a stepping stone to liberation and deliverance, and as a medium for breaking free from the endless cycle of birth and death. It is imperative and obligatory for him to do this quick and soon, because if this human body is lost he would lose a golden opportunity which might not come his way for generations and generations to come. It is only as a human being that he can read, listen to, study, understand, implement and benefit from the eclectic teachings and the axiomatic doctrines of the scriptures—for animals and all other forms of life cannot do this.

Only a human can think intelligently and analytically; only a human can exercise the right and power to pick and choose, to accept and reject from the different options available to him; only he can do righteous and auspicious deeds and avoid those that are not; only he can meditate and contemplate and make conscious efforts to ensure that the soul can get certain deliverance from the shackles that it has found itself bound to; only he can lead others by his own example, and let others benefit from his own learning and experience; only he can obtain an extreme sense of bliss and ecstasy or derive extreme pleasure and a sense of immense satisfaction that is ethereal in nature and not restricted to the physical plane of existence that is related or limited to the gross world and the gross body, such as the bliss and ecstasy obtained during meditation, the elation experienced when one discovers the ‘truth’ about his self known as the Atma that is pure consciousness, the sense of great happiness and satisfaction obtained by doing charitable and noble deeds, the exhilaration obtained at making new discoveries and innovations—something that animals and other lower forms of life cannot do.

The human body is the highest rung in the evolutionary ladder. Beyond that, the Atma cannot expect to find a better abode for itself in its quest for a medium to either enjoy the material comforts of the world or for finding permanent liberation and deliverance from the endless cycle of birth and death. Both ways, the human body is a god-gifted opportunity for the soul. So it is up to the individual how he uses this golden opportunity—would he like to fritter it away in such mundane things as wasting it away in attempts to satisfy his senses, or would he employ it to achieve greater heights of wisdom and enlightenment that lead to his self realisation and ultimate Brahm realisation. While the former use would be tantamount to his renewing his bondage to this artificial world of delusions and spiritual torments, the latter would be liberating and delivering for his soul; it would lead to his finding emancipation and salvation.]

6. There is a sacred entity called ‘Sachidanand¹’ (one that is an embodiment of Sat or truth, Chit or consciousness, and Anand or bliss) which is more exalted, holy, auspicious, divine and sublime in nature, and it transcends the definition of goodness, holiness, auspiciousness and godliness as these terms are usually understood to mean by people belonging to the various Varnas and Ashrams which are the various classes of society and the phases in the life of a person respectively.

Therefore, such persons who believe that by merely following the rituals and observing the various sacraments as prescribed for the various Varnas and Ashrams in a mechanical and ritualistic way (without understanding their real intentions and meaning), or by becoming an expert in the different tenets of the scriptures and preaching about them to others without actually understanding and implementing them fully oneself one would be entitled to obtain Mukti or Moksha, then such

persons are living in a fool's paradise. They are indeed called 'Agyani' because they are ignorant of the truth and the reality. They are deluded and under false impression that they are being religious and are following the correct path that would lead to their Mukti or Moksha—i.e. that any of these paths would give them certain liberation and deliverance from the fetters of this world and provide their souls with the grand opportunity of obtaining emancipation and salvation².

It is difficult to say when such ignorant persons would find real Mukti or Moksha. [In other words, it is doubtful that they would ever find liberation and deliverance for themselves in the true spiritual sense; it is uncertain when their soul would find emancipation and salvation. In the context of what has been said earlier in verse no. 2 of this Canto 2 above, the following of the designated path as laid down for the people belonging to the different Varnas and Ashrams is only one of the ways to obtain Brahm Vidya, but not the ultimate way and not the ultimate aim of spiritual practices. The medium is not the aim. These paths help one to inculcate self discipline and practice an auspicious lifestyle as prescribed in the scriptures so that the creature can rise and lift himself from a low level of existence to an exalted state, but it is up to the practitioner to decide what rewards he wants for them. If he wishes worldly gains and fame, he gets them; if he wishes a better life and ascendance for himself, he would get it. But he must remember that all these wishes entail some form of expectation and involvement in deeds done in accordance with the tenets of the scriptures and the laws framed for the different Varnas and Ashrams. Since doing of deeds would produce a train of consequences, the Atma can never find true liberation and deliverance because such consequences would have to be suffered or enjoyed by it only with the aid of the gross body. And as long as there is the body, where can the Atma say that it has found liberation and deliverance because this gross body is the foremost millstone around its neck; it is shackled to this body. So, as long as the man thinks that he is doing something—though auspicious, righteous and strictly in accordance with the principles laid down for him by the laws of Varnas and Ashrams to which he belongs—he is still involved in doing deeds, and therefore cannot escape either the law of action and its reaction or the intervention of the body because deeds cannot be done without the body. Hence, true liberation and deliverance eludes him; he cannot expect to find emancipation and salvation for his Atma, which is his pure conscious 'self' and not the actual doer of any deeds, if he entangles and implicates this Atma in the vicious cycle of deeds and consequences, whether done in accordance with the guiding principles for various Varnas and Ashrams, or not.] (6).

[Note—¹*Sat-Chit-Anand*—that is, to be eternally truthful, eternally conscious, and eternally blissful, these are the auspicious virtues of the Atma. Refer also to Canto 2, verse no. 23 of the present Varaaha Upanishad as well as to Rudra Hridaya Upanishad, verse nos. 26-27; Panch Brahm Upanishad, verse no. 41 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.

²There are four *Varnas* or classes, and four *Ashrams* or sections or phases of life in Hindu society—viz. Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras are the four Varnas, and Brahmacharya (the 1st phase of life as a celibate, or student life), Grihastya (the 2nd phase as a householder), Vanprastha (the 3rd phase when the person stops being active in worldly affairs and heads for pilgrimage or forest) and Sanyas (the 4th and last stage when he takes to complete renunciation and prepares to welcome death).

Each has a set of long elaborate laws and regulations that govern its working; each has its list of sanctioned duties, religious sacraments and ceremonies, deities and rituals, dos and don'ts. These are collectively called the Dharma of that particular Ashram and are used as yardsticks, benchmarks or gold standards to judge a person

and decide if he has led an auspicious and noble life or not, what rewards or punishments and the subsequent end he deserves, whether he goes to hell or heaven, whether he rises or falls, what new life forms he would get in his next birth, and whether he is able to please the Gods who preside over his Ashram or not. So an ordinary man is engrossed in fulfilling these long demands all his life so much so that he has no time to think beyond them and decide things for himself whether what he is doing is really worth the effort and would really and truthfully give him spiritual liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation, whether merely spending the entire life adhering to the Dharma of the Ashram would give him eternity and peace and bliss that he so assiduously and urgently seeks.

Usually people think that by merely following the numerous tenets and doctrines of the Ashram they belong to in a sincere and diligent manner they would find Mukti or Moksha for themselves which would provide them eternal bliss and happiness—but this is a fallacious thinking and a grave error of perception. They miss the intent of the main teaching of the scriptures and their hidden meaning; they simply go about their lives like a machine in a factory floor without realising that they are surreptitiously and unawares being chained to the cycle of deeds and their results. They forget that there is no such thing as a physical heaven or a better after-life where there is eternal peace and happiness and where one can aspire to go after having led an auspicious and righteous life strictly according to the tenets and doctrines of the Ashram they belong to. They do not realise that all deeds, no matter how auspicious, righteous and noble they are, have a chain of consequences that cannot be avoided. These consequences may be in the form of a good reward or as a punishment, but they have to borne nevertheless by the doer of deeds. If the deeds are good, the reward would translate into better birth in a higher clan, better life, and better facilities and opportunities for enjoying the material pleasures and comforts of the sense objects of the world in the new life. But this chain would continue endlessly, and it would never translate into ‘Mukti and Moksha’ because of the intervention of deeds, their results, the body and the world. The creature continues to oscillate between births and new births depending upon the nature of deeds done by him in a given birth. He might be suffering from torments in the current birth because of some bad deeds of the past, and he does good deeds now so as to get rid of his miseries. These auspicious deeds might mitigate his sufferings and he thinks that he has found Mukti or liberation from his miseries and torments, but this is only a temporary form of Mukti rather than a permanent one because these deeds have their own set of effects and the creature gets a new birth as the reward of these good deeds. It is this basic fault in their thinking that they continue to remain whirling in the cycle of birth and death. So we see that even good and auspicious deeds are no solution for the torments being suffered by the soul, and the true form of Mukti and Moksha is attained differently. The concept of deeds and their consequences have been dealt with in a number of Upanishads. A brief reference is as follows—

- (i) Rig Veda’s Kaushitaki Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 1.
- (ii) Sam Veda’s Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 5, Section 3-10; Canto 7, Section 21.
- (iii) Shukla Yajur Veda = Adhyatma Upanishad, verse nos. 49-60, 66; Niralambo-panishad, verse no. 11-12; Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, 3/1/3, 3/2/11-12, 3/9/28, 4/3/12, 4/3/33, 4/3/36, 4/4/1, 5/10-5/11, 6/1/1-6, 6/2/2, 14-16, etc.; Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 23-26; Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 2/4/2-3.
- (iv) Krishna Yajur Veda = Kathrudra Upanishad, verse no. 13, 20-26; Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 12, 48, Canto 4, verse no. 35; Rudra Hridaya Upanishad, verse no. 35; Shwetashwatar Upanishad, Canto 4, verse no. 7, and Canto 6, verse no. 3; Sarwasaar Upanishad, verse no. 6; Taittiriya Upanishad, Valli 2, Anuvak 6; Katho-panishad, Canto 1, Valli 1, verse no. 20, and the whole of Canto 1, Valli 2 right up to Canto 2, Valli 3; Skanda Upanishad, verse no. 7.

True form of Mukti (liberation and deliverance) and Moksha (final emancipation and salvation for the soul) is obtained when the chain of deeds and their consequences is broken. This is possible only when the wise and enlightened man realises that his 'true self' is the pure conscious Atma and not the body, that the deeds are done by the body and not the Atma, that the Atma is a separate entity vis-à-vis the body, and that the body is limited by its physical grossness, is perishable and mortal as compared to the Atma which is ethereal, eternal, infinite and immortal. So, when he breaks free from delusions that had made him think on the contrary, when he overcomes ignorance about spiritual truths, when he becomes wisened regarding the great axiomatic maxims as espoused and expounded by the Upanishads, he becomes 'self-realised' in as much as he has come to be aware of the facts regarding what constitutes true Mukti and Moksha, and how to attain them.

Therefore, a wise and erudite man who has correctly applied his intellect to read, hear and interpret the Upanishads in the correct way and in the correct perspective comes to realise that attempts to seek peace and eternity by involving himself in doing deeds and seeking happiness and peace in the outside world, which unfortunately is perishable and a treasury of miseries itself, is hogwash and cheating one's own self. He must understand that true peace and eternity rests nowhere else but inside one's own self. There is no thing as a God somewhere in a distant heaven, there is no heaven in the first place, and there is no after-life and no better or worse life in the real sense. It is what one makes of one's life that it becomes better or worse as these are relative terms.

A careful reading and analysis of the scriptures makes him wisened to the eclectic truth about 'God' and he realises that the Divinity that he intends to worship and honour and please by doing so many rituals and observing so many sacraments and obeying rules of the Ashram or Varnas to which he belongs is to be found nowhere outside but in his own bosom as his pure conscious 'self' known as the Atma which is not only his true self but also the supreme Brahm, the Supreme Being, himself personified. He understands that this Atma does not do anything, and that whatever is done is done by the body with which the Atma is not related except for the fact that the body is its temporary habitat till the time of the Atma's final liberation from its shackles. He also understands that true Mukti or Moksha is obtained when this Atma leaves this body and does not enter another, i.e. when there is no transmigration, and this is possible only when the Atma completely disassociates itself from deeds that the body does according to the sanctions of the Ashram in which it lives. As a result, when the body is shed, the Atma does not carry over any baggage of the past life and simply merges to become one with the cosmic Consciousness that uniformly pervades throughout the creation.

But it must be remembered that this eclectic awareness and enlightenment can come only when one analytically and thoroughly studies and delves deep into the hidden meaning of the scriptures, and peels off the outer shell of words and phrases into the spirit of those words. This is where the importance of 'self study' comes in under the guidance of an expert teacher and led by the wise intellect. Refer Brahm Bindu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse nos. 13-22.

Therefore we conclude that true Moksha or Mukti for the creature is obtained when he rises above the limitations of these four Ashrams.

The concept of eternal Mukti and Moksha have been the subject matter of discussion of many a Upanishads. Moksha and Mukti—Basically there are said to be three types of Muktis—viz. Jivan, Videha and Kaivalya. The following list summarises the Upanishads that deal with these three varieties of Muktis.

(1) Jivan Mukti—(a) Krishna Yajur Veda tradition—Sarvasaar Upanishad, verse no. 2; Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 6, 15, 42, Canto 4, verse no. 21-35, 18-33, 42-43, Canto 5, verse no. 56, 59, 75-76; Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 79-80, and Canto 3, verse no. 33; Katho-panishad, Canto 2, Valli 2, verse no. 12-13, and Canto 2, Valli 3, verse no. 4, 6-15; Akchu-panishad, Canto 2, verse no. 32-39;

Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 1-32; Brahm/Amrit Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 5; Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 46-47, 144, 151, 161. (b) Shukla Yajur Veda tradition—Paingalo-panishad, canto 3, verse no. 5, and canto 3, verse no. 9-11; Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 1/4/3-4; 2/3/6-7; 2/4/5-6; Adhyatma Upanishad, verse nos. 12 and 4-47; Muktiko-panishad, Canto 2. (c) Atharva Veda—Ram Rahasaya Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 11-17; Annapurna Upanishad, canto 2.

(2) Videha Mukti—(a) Krishna Yajur Veda tradition—Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 3, verse no. 34; Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 33-81; Sarwasaropanishad, verse no. 2; Akchu Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 32-40. (b) Shukla Yajur Veda tradition—Paingalo-panishad, canto 3, verse no. 12, and Canto 4, verse nos. 7 and 15; Mahopanishad, canto 2, verse nos. 36-73, and canto 5, verse nos. 23-41.

(3) Kaivalya Mukti—It has been described in (a) Shukla Yajur Veda's Paingalo-panishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 7 and 15; Muktiko-panishad; Subalo-panishad, Canto 13, verse no. 1, and Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, Brahman 2, section 3, verse no. 1. (b) Krishna Yajur Veda's Dhyani Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 93/15, 103-106; Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 14-15, 17-18; Sarva-saar Upanishad, Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 4; Skanda Upanishad, verse no. 15.

(4) The *three paths* of Mukti have been described in Advaita Tarak Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse nos. 4-13.

(5) The *relationship between Mukti and Gyan* has been succinctly described in Krishna Yajur Veda tradition's Brahm/Amrit Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 5; Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 14-18.]

7. Such an enlightened and wise man should develop this eclectic and highly evolved spiritual view about himself—'I am the only entity that is truly happy and blissful; I am happiness and bliss personified (in my fundamental form as the pure consciousness). Therefore, there is nothing besides me that is (i.e. that gives) happiness and bliss.

There is no one more dear to 'me' than this eclectic view of my divine 'self'. In fact, the concept of 'me' being different from my 'divine Atma' is not acceptable to me. [That is, I do not subscribe to the view that my body or anything else in this world is 'me' or 'mine' accept the Atma.] (7).

[Note—Refer also to (a) Krishna Yajur Veda's Tejo Bindu Upanishad, Canto 2-4 and Canto 6; Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse nos. 81-110; (b) Shukla Yajur Veda's Adhyatma Upanishad, verse nos. 55, 61-71; (c) Rig Veda's Atma Bodh Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 1-31.]

8. Oh great sage! 'I do not become infatuated with anyone or anything so much that I have to take a birth for him or her or it'. The one who has this great way of thinking and has developed wisdom of thought, the one who has this enlightened view of the self and creation—well, it is me. [This verse has another interpretation—Those who are wise and enlightened enough to understand that the Atma, which is their true 'self' and pure consciousness, has no one with which it is infatuated because it is inherently dispassionate and detached from this external world of artificiality, are an image of the Supreme Being himself. This is because the Atma is itself a manifestation of the supreme Consciousness called Brahm. Hence, the pronoun 'me' or 'I' applies to a person who has become truly 'self' and 'Brahm' realised; he is not addressing his gross body but his own true 'self', which is the Atma and not the gross body.] (8).

9. 'I am self-illuminated'—this eclectic statement refers to the divine light emanating from the pure consciousness which is different from and has no parallel with all the other types of illuminations and sources of light known in the physical world.

How can any other form of light which has no self-existence or which is not self-reliant (i.e. any kind of worldly light or physical form of illumination which has no permanence, which has no glow and radiance of its own but depends upon some other source, which itself is transient and temporary, to get its luminosity, and therefore cannot be permanent or have any reliability) ever dare to touch or compare itself with the divine, eternal and self-generated illumination emanating from the Atma? [In other words, the Atma is a unique self-illuminated divine entity which is pure consciousness personified. Its light is self-generated and not dependent upon some extraneous source for illumination; it is like the sun which is self-illuminated unlike the moon which depends upon the light of the sun for its illumination.] (9).

10. Those who are erudite and enlightened enough to know with unequivocal certainty about the divine and exalted entity that is self-illuminated, and which needs no support to keep its self illuminated, or any external prop to support and protect its existence—only such persons are endowed with true knowledge, erudition and wisdom.

This is my (i.e. Lord Varaaha's) firm belief and assertion. [This statement is being made by Varaaha because he is the one who is preaching this Upanishad.] (10).

11. The entities which are known as the mortal world as well as the immortal world and the cause that creates a confusion about them—i.e. the entities called a Jiva (living creature), an Ishwar (God) and Maya (the powerful dynamic delusion creating powers of the Lord which has created this illusion known as the world) respectively—are not separate from the Atma, do not have any existence that is distinct from the Atma, if one takes a holistic view of this divine entity known as the Atma in its entirety. Amongst them, 'I' have an exalted and most mysterious existence. [The 'Atma' referred here is the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm. The entire creation in all its variations and consisting of each individual unit, such as the three entities Jiva, Ishwar and Maya mentioned here, are revealed from this one single non-dual cosmic Brahm or Consciousness. Vishnu is the Viraat Purush of Vedanta, i.e. he represents the macrocosmic gross body of Brahm from which the rest of the visible and invisible creation emerged. Hence Vishnu is unique and most exalted amongst all the manifestations of Brahm. Similarly, the pure conscious Atma is a manifestation of the cosmic Consciousness in the individual creature's body. Hence, it represents the cosmic all-pervading supreme Brahm. Therefore, if Brahm is unique then Atma is also unique. In this context, the term 'I' has two meanings—one, it would refer to the Lord who preaches this great Upanishad, and two, it would refer to the self-realised person who is being preached because upon realising who is actually is he proclaims that there is no difference between the Lord and himself. It is remarkable synergy of preaching and practicing—the Lord shows in practical terms what he means. He says, in effect, that what is 'me', i.e. the Lord, is also 'you', the disciple who is being taught this Upanishad. This is because the truthful 'me' of the preacher is the same as the Atma residing in the body of the person hearing this discourse, the person addressed as 'you' in conventional terms. Hence, there is no distinction between the 'I' of the preacher as well as the one who is being preached.] (11).

12. The concept of Dharma and Karma¹ etc. and the various dichotomies and debates created around them and by them in this world causes great deal of perplexities and consternations for those who are ignorant of their true meaning and intention. It is like a veil of darkness symbolising ignorance that wraps them like a shroud. Such people are unable to see the truth as if they have been blindfolded.

Such ignorant and deluded persons cannot have any contact or touch with the self-illuminated Atma (which is their 'true self' known as the pure consciousness). Therefore, they cannot have any contact with me, the cosmic Consciousness and the ultimate Truth of creation as well. [That is, the Supreme Being and the Absolute Truth is accessible only when all darkness of ignorance is removed, and not before. Attainment of the Lord and the Truth is equivalent to attainment of self-realisation, and vice versa.] (12).

[Note--¹The *Dharma* is the righteous, noble, proper and auspicious way of doing any *Karma* or deed. But the problem is that there are many schools of thought and many benchmarks to decide what Dharma is and what Karma is. This leads to endless debates and confusions. While the 'truth' can be only one and not two, such situations of uncertainty cause perplexity and a grave sense of fear in the person. Having doubts and not being able to arrive at one irrefutable conclusion of what is the 'real and truthful' thing is a metaphor for ignorance and delusion. This is what is meant here—the very concept of having different interpretations of Dharma and Karma show that they are all misleading and erroneous to the core because there cannot be two interpretations or aspects of the same truth and reality because it is absolute and not subjected to fractionalization.]

13. This divine Atma (the pure consciousness residing in the bosom of all individuals) is a neutral witness of and for all. [That is, it stands as a mute and neutral witness to what the creature does, both with his external gross body as well as with his internal subtle organ of the mind and intellect. In other words, it is wrong to think that one can deceive the Lord (Vishnu) by being cunning enough to be able to hide from him and do things on the sly because the Lord does not reside outside but inside the very bosom of the person as his own 'self' known as the Atma. So if one tells a lie to deceive the world, he cannot cheat with the Lord residing as his Atma, and therefore the liar cannot escape punishment.]

The Atma transcends the limitations and bindings imposed by the rules and regulations designed to govern the functioning of the four Varnas and Ashrams (as described earlier in verse no. 6). It is free from all such fetters. They do not apply to the Atma. [Such limitations and rules as the ones prescribed for Varnas and Ashrams apply to the physical body and not to the Atma because it is already ethereal, taintless, exalted, eternal and sublime, and therefore it does not need to be freed from any sin or do anything good and auspicious so that its stature is further enhanced or improved from what it is at present. It is wisdom and enlightenment personified, and so does not ever behave unscrupulously, irresponsibly or irrationally so external laws and codes of conduct meant for regularizing one's behaviour and conduct need not be followed by it and do not apply to it. An entity that is inherently self-regulated and restrained needs no external means to teach these virtues to it; it does not need the bridle of the law to keep it under leash.]

Since this Atma has such eclectic, divine, sublime, glorious and magnificent virtues, anyone who understands that this Atma is a personification of Brahm, the supreme transcendental Consciousness, becomes an image of Brahm himself. [Refer verse no. 21 of this Canto 2 also. Such a person becomes one like Brahm in the sense that as no one can see Brahm in his original form but only in the form of the visible

world he has created in his image, this enlightened person's Atma is the Brahm which has revealed itself in the physical body in which this Atma lives and which is known in the external world as the concerned person's persona. An enlightened and self-realised person's behaviour, demeanours and thoughts would reflect his highly evolved spiritual state of realisation which would set him apart from others. He would be like a 'lighted candle' in a dark room, thereby personifying the light of the Sun (representing Brahm) that removes the darkness from the vast expanse of the realm. The light of his self-illuminated Atma has managed to shine through because the spiritual aspirant has been able to remove the dark veil of ignorance and delusions that surround other not-so-fortunate creatures, thereby forcing their Atma to remain mired in darkness. Thus, self-realised and enlightened men are like the lighted candle for the rest of humanity.] (13).

14. A person who has developed the inner sight of wisdom and enlightenment which enables him to carefully weigh, finely scrutinize, intelligently analyse and then convincingly determine the real 'truth' about everything visible in the form of this world based on the knowledge and benchmarks set for such purpose by Vedanta (Upanishads) is able to have a deep insight and peer behind the external façade of this visible world to see the subtle and universal existence of the 'Param Pad'¹ in it.

Such wise, erudite, sagacious and enlightened persons find liberation and deliverance from the fetters caused by ignorance and delusions pertaining to the reality of existence, and consequentially they are able to free themselves from such shackles and finally obtain emancipation and salvation for themselves—i.e. their souls² (14).

[Note--¹The *Param Pad* is the Absolute state of being, the Absolute state of existence. It is the supreme state of existence of consciousness which is regarded as being synonymous with the ultimate state in which anything can ever hope to exist, the state of perfection, truth and absoluteness. This Utopian state is the stature occupied by the only non-dual Truth in existence which the Upanishad prefer to call 'Brahm Pad', the stature of the truthful transcendental Supreme Being known as Brahm, the cosmic Truth and Consciousness.

It is a stature in which a creature reaches the supreme Lord and merges his own individual Atma with the Atma of the Supreme Being. The word 'Param' means the most exalted, supreme, greatest and the ultimate, while 'Pad' means feet, state, stature, honour, title etc. That is, the creature is honoured with the highest title obtainable in this creation in the form of salvation and emancipation of his soul. It also refers to achieving the goal of being near to his Lord. Param Pad is equivalent to spiritual utopia.

This destination is the supreme state which a spiritual aspirant aspires to achieve. It is not any physical place known as 'heaven' as such, but it is a symbolic destination whereby the soul of the individual creature reaches the citadel of spiritualism where the soul becomes one with its primary source, the supreme cosmic Soul, by merging with it. This is its final destination, and is called emancipation and salvation. The devotee reaches the destination which he aspires for. For example, devotees of Vishnu find an abode where that Lord resides, and that abode is called Vaikunth. Those who worship Viraat Purush reach Brahma Loka. Those who worship Brahm also reach Brahma Loka, but this abode is a symbolic heaven, for the worshippers of Brahm, there is no return to this mundane world as they would have merged their souls with the cosmic Soul known as Brahm.

In the realm of Upanishadic philosophy, this *Param Pad* refers to the ultimate citadel of spiritual achievement that any aspirant strives for. This is the culmination of his spiritual quest and the end of his spiritual journey. Briefly, when he has reached

this state of existence, he is deemed to have removed and eliminated all distinctions and artificial demarcations that are supposed to exist for an ordinary creature between the 'self' and the supreme Brahm. He has merged his Atma, which is his pure and truthful 'self', with the cosmic Truth known as Brahm. He has realised that 'consciousness and truth' are always and indisputably 'one' and non-dual, and therefore there cannot be any distinction between himself and Brahm. Since the entire existence has its origin in this Brahm, and since his own 'self' is Brahm personified, it follows that there is no distinction between his own self and the rest of the creatures in this creation. This mystical, eclectic and divine realisation of the ultimate paramount spiritual truth of existence removes all causes of consternations, perplexities and vexations in him that confound all the creatures in this world. Such an enlightened and truly realised person becomes calm, quiet, peaceful, tranquil and serene, for he has found the elixir of eternal beatitude and felicity which leaves nothing more to be sought. That is, he has reached the citadel of spiritual realisation which makes him liberated and delivered from the fetters of ignorance-based delusions that shackle all his other brethren to this world of artificiality and perpetual restlessness. All creatures strive to reach some 'Pad' or acquire some good designation, honour, fame and name for themselves, and this 'Param Pad' is the highest of any designations and honours that is attainable by a creature because it provides him with eternal happiness and peace.

Refer Tejobindu Upanishad, 6/43; Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 5/1/8; Paingal Upanishad, 4/27.

²A truly wise person is one who is not swept off his feet by external appearances but understands the reality behind each instance coming his way and then determines how to deal with it. In the realm of spiritualism and metaphysics, a wise and enlightenment man would be he who understands the truth that whatever is seen or unseen are all revelation of one supreme source of existence known as Brahm. This Brahm is the origin of all that exists so much so that each unit of this creation, from the minutest to the most colossal, is a manifestation of this single entity. For instance, gold can be moulded into innumerable variety of ornaments, but a truly wise man would see the universal presence of gold in all of them and determine their value on the fact of how much gold each unit contains rather than its outer look. The external look and design of a golden ornament can be very misleading; it can be changed and the ornament given a completely new look if it is melted down and re-moulded. What does not change in it is of course the 'gold' content. Moreover, suppose the same design and shape is moulded from some other metal such as iron or copper or even brass having almost the same external glaze and shine as gold, would the buyer pay the same price for them? Definitely not, simply because there is no 'gold' in it.

Likewise, a wise and enlightened man realises that everything he sees in this world is essentially one Brahm revealed in all these forms—and nothing else. The world has any value only because there is conscious life in it, and this life is intelligent life. So, when a wise man sees and interacts with the world, he is actually seeing and interacting with the supreme Lord of creation who is sought to be worshipped by fools and ignorant people alike by doing elaborate religious rituals, fire sacrifices, repeating of endless Mantras, going on pilgrimages, doing so many exclusive auspicious deeds such as making charity, giving alms and donations, visiting shrines and serving holy men etc. when they forget in the whole exercise that they need not indulge in separate enterprises to please and worship the Lord when the latter can be very easily and conveniently served in the routine course of daily life by merely fine-tuning one's view of the world and the self—which is to see the Lord in every single unit of creation as well as inside his own self as the pure conscious Atma. With this world-view, each single deed and action would be an offering as well as service to the all-knowing, omniscient, omnipresent and all-pervading Lord, and no special efforts are needed to be made separately to please and worship him. This is the holistic view of Brahm and his worship. This highly evolved state of the mind and

intellect is called reaching the 'Param Pad'. This exalted stature is not somewhere in the sky or in a castle somewhere, but is here and now in our midst. What are needed are the vision and the sight to see this Param Pad, the exalted and divine abode where the supreme transcendental Lord dwells. Going by the timeless adage that one can reach one's target only when he sets his sight on it, a man who sets his sight on this Param Pad is the one who would ultimately reach it.

The view that this world is separate from the Supreme Being known as Brahm, that the other living being is distinct from my own 'true self', and that Brahm is to be worshipped as a holy and divine Being detached from this existence and 'me' is out of ignorance and delusions created by misconceptions about the 'truth'. Once one overcomes this ignorance, all delusions vanish, and the light of Truth and Reality shines through.]

15. The eclectic view that the gross body is a separate entity from the sublime Atma (pure consciousness) is a highly evolved and enlightened way of spiritual thinking, and it shows that the person having this view is truly wise, learned, enlightened and self-realised.

Therefore, a person who is aware of only one Truth, and that it is in the form of the Atma and not the body (i.e. who recognises the Atma as the only eternal Truth and rest as un-truth), is the person who is deemed to have obtained Mukti (liberation and deliverance from the fetters of ignorance and delusions pertaining to reality and truth of existence and life as well as about his body and his true 'self') almost involuntarily, even without his making any special effort to obtain it. Besides this, the feather in the cap is that this Mukti is available to him even while he is alive—a form of exalted existence called 'Jivan Mukti' (15).

[Note—Jivan Mukti is that eclectic state of existence in this world when a wise, erudite and enlightened man has freed himself from the fetters of ignorance about what is his truthful self as well as the world in which he lives. He realises that everything in this world is an illusionary creation of the mind and exists only as long as the mind wishes it to do so, that the 'truth' is not this material gross world or the gross body but his 'self', that his 'self' is not the body but the pure consciousness residing inside this body and that they are separate entities, that the deeds are done by the body and not the Atma, that the supreme Brahm is an all-pervading entity that is present universally in the entire creation but it is too sublime and subtle so as to be invisible to the organs of sight, called the eye, in the ordinary sense, that all deeds, though done by the body, are meant to be an offering to this Brahm that resides in the world and who controls each single action and movement of the creature in the form of the consciousness that resides in his own body, and so on and so forth. As a result, such a wise man completely disassociates himself from the deeds done by the body in this world as well as allowing himself in getting involved in the affairs of the world. He lives in this world in a dispassionate and unconcerned manner, totally oblivious of his surroundings. In short, he is as good as not living in the material world of sense objects. Therefore, he has obtained Mukti or freedom from the entanglements and endless miseries associated with humdrum life in this mundane world. He is not at all perturbed and disturbed by anything or any event; he is always happy and cheerful, contented and blissful, whether or not he even gets his daily necessities of life or his body is looked after.]

16. The supreme transcendental Divinity known as Brahm is a sublime entity which is an embodiment of such magnificent and grand virtues as, inter alia, Satya (absolute truth), Gyan (absolute knowledge and enlightenment) and Anand (absolute bliss). Brahm is beyond the reach and purview of darkness symbolising Agyan (the opposite of Gyan, i.e. ignorance and delusions).

A wise, realised, erudite and enlightened person who tastes this divine nectar effusing from the knowledge of Brahm on a constant basis—say, how can he be ever tied to deeds and their consequences? (16).

[Note—The main purpose why a man gets involved in some enterprise is to derive some gain from it, some betterment for himself and improvement in his present state. He does anything for his own comfort and pleasure, for his own good, and with the expectation that the deed he is doing would give him peace and bliss; he acquires things because those things would give him joy and happiness. He would never do things that give him pain and discomfort. But all such acquisitions are transient and temporary and so are the benefits or rewards of comfort, pleasure, happiness, joy, bliss, peace and calmness etc. derived from them for the simple reason that the material world in which they are acquired and to which they relate is itself transient, artificial, temporary and perishable. So what's the use, the man begins to wander. On the contrary, if he tastes the nectar of eternal bliss and profound peace effusing from the honeycomb of the Param Pad which he is fortunate to have accessed by self-realisation and its accompanying Brahm-realisation, he would shun the false nectar presented by the illusionary flowers of this artificial world, and therefore would no longer need to get involved in deeds which had earlier enabled him to obtain these false sources of peace and bliss. Once he has tasted nectar that has eternal value, he would shun that is temporary.]

17. You should realise how basically and inherently exalted and divine your true self is. Your 'self' is known by the phrase 'So-a-ham'¹—i.e. 'that is me'. The 'that' in this statement refers to the divine entity which is a witness for and to all the three worlds (the past, the present and the future), is characterised by the glorious virtues of Satya (absolute truth), Gyan (absolute knowledge and enlightenment), and Anand (absolute bliss) etc. (as described in verse no. 16). [In other words, the term 'So' or 'that' refers to the supreme transcendental Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness, the divine entity that possesses the three glorious virtues of truthfulness, knowledge and bliss. In a similar vein, the term 'Ham' or 'me/I' refers to the Atma which is a microcosmic representative and an image of the cosmic Consciousness that resides in the bosom of the aspirant as the 'self', and therefore possesses the same divine virtues as possessed by its parent. In fact and essence, there is no difference between them.]

Hence, you must realise the greatness of your 'true self' which has these eclectic and magnificent virtues in it. You are therefore free from all faults, taints, corruptions and shortcomings (associated with ignorant fools who aren't aware of the reality and the truth about their own selves) (17).

[Note—¹There are a number of Upanishads that deal with this spiritual concept of *So-a-Ham*—viz. (i) Sam Veda = Yogchudani Upanishad, verse no. 83. (ii) Krishna Yajur Veda = Braham Vidya Upanishad, verse no. 34, 78-79; Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 131-133; Panch Brahm Upanishad, verse no. 28.]

18. The pure, immaculate and sublime Atma that is consciousness personified is inherent to all living beings. It can be observed only by the subtle eye of wisdom and enlightenment (and not by either the physical eyes of the body or by the analytical abilities of the logical mind that wishes to have material proof of anything to be convinced that it is truthful), and not otherwise. That eternally conscious and divine Atma cannot be perceived (understood, realised, known and seen) by the eyes which are perpetually veiled by a dark shroud of ignorance and delusions.

Even as a blind man cannot see the brilliantly splendid sun although the latter is very evident and requires no proof for its existence, a man who is ignorant and deluded cannot see that sublime, self-illuminated and radiant Atma that invariably

resides in a very subtle and invisible form in the entire manifested world, being diffused in it uniformly and in a universal manner (18).

19. That which is known as 'Pragyan', or the most excellent form of truthful knowledge and wisdom, is manifested as Brahm, and the latter is recognised by the eclectic virtue and characteristic of being 'Satya Paragyan', or an entity that is marked by the highest degree of the eclectic virtues of absolute truthfulness, absolute knowledge, absolute wisdom and absolute enlightenment.

In this way by having 'Parigyan' of Brahm, i.e. by having a complete, comprehensive, all-inclusive and holistic knowledge of the absolute Brahm as described above, a mortal person becomes immortal. [This is because he would have realised that his 'true self' is not the body which is perishable and mortal but the Atma which is pure consciousness personified, and is an entity that is eternal, infinite, imperishable and indefinable. Naturally therefore a wise and self-realised man can never consider himself as mortal. He considers himself rather as Brahm personified, as the eternal Truth personified, as the cosmic Consciousness personified. Modern physical science searches for the 'truth' in material terms in this world, and when it is verified by experiments it is declared as a fact of science. Similarly, in the field of spiritualism and metaphysics, meditation and contemplation are used as tools to search for the profound 'truth' of creation, and when it is discovered the practitioner is said to be self realised. This is because such discoveries about the ultimate 'truth' are to be made by him as a solo effort, the effort of the 'self'. He is also called Brahm realised because this 'truth' is called Brahm, the supreme transcendental Truth that is absolute, unequivocal and irrefutable.] (19).

20. That Brahm which is an embodiment of eternal and infinite bliss and ecstasy, which is a fount of unbound beatitude and felicity, is indeed free from the concept of duality (which creates a lot of futile and unnecessary debates, doubts, confusions and perplexities).

Brahm is 'Nirguna', i.e. it has no attributes and physical characteristics. It is a treasury of Sat and Chit, i.e. it is an eternal fount of Truth and Consciousness.

When a self-realised person comes to know that these divine and magnificently glorious virtues of Brahm are also his own truthful virtues because his true nature, form and identity is the Atma which is truth and consciousness personified—or Brahm personified, he becomes fearless. [That is, he no longer fears from death, or being trapped by illusions and ignorance. An entity that is 'true' never changes, and an entity that is 'eternal and imperishable' never dies a physical death. He is freed from the fetters of ignorance because this fearlessness comes when he has realised that the Atma is separate from the gross body which is mortal and finite. He overcomes illusions because wisdom would teach him to look for the 'real truth' that is hidden behind the façade of misleading charms of the material world of sense objects. He realises that the Atma is the same divine entity as Brahm, and is the only truthful reality in this otherwise delusory world of misconceptions.] (20).

21. That which is pure and immaculate consciousness, that which is all-pervading, omnipresent and inherently present in all living beings as their integral part, that which is constant, steady, eternal in all phases of time, that which is absolute, wholesome, complete and lacking in nothing, that which is an embodiment of all imaginable happiness and joys as well as comforts and pleasures, that which is non-dual, single entity that is irrefutably immutable and eternally indivisible—the divine

entity which possesses such majestic and glorious virtues and magnificent characteristic is the supreme transcendental Brahm as described previously.

Those who are Brahm-realised, those who are well-versed in the true essence of the supreme divinity known as Brahm, perpetually live in a state which characterizes this realisation. [That is, once the enlightened man acquires a high stature of enlightenment bestowed upon him by becoming acquainted with the Emperor of the creation, i.e. with Brahm, he would like to live in this exalted position rather than revert back to a lowly stature from which he has risen to this exalted position after great effort. When one has got something better and superior, he would naturally not like to retrace his steps to his bad old days. So, when a man has spiritually risen to the high state of Brahm-realisation, a state which is the culmination of all spiritual endeavours because it makes the aspirant come face to face with the objective of all his spiritual efforts, he would prefer to remain there for eternity. This is what is meant here. Once a wise man has come to realise the glorious virtues of Brahm and the fact that this Brahm is his own Atma which is his 'true self', he is overcome with such a great sense of spiritual achievement and relief at having attained the goal of his eternal pursuit of truth as a means of finding liberation and deliverance for his soul that he plunges head on in the ocean of bliss and ecstasy that accompanies this realisation. Refer verse no. 13 of the present Canto 2.]

A person who knows what is being said here, who has experienced it and who has understood the real meaning of it—such a person becomes an image of Brahm; he becomes one with Brahm; he is Brahm personified. He is indeed nothing but Brahm (21).

22. For those persons who are called 'Agyanis', i.e. those who are ignorant of the reality and truth, this world is nothing but an ocean of miseries, grieving, torments and distresses. On the other hand, for those who are categorised as 'Gyani', i.e. those who are well versed with the reality and truth, the same world is in the form of happiness and joy. [That is, those who are ignorant tend to have a general negative outlook of life and the world, expecting too much from this world which itself is hollow and imaginary like the distant mirage in the desert. They hope to get some real thing, some permanent result, and some kind of sustainable reward in a world which is artificial in itself. It's like trying to reach the horizon which moves further away by every step the man takes towards it. On the contrary, a wise man knows these things before hand, so his expectations are in accordance with this wisdom and enlightened view of the reality. He knows what the real truth is and the apparent truth is, and therefore never tries to find water in the desert mirage or attempt to touch the horizon. He realises that it is simply a waste of time, energy and effort in pursuing mirages and things that are simply illusions created out of ignorance of the truth and reality. He enjoys the world like a spectator enjoys a magic show—he laughs and participates in a general way but knows that everything is an illusion. So he remains unperturbed, unaffected and unruffled by anything that happens around him.]

Similarly, for those who are blind, this world is a dark, colourless and blind alley to be in, but for those who have eyes this world is full of radiant light, vibrant colours, myriad forms and generally a brilliant and charming place to live in. [In other words, for ignorant people who lack the eye of wisdom this world is a fearsome place to live in, a place full of agonies and miseries. But for enlightened people this same world is a colourful display of Brahm's astoundingly varied contours and magical powers of vivid display. They marvel at their Lord's astounding maverick skills and instead of fretting and fuming at the deceitful nature of the things around him they

enjoy the spectacle with keen interest, remaining all the time aware that it is just that—a spectacle to be enjoyed but not to be taken for a ride by. Such a man might appear to be unconventional in his behaviour, preaching renunciation, detachment and dispassion on the one hand, and enjoying the world and appearing to be engrossed in it with full vigour. But this is only his outer façade, because internally he is completely detached and non-involved, and is enjoying the world as a spectator enjoys an interactive magic show in which he is asked to participate by the magician. For ordinary people, he is either lying or is mad.] (22).

23. A wise and enlightened man who is of the firm conviction and faith that my (Vishnu's) form as Varaaha is a divine manifestation of the Supreme Being's eternal, infinite, non-dual form that is characterised by the eclectic and sublime virtues of Sata (absolute truth), Chit (absolute pure consciousness) and Anand (absolute bliss and ecstasy; absolute beatitude and felicity)—for such a person there is no such concept as 'Bandhan', i.e. fetters and shackle that tie a man to something, or 'Mukti', i.e. liberation and deliverance from such fetters and shackles¹. [That is, they are eternally free and need not make special efforts to obtain it. This happens because such persons are able to see behind the Lord's physical form as a 'Boar' and realise that it is the supreme Lord Vishnu in this form. This is the path of true devotion and submission for the supreme Lord which paves the way for their liberation and deliverance from being perpetually remaining entrapped in this cycle of birth and death. It would also mean that they have developed the insight and the ability to peer behind the external façade of things which are apparent but not the real thing, not the whole 'truth', as in this particular case when Lord Vishnu appears to be like a boar, but actually this external appearance is not the truth about the Lord because he is the supreme Lord of creation who has no specific form of any kind let alone as a boar; the Lord is obviously not an ordinary animal such as a boar! In fact, this form of boar is one of Vishnu's countless visible manifestations, as the entire creation is an image of the Viraat Purush, the sublime, macrocosmic, all-pervading and invisible form of the Lord. It is the Viraat Purush who has revealed himself in the form of the entire visible world and all its inhabitant creatures in his own image. Therefore, all the Gods of the Trinity, such as Vishnu the protector and sustainer of creation, Brahma the creator of this visible creation, and Shiva the concluder of this creation, are manifestations of this single universal Divinity known as the Viraat Purush. This Viraat Purush is himself the gross body of the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental Brahm who, in his desire to initiate this creation, had gradually assumed bodies that became grosser by degrees until Brahm was able to realise his wish of creating this visible world. So, Viraat Purush was the first step, followed by Vishnu and the other Gods, and finally the creature with a gross body.] (23).

[Note—¹There is another metaphysical interpretation of this verse. By saying that the physical form of the boar is not the latter's true identity, it clearly implies that a person who thinks that he has known the truth and reality by seeing only the external features and characters of world has not known the reality and the truth about it. On the other hand, a man who realises that the boar is not an ordinary animal but the Lord of creation revealed in that form, he has actually understood the truth that the Upanishads try hard to preach and emphasise. In other words, a person who realises that the pure consciousness that resides in the body of a living being, whether it is a boar or a human being, is the same divine entity that is known as the cosmic Consciousness which is universal and uniform in the entire creation, is the one who has really understood the meaning and essence of the teachings of the Upanishads, for they teach about the non-duality and universality of the Atma, also called the

universal soul. This is because this Atma is the ultimate spiritual 'truth', and truth is always one and not two if it is to remain 'true'. Such a 'truth' is called the 'Absolute Truth', and in the realm of metaphysics it is called Brahm at the macro level of creation, and Atma at the micro level. Since the gross world shows signs of conscious life because of an esoteric factor hidden deep inside it without which there would be no such thing as 'life', this 'consciousness' is synonymous with life. And since life is very much in evidence and verifiable, this consciousness is also synonymous with 'truth'.

But it is very important not to confuse issues here. This consciousness needs a gross physical body to reveal itself because it is ethereal, subtle and invisible by nature. At the same time, the gross body is merely a reflection of this consciousness residing inside it; the body is an image of the 'truth' like one sees an image in a mirror. This image is reflective of some grand and irrefutable truth, but it is not this truth itself. So, a wise man is one who ascertains the 'truth' through the medium of the external appearance of this truth. In other words, he has developed sufficient degree of wisdom and erudition that enables him to see that the physical body of the 'boar' hides the supreme soul of creation known as Brahm. This Brahm has manifested himself first as the Viraat Purush, and then as Vishnu who assumed a grosser form of the Boar so that he can physically do certain things that is not possible to do in an ethereal form.

But this knowledge must not be extended to ridiculous proportions—one should not go and embrace a boar saying that this ferocious animal is his Lord! All things made of iron are 'iron' in the true sense, but that does not mean that one calls a kitchen knife made of iron as a sword or saw because they are also made of iron. That would be height of nonsense and stupidity.]

24. It is a wise thing to regard one's true form and identity as ethereal and sublime, being an embodiment of nothing but pure consciousness. This is the unequivocal tenet, an irrefutable axiomatic maxim to be followed by all those who have a gross and physical body. [That is, one should always remember that the body is not one's true self, but it is the Atma that is the truth and the self.]

The position of the Atma vis-à-vis the body is like the sky (space) that is enclosed by the body of a mud pitcher. The Atma is the same in all the creatures irrespective of the body it assumes¹. So a wise man is he who does not impose upon this universal and uniform Atma the limiting and gross features so typical of the body. [That is, the Atma has no relevance to the body except the fact that it lives in the latter during the time it passes through this life. Once the time to leave this world comes, which ignorant people prefer to call 'death', the Atma—the real and truthful 'self' of the person—just flies off the body like a bird leaving its perch on a tree and flying off into the vast fathomless space of the sky.] (24).

[Note--¹The sky enclosed by the outer body of the clay pitcher is called 'Ghatakash'—the Akash or sky or space within the Ghat or pitcher. But when this pitcher is broken, this sky merges seamlessly with the 'Mahaakash' or the vast and infinite sky or space present outside the pitcher. In actual fact, there is no distinction between the two types of skies, i.e. the space within the pitcher and the one outside of it. The names are artificially given hypothetically to this undivided space for the purpose of study, understanding and explaining the two planes in which the sky exists. For example, there might be a breeze blowing in the sky outside the body of the pitcher but it does not affect the air inside the pitcher as is proved by the fact that a lighted candle continuously flickers in the open air or even be blown out by the gust of wind, but its flame remains steady and erect when the candle is placed inside the pitcher.

Again, even as the air inside the pitcher assumes the shape of the pitcher though essentially the air element has no shape, and the fact that the same air is given two names based on the fact whether we are talking about the space inside the pitcher (the Ghatakash) or the one outside it (Mahakash), the same universal and indivisible Atma is known by numerous names according to the physical gross body in which it lives. That is, the same Atma is known as a man or a woman, a boy or a girl, or even an old man and a young man. It is the same Atma that lives in the body of a human being that also lives in the body of all other members of the zoological kingdom.

A wise man knows for certain the universality, the uniformity, the sameness and oneness of the two types of airs in relation with the clay pitcher. So he also sees the same pure consciousness known as the Atma as being universally and uniformly present in all the creatures irrespective of the physical form of the gross body in which it lives. For instance, even amongst the same human beings we have uncountable classes, sub-classes, castes, sub-castes, races, tribes, ethnic groups, nationalities, colours of skin, religious dispensations, some distinctions based on natural geographical demarcations and others based on man-made demarcations such as districts, areas, states, countries and continents etc. But as is evident here, all are 'human beings', and one man is not a 'man' because he is rich and possesses more worldly wherewithals, while his brother a 'non-man' because he is poor and lack resources. All these external features are like the body of the pitcher; the air inside all the pitchers is the same—whatever the shape, size and colour of the pitcher, this air would always be called a Ghatakash, and not a yellow or red or small or big or rounded or square Ghatakash. Likewise, the pure consciousness is the same in all the living beings no matter what external features the body exhibits.]

25. A wise and truly enlightened man is he who treats this world, both the movable and the immovable world which is physically separate and distinctly different from his own body, as an image of his own 'self' because the outer living world has the same Atma in it that resides in the bosom of the wise man himself. In other words, the physical gross form that the world has is like the man's own gross body, and its essential principal called the Atma is the same as the Atma that lives in the body of the man viewing this world. [This happens because the world, including the man who views this world, is a manifestation of the universal Brahm, and since Brahm is one and not two, it follows that all the forms that it takes are but different forms of the same divine entity. These forms may vary externally, but internally they harbour the same Atma. It is like the case of the gold ornaments—they may vary in size, shape, design and weight, but inherently they are all the same because they all have the same element of gold in them. Even amongst the human beings, there are huge variations in physical features, colour of skin, mentality, temperament, behaviour etc. but all are classified as humans.]

This holistic view makes a wise, erudite and enlightened man think of this world in the terms of 'it is me'¹. [That is, he understands that the world that he sees outside along with all its creature is but a revelation of the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic gross body of the Supreme Being known as Brahm. At the same time he also is aware of the fact that he himself is a manifestation of Brahm. Therefore he concludes that the world is nothing but another form of his true self—i.e. the supreme 'consciousness' that has given the man his independent identity is the one that has also given this world its independent identity. Even as the gross body of the man is not his truthful identity but only a carrier of his true 'self' which is however known as the Atma, the pure consciousness, the external world too is the carrier of the cosmic Atma hidden inside it as its truthful identity and essence. Shorn of this universal Atma, both the body of the individual and the external gross form of the world would

lose their importance, worth and relevance. A wise, enlightened and self-realised man must develop a very broad and holistic perspective of existence; one must not treat other creatures with contempt and disdain, because the same pure consciousness resides uniformly and universally in all the living beings. In other words, all have the same gene and the same blood flowing through them like siblings do. All living beings have the same Father who is none other than Brahm known by as many names as there are tongues! Refer verse no. 27 of this Canto 2 also.] (25).

[Note--¹Obviously, if we develop this grand view of creation then all the causes of strife and discord in it would vanish in a jiffy. One would immensely appreciate the grand and magnificent approach of the ancient sages and seers who envisaged this world as one unified home, and had endeavored to spread the message of universal peace and universal brotherhood. That they have been relegated to the pages of unread texts is a matter of great misfortune for the entire humankind.

The term 'movable world' pertains to all the living beings that show movement, such as animals, and the term 'immovable world' would mean all creatures that do not move but are nevertheless as living as their mobile counterparts, such as lower forms of members of the animal kingdom and all the member of the plant kingdom. Even amongst the humans, a sleeping man shows no physical movement, i.e. he is 'immovable', but this does not mean that he is not alive.]

26. A truly realised person regards himself as the universal consumer and enjoyer of everything worth consuming and enjoying because he is a personification of the ubiquitous, all-pervading, all-encompassing and omnipresent Brahm who is the cosmic consumer and enjoyer of all things that he had created all by himself. [Since there is no one other than Brahm in this world, it naturally follows that he is the 'only' consumer and enjoyer of everything. But there is a queer twist to this—and it is that whatever that is consumed or enjoyed is also a manifestation of Brahm because of the universal doctrine that 'everything in existence is Brahm'. So we come to a very unique and paradoxical proposition—that Brahm is both the consumer and enjoyer as well the entity that is consumed and enjoyed! That is why Brahm is an incomprehensible entity beyond the grasp of the mind.]

This eclectic view and outlook of creation that there is indeed some divine and inexplicable entity which has this apparently paradoxical but unique and mystical quality about itself (as narrated above) which cannot be explained or understood but is nevertheless true and a matter of reality is an acknowledgement of the presence of this indefinable Divinity known as Brahm. The conviction that 'whatever there is, is nothing but Brahm' is the exalted state of being in a Brahm-realised state of existence (26).

27. A wise and enlightened man who has become firmly convinced of and has an unwavering faith in the undisputed fact that this world is a manifestation or revelation of the ubiquitous, all-pervading, all-encompassing and omnipresent Brahm, and nothing else—for such a man, this world has no distinct and separate existence from either Brahm or his own 'self' though it apparently appears to be so. [Refer verse no. 25 of this Canto 2. The physical world appears to exhibit so many characteristics that do not fit at all with the highly exalted, most glorious divine virtues and eclectic nature of the magnificent Brahm. So how do we reconcile this obvious disparity? The answer is that Brahm has the complete array of qualities in him—right from the best called the Sata Guna through the medium Raja Guna to the lowest and meanest Tama Guna. So, in essence, Brahm encompasses everything in existence, not only the good and the best but even all that lies in between the two extremes. Even the worst is

within the definition of existence as much as is the best and therefore within the ambit of being called a revelation of Brahm. It is like the case of the water element having the same pure molecule consisting of two atoms of Hydrogen and one atom of Oxygen whether it takes up the form of water found in the ocean, the river, the well, the cloud or the dirty drain. It is the external features that surround the basic water element that makes it appear to be salty, sweet, polluted, murky or filthy. Further, since the Atma is indistinguishable from Brahm, since both are the same entity albeit existent on different planes—the Atma is at the micro level of existence while Brahm is at the macro level—it follows that if one sees everything as Brahm personified then he must also be seeing everything as Atma personified!]

Hence, a wisened and enlightened man sees the same universality, uniformity and oneness in this otherwise astoundingly diverse, varied and multifaceted world. [This is the grand philosophy of non-duality or Advaitya Vedanta that is being espoused, expounded and preached here.] (27).

28. By regarding my form (i.e. Lord Vishnu's who is preaching this Upanishad in his incarnation of Varaaha or the legendary Boar) as a manifestation of the supreme transcendental Brahm, a devotee remains free from all fetters that bind him to deeds and their consequences. [This is because this supposes that as an ardent devotee he would surrender all his deeds and their results to the Lord who is the Divine Being. Therefore the question his suffering from the consequences of deeds does not arise at all.] (28).

29. Only a wise and enlightened person who regards Brahm as having no gross body and its accompanying organs etc. and treats this ubiquitous and universal Divinity known as Brahm as being an ethereal and sublime entity that is merely a neutral witness for and of all that exists and happens in this world, only such a man can understand that this unique and most inexplicable Brahm is realizable by spiritual practices, as well as by inculcating wisdom, erudition and enlightenment. This Brahm has the eclectic virtues of being an embodiment of spiritual solace, comfort, happiness and joys. This Brahm is self-illuminated and in the form of the self-illuminated Atma (the pure consciousness) (29).

30. A person who has developed the eclectic and highly evolved universal view of creation after thorough research and having had a first hand experience of the truth of the doctrine that states that everything and everyone in this world is an image of the Atma which is also one's own true self—such a person is regarded as being a man of steady mind and intellect as he remains unfazed, unruffled and unmoved by the apparent dichotomy and disparities that are visible in the external forms of the world. [This is because he knows that these differences are only external appearances which have no truth and pith in them, and that they do not reflect the reality hidden under this external façade.]

He is regarded as a man who is most wise and learned about the truth and reality; he has witnessed the veracity of the 'truth' first hand, and he has also experienced the attendant sense of universality and uniformity first hand.

Oh Ribhu! Become wise and enlightened like this man (as described in the foregoing verses) and think in this term—'that Tattva (i.e. the essence, principle and elementary truth) is indeed me (i.e. the 'true self')'. Think that 'the essence that has been called Brahm and Atma, the fundamental principle in creation and the basic 'truth and reality' that is known as Brahm at the cosmic level and as the pure

conscious Atma at the micro level is none other than me'. [Here the word 'me' means the true 'self' of Ribhu and not his gross body. It can also mean the supreme Lord Vishnu who is preaching the sage these words of profound spiritual wisdom.] (30).

31. Hence, the notion that the world is a form of illusion and deceitful is not sustainable (because if we say that the world is a manifestation of the truthful Brahm and Atma, then it cannot be illusionary and deceitful, but ought to be real and truthful). On the contrary, the holistic and philosophically evolved view is that this world is a manifestation of the Atma (the pure consciousness)—this is a sustainable and philosophically high standard of thinking about the creation.

A person who has this eclectic and wholesome view of this world is deemed to have a holistic and all-inclusive view of it. He is neither under any bondage (of ignorance and delusions) and therefore need not find any freedom from it (31).

[Note—This verse has to be understood properly. When it is said that the 'world is an illusion' what is meant is that the external appearances are more often misleading and not the true thing. The external features by which one recognises a thing do not tell the entire reality of the actual truth about that thing; external perceptions are very deceptive and misleading. It has been repeatedly stressed in this Canto that the 'reality and truth' of this creation is Brahm and the Atma, both of which are ethereal and invisible entities. So to judge them and their nature by external visible features is hopefully inadequate and using the wrong methodology. So while the world is 'true' in as much as it is visible, verifiable and a manifestation of Brahm and the Atma, it is 'false' when one falls for its exteriors only. The obvious reason is that the outer features of the world have a multifarious and multifaceted personality wherein no two units are alike, the world is subject to changes and is perishable, whereas Brahm and the Atma are just the opposite—they are non-changeable, uniform, immutable and steady. Besides this, the world is visible, definable, has definitive attributes and a gross form, while Brahm and the Atma are invisible, indefinable, attributeless and sublime entities. Therefore, the world is not Brahm or Atma in the real sense, and hence is not the truth.

Now, if Brahm and the Atma are the 'truth', then they cannot have two forms since 'truth' can be one and never be two. Therefore, it follows that Brahm and Atma are the same truthful entity with two names depending upon the plane at which the universal Truth is perceived.

This is the reason why the same world acquires two distinct connotations for two types of people—viz. the Agyanis or those who are ignorant of the truth, and the Gyanis who are well-versed with the truth. Both of them call this world as 'true', but this word assumes separate meanings for them. Those who are Agyanis (of verse no. 22) call this world as true because they rely on its physical features that are visible and verifiable. Those who are Gyanis (of verse no. 22 again) call it as true because they see Brahm and Atma revealed in its form. While the Agyanis rely on the external features, the Gyanis rely on the hidden truth behind this external façade.

Similarly, the Agyani would call the world false and illusive because it is not able to fulfill his dreams of eternal happiness and physical pleasures, while the Gyani would call it false because it is the creation of the mind and also because it has none of the characteristic virtues associated with anything which is true—such as imperishability, eternity, infinity, stability, immutability, indivisibility, non-changeability etc.

Thus we observe that the same statement can have two completely opposite meanings which can create schism and confusion in the mind of an ordinary man.]

32. A wise, enlightened and self-realised person who discovers even for a fraction of a second, after due research and investigation, the truth that 'I' (Varaaha, the

incarnation of Vishnu, the Supreme Being) have revealed myself also in the form of his own true 'self' is so overwhelmed with euphoria that he begins to dance in ecstasy.

Such a person is sure to obtain freedom from all fetters that tie him down to the body and the world (32).

33. Such a person exclaims in extreme ecstasy of self-realisation—'I repeatedly bow to my true divine 'self' which is the eternally free pure consciousness that pervades throughout the creation, and lives uniformly and universally in all the creatures as their Atma' (33).

[Note—This verse can be read as follows:—Lord Varaaha said, 'One should repeatedly bow to my divine form which is eternal cosmic Consciousness which resides as the pure conscious Atma of all the living beings, including the spiritual aspirant himself, and it is the same cosmic Consciousness that pervades uniformly throughout the universe'.]

34. [Lord Varaaha said—] 'That (supreme transcendental ethereal Spirit known as Consciousness mentioned in verse no. 33) is you and it is me as well; it is in the form of the other Gods as much as it is the form of my own sublime and divine form. And therefore, what I am and what my other divine form as other Gods are, is also you. Indeed, there is no difference between you and me! You are eternal and I too am eternal, therefore there is no difference between two entities that are both eternal. [Since the same Consciousness prevails uniformly in all the units of creation, whether it is the immortal God or the mortal individual creature, it follows that the spiritual aspirant exults at the discovery of this eclectic universal truth declared by the Lord himself. These verses describe the non-dual aspect Brahm lauded and espoused by the Upanishads. This verse, as many others, espouses the philosophy of Advaitya Vedanta which expounds upon the eclectic spiritual philosophy of non-duality in creation, and the uniformity and universality of the pure consciousness known as the Atma.] (34).

35. Salutations to me (Varaaha) who am the Supreme Being, and salutations to you (Ribhu in the form of his Atma, his true 'self') that is personification of Shiva, the eternal and truthful Divine Being, the auspicious and beautiful One. [It is to be observed here that honour is being shown to both the preacher and the preached. This is meant to honour the Atma that is the same in both, and not their gross physical bodies.]

What do I do; where do I go; what do I accept or reject? [I need not do anything because nothing is left to be done. I go nowhere because there is no spot in creation where I am not present. I need not accept anything because I am already contented and fulfilled and have no desire or shortage of anything that needs to be fulfilled. I do not reject anything because all are equally dear to me and a part of my own self, and so it's impossible to reject one's own self. Therefore, I remain in a state of perpetual equanimity and uniformity, and I have a universal existence. I do not get carried away by anything. I am not like an ocean that gets filled by the rivers constantly pouring their million and million of gallons of water in it, nor does its water level ever drop during the severest of droughts. Since everything in existence is me and nothing but me, it follows that if I accept anything then I am accepting my own self, and if I do anything it would mean I do myself or go to my own self. All of these are incredulous propositions which are difficult to understand. Refer also to verse no. 26 of Canto 2 in this context.] (35).

36. Just like the whole world (earth) becomes one uniform body of water when it is submerged in the flood of doomsday at the end of the Kalpa (end of an era; end of one phase of creation), when the spiritual aspirant abandons the notion of having any kind of company or contact with this world—whether it is external (i.e. his interaction or contact with the outer world) or internal (i.e. his awareness of his own body as well as its happiness or sorrows, its comfort and pains)—it is only then he can expect to attain the uniformity and equanimity that comes with awareness of the ‘self’ as being the pure ethereal cosmic Consciousness and nothing else. Such a man is overwhelmed by the surging awareness of the universal Atma that removes all distinctions and barriers created by the concept of ‘this’ and ‘that’. He is able to attain me (the Supreme Being) as he has attained oneness with the Atma, the pure consciousness and the universal soul. There is no doubt in it (36).

[Note—The external features of the earth present an astounding variety of existence—there are huge mountains and hills on the one hand, and deep ravines, gorges and valleys on the other hand; there are deserts and marshy land; there are green verdant forests and barren stretches of icy glaciers; there are natural and artificial boundaries creating nations and states as well as natural ones delineated by rivers, mountains, valleys and the like; there is day in one part of the earth where people are engrossed in the cacophony of daily chores while there is night in the other part where there is no activity and people sleep. This state of affairs exist only till the time there is no deluge—because when this happens, everything gets submerged in one huge mass of water. Similarly, this world creates so many diverse emotions in a man—he is constantly being buffeted by numerous ideas and emotions, uncountable inputs from the external world, and all sorts of dilemmas and contradictory circumstances and evidences that a man faces in this world which leave him absolutely flummoxed and reeling in confusion and perplexity so much so that he is not able to decide what is the truth and what is not, what is to be done and what is to be avoided. He sees so many choices that instead of coming to a decision he gets all the more confused. The charms of the world are very enticing and hard to resist, and since they are like a desert mirage, the more a man runs behind them the farther away from him they recede.

Then there is the perpetual problem of his own body which makes its own share of demands—it needs comfort and pleasure, it has so many physical problems that constant vigil is to be maintained so as to keep it in good health and humour, for otherwise it would make life hell even for a renunciate monk.

To overcome all these upheavals the spiritual aspirant faces he is advised to remain absolutely calm and composed internally by detaching himself both from the external world of material sense objects as well as from the internal world revolving around his body. This is possible only when he begins to realise that his Atma which is his ‘true self’ is neither the gross body nor is subjected to any sufferings. This Atma does not die as it is an eternal and imperishable entity. At the same time he understands that the world has no relevance for him because it is the gross body that interacts with this world and creates so many relationships, and not the Atma. Therefore, all the restlessness and upheavals pertaining to the world are limited to the body and not his ‘self’. So why should he be worried and get perplexed?]

37. [This verse describes the chief characteristics of a truly renunciate person called a Vairagi. Refer also verse nos. 2, 4 of this Canto 2 in this context.]

A Vairagi (a renunciate and dispassionate person who has sacrificed his desires for worldly charms in order to attain spiritual emancipation and salvation) abandons all forms of contacts or companies with everything related to ‘grossness and untruth’ such as the world and the body just like a person running away from a snake

or throwing one if it is caught by mistake. [That is, he is terribly scared of this contact and treats it as dangerous as the snake. He might be entangled in it till he has not become aware of the Truth, but once this awareness comes he would not lose a single moment in discarding the world and the body.]

A Vairagi desirous of sacrificing the sensual attractions of worldly charms and the overwhelming urge for sense gratification, collectively called 'Kaam' (literally lust, yearnings, lasciviousness and passions; desire for sensual gratification and enjoyments of the material world and its juicy attractions) on the altar of nobler pursuits and higher goals of life should abandon contact with a beautiful woman just like the case when people shun a rotting corpse and go away from it at a distance because of the foul and loathsome stink emanating from it.

He abandons all the sense objects of this enchanting but entrapping and deluding material world like they were horrible poison though this world is very difficult to eliminate and shun. [That is, he would have to make conscious effort to renounce this material world. It is a difficult proposition and would require strong will and resolve.]

Such exalted persons are called 'Param Hans', literally one who is as pure and uncorrupted as the divine Swan¹, as they regard their own selves (i.e. their soul and true 'self') as an image of the supreme Lord known as Vasudeo (Vishnu the sustainer and protector of the creation, the Lord who had incarnated himself as Varaaha). With this eclectic and sublime concept of the 'self', they become spiritually enlightened and think in this term—'I am indeed Vasudeo'. [A wise and self-realised person understands that his true 'self' known as the Atma is none other than the supreme Atma of creation. It is indeed the microcosmic form of the cosmic Consciousness that pervades uniformly in all the units of creation, whether as the mortal individual living being or the immortal entities known as Gods. Refer verse nos. 34-35 of this Canto 2 above. Vasudeo is another name of Lord Vishnu, the personified Supreme Being. Hence a self-realised person develops the enlightened view that his Atma is as divine, ethereal and sublime as the cosmic Atma that lives in Lord Vishnu, i.e. there is no difference between the two. This is the great 'Advaitya' or non-dual philosophy propounded and espoused by the Upanishads.] (37).

[Note--¹The enlightened and realised person thinks of himself as a *Hans* or a Swan and feels exhilarated that he is not an ordinary man bogged down by worldly fetters, but an exalted soul that is like a Swan.

The bird Swan or Hans is considered the most pure, clean, wise, erudite and clever among the birds. It is said to eat pearls, which means it picks up and accepts only the best amid the variety of things available to it in the form of an assortment of various gems and jewels representing the dazzling charms of this world. It is also reputed to drink milk leaving aside the water content in it symbolising its ability to imbibe the essence and the best, and leave the rest aside. It is also the vehicle of Goddess Saraswati, the patron Goddess of knowledge, wisdom, intelligence, speech and learning, indicating that it bears these glorious virtues. Hence, the reference to a swan while describing a creature conscious of the vital wind or Pran passing through him means the basic, inherent and intrinsic tendency of that wisened and intelligent creature is to be the best, most pure and divine, wise, awakened and enlightened, adroit, clever and sagacious like the swan, and pick all the goodness and forsake all that is bad in this world. Saraswati rides on a swan, symbolising the creature's inborn enlightenment and excellence of his mental caliber. Symbolically, Saraswati resides in his Pran because it rides on the swan, i.e. in his heart, throat and mind—that is, his heart has purity of emotions, he speaks well of all, and his wise words are sought after by all as priceless gems of wisdom, and his mind is intelligent, discerning and

noble. A wise man is expected to pick the truth from amongst the basket of assorted charms present in this creation, and leave aside the non-truths.

The alphabet 'Ha' of the word 'Hans' is sounded by the vibration of the exhaled wind passing through the vocal cords present in the throat or the wind pipe which connects to the nose, while the alphabet 'Sa' is sounded by the root of the tongue which opens into the mouth when the breath is inhaled. Both the nose and the mouth open in the same cavity called the throat. Hence, the inter relationship between 'Ha' and 'Sa' is evident. The main objective of this Upanishad is to make the Yogi (a person who follows its tenets of meditation) aware that he is like the divine swan, but he was unaware of his own divinity and sublimity, his exalted and noble stature, till that was pointed out to him. So he must become one like a 'swan', remind himself constantly that he is like a swan, and he must not do anything or act in anyway which is not befitting his exalted and superior status which is equivalent to a wise swan.

During the twenty-four hour period covering a single day and night, a person inhales and exhales, or breathes, roughly twenty-one thousand times, because each cycle of inhalation and exhalation is equivalent to saying one Mantra 'Hans' consisting of the two syllables 'Ha and Sa' (refer Dhyānbindu Upanishad, verse no. 63).

The Dhyān Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 24 and 62-63, and the Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse nos. 131-132, Canto 2, verse nos. 9-11, and Canto 6, verse no. 20, 52-54 of the Krishna Yajur Veda; the Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 82-83 of Sam Veda; the Param Hans and Hanso-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition are exclusively dedicated to explain the concept of the pure conscious Atma by way of using the metaphor of a Hans.]

38. Such a person sees everything in this world as a manifestation of the eternal Truth. [That is, he sees the same universal and truthful Brahm in each unit of creation.]

Therefore, he accepts everything as true¹. This leads him to be convinced of the eclectic truth of the scriptural maxims and axioms that say 'I am true and truth personified', 'I am the supreme transcendental Brahm personified', and 'therefore there is nothing beyond me'. [Once he is convinced of the first eclectic statement, the other are natural corollaries. If he is 'true' then naturally he is 'truth personified' because there can be only one and not two Truths. Since Brahm is the only eternal Truth in creation, it follows that such a person must be 'Brahm personified'. And finally, since Brahm is all-pervading, all-encompassing and all-incorporating, since everything in creation had emerged from Brahm, and since Brahm forms the outer boundary of creation, it follows that nothing exists beyond Brahm, and therefore, 'beyond me', as I am Brahm personified!'] (38).

[Note--¹This observation made by a wise and enlightened man should not be confused with an identical statement made by an ignorant man who has no idea of what the 'real truth' is as he is under a thick veil of delusions. Such a man uses this particular statement made by a wise man that 'what is seen by me around myself in this world is true' as an escape route and a proof that he is not doing anything wrong by being indulgent and engrossed in pursuing this world. As is clear here, the wise man's assertion is quite the opposite of the ignorant man's—for while the wise man has developed the divine insight that enables him to penetrate and peer behind the external façade to see the subtle and sublime truth hidden imperceptibly inside, an ability that makes him see the truthful reality of this world and understand the truth of the fact that same cosmic Consciousness that resides in his own bosom as the Atma is also the Atma of the rest of the external world, and that this world is a manifestation of the Supreme Being because nothing exists that is not this Supreme Being, the ignorant man only takes the statement at its face value and finds an excuse in it to become indulgent and engrossed. This man sees only the external façade and treats it

as the much flaunted and lauded 'truth' without knowing that he is only cheating himself, that he is calling a shining piece of polished brass as gold by merely relying upon the external glaze and polish of the former that resembles that of the latter. He is a deluded man.]

39. Real 'Upvaas', literally meaning to 'fast', is the cohabitation of the individual Atma with the Parmatma¹. In this state of existence, the Atma of the individual man rises higher than its normal course in routine life and lives in an exalted state of self-realisation which brings it closer to its naturally divine, eclectic, sublime, holy and exalted form. This is the true meaning and intent of fasting, and not merely abstaining from food. [If one is not enlightened enough about the real intention and metaphysical meaning of fasting then it would only create more craving for food in him which would result in binge eating on the one hand and constant diversion of the mind to eatables even during the period of fasting. The man would be watching time so that he can grab food with the eagerness of fish taking to water. This is not the intention of fasting, and it is more harmful than being of any good. It is better to eat moderately than to fast and have the mind yearning for food.] (39).

[Note--¹The word for fasting is 'Upvaas' which has the word 'Vaas' as its component. Vaas means to dwell, to live, to reside. The first component 'Up' means 'additional, on, upper, near, close, with, by, vicinity, proximity'. Hence the composite word 'Upvaas' refers to the 'upper or higher' state of existence when the individual creature resides in close 'proximity or vicinity' of the supreme Brahm that is obtainable only upon self-realisation and self-awareness. This supreme Brahm resides not externally but inside one's own self, one's own being, one's own bosom as the Atma which has attained a higher level of wisdom and enlightenment.]

40. Those who are stupid and ignorant think that by merely making the body suffer and subjecting it to harsh rigours of a strict life they would be able to train and tame the Atma and help it to find liberation and deliverance¹. Does the snake living inside a hole in a mud-mound die if one beats the outer surface of this mound?² (40).

[Note—¹That is, some people think that the worldly tendencies of the 'self' can be controlled by putting restrictions on the body. They think that by depriving the body of its natural needs such as the need for food and drink, for sleep and work, for shelter and clothing and for such other basic comforts and needs that cannot be categorised as luxury and extravagant by any stretch of imagination they are doing some kind of great spiritual practice such as observance of austerity, doing penances, suffering for some noble cause and other such spiritually uplifting exercises—collectively called doing Tapa, then they are living in a fool's paradise. Forceful suppression of basic bodily needs and natural desires is tantamount to oppression if these desires and needs are not overcome naturally on their own by inculcating a profound degree of renunciation and detachment from getting involved in them. Such suppression is artificial Tapa and is equivalent to cheating one's own self, an exercise which leads one to no where. Rather, it would only stoke the pressure of desires and yearnings to such an extent that one day they would explode like a pressure cooker whose vent has been chocked. In their ignorance and stupidity they think that the means of spiritual liberation and deliverance is to torture the body such as by prolonged fasting and doing severe Tapa, i.e. by doing severe penance, keeping punishing vows, observing strict rules of austerity and other codes of religious laws that require prolonged sufferance of the physical body in general and causing misery for the body as a means of atonement for past sins in the hope that by inflicting pain and sufferance on the body the soul would be benefited. Nothing is further from the truth—for instead of finding peace and happiness such persons are only causing an insult to the Viraat Purush, the Supreme Being whose image this body is on the one hand, and who

resides at the same time as the immaculate and pure conscious Atma in this body. So, instead of any spiritual gain and coming closer to the Lord they actually move away from him and cause undue harassment to the 'self', the Atma, by disturbing the latter's peace and calmness. When the gross components of the body such as the organs of perception and action are agitated and uncomfortable, the subtle components such as the mind and intellect would also be agitated and in discomfort. Since the Atma lives in this body, it cannot be totally immune to all this trouble inflicted upon the body in which it lives just like the case when the house is on fire, its resident cannot sleep in peace. So the concept of making the body suffer as a means of spiritual practice is not the proper way of spiritual upliftment and liberation. On the contrary, it is counter-productive as it robs the resident Atma of its physical comfort and mental peace. This causes unwarranted diversion that distracts the Atma from its ultimate goal of finding eternal peace, happiness and bliss. It interferes in the Atma's natural state of being in a state of meditation, because physical discomfort is a great irritant during the earlier stages of spiritual practices.

²This does not happen; the snake would go deeper into the hole and retract its body to form a spiral, so no matter how much the external mound is thrashed the snake will not be harmed and would survive the beating. In fact, the thick layer of mud would act as a protective shield around it. Similarly, by torturing the body the inherent desires, aspirations, yearnings, traits, nature and temperaments of the man are not overcome; they are not at all affected. The dark veil of ignorance that has covered his mind-intellect and prevents the inherent light of wisdom and enlightenment emanating from his self-illuminated Atma from shining through is not eliminated by torturing the body. Indeed it is true that certain benefits are obtained by following this path of making the body suffer, such as doing Hath Yoga, but then when these benefits begin to bear fruits, the practitioner would be so much dazzled by his newly acquired mystical powers that instead of diverting them for his spiritual upliftment and rising to the next higher level in the path of final liberation and deliverance of his 'self' he would be swept off his feet by the fame and powers that come with any achievement, be it spiritual or worldly, and begins to enjoy the limelight of honour and praise in which he finds himself in; he begins to hallucinate and get diverted from his true path and goal in life. He would boast of his achievements and forget that he is missing the target of his painstaking efforts altogether.]

41. Those who are even certain of the axiomatic truth of the doctrine which says that 'Brahm is', i.e. that there is some unknown divine and unexplained entity which is supreme and transcendental in creation, have only a superficial knowledge of Brahm. On the contrary, those who make the honest statement 'I am Brahm' with truthful conviction and only after having actually experienced and verified the veracity of this axiomatic truth are indeed the ones who have the real and truthful knowledge of Brahm¹ (41).

[Note--¹It is crucial to understand this verse correctly and clearly. Those who have not experienced and witnessed first hand the presence of the supreme Brahm as the pure conscious Atma residing inside their own bosom have only a theoretical knowledge of Brahm. Anything that is learnt in theory but not practically verified is bound to create doubt and confusion as to its authenticity and reliability. So, even if one has learnt about the existence of some divine entity known as Brahm by study of the scriptures but has not been able to actually experience and witness Brahm's presence in practice has only a superficial and not-too certain knowledge of Brahm. Therefore, only those who have realised the truth of the axiomatic maxim by experiencing and witnessing this Brahm in their own 'self' as the Atma which is the cosmic Consciousness revealed in the gross body are the ones who can assertively and honestly claim 'I am Brahm'. Such people are firm in their conviction and faith

as compared to those who rely only on hearsay and literal texts. For the latter category of people, when they say 'I am Brahm', they are merely repeating the sayings of the scriptures like a parrot.

In other words, only those who have realised that their own 'self', the pure conscious Atma, is nothing but Brahm personified are the ones who have correct knowledge of Brahm. The rest only have a theoretical knowledge of Brahm that is not applied by them in practice. They can be thrown into a cesspool of doubts if by some remote chance some other theory comes their way which might be more convincing on the face of it. Such people are kept churning in the ocean represented by the voluminous scriptures in their search of the real 'truth'. On the contrary, when one has witnessed something first hand or experienced it directly then no matter how much others tell him about something else he would not believe it. So a man who has experienced the bliss of self-realisation first hand is more convinced of the fact that Brahm is bliss personified as compared to one who has just read about this axiomatic truth in some scriptural text.]

42. In the instant when the ascetic realises that his truthful Atma, i.e. his 'self' and pure consciousness, is the 'only thing that matters (the state of Kaivalya)', i.e. when he realises that there is nothing spiritually true and real and worthy of attention except the Atma, it is in that instant that he is deemed to have obtained 'Jivan Mukti', i.e. he has become free from all the fetters that had been shackling him to ignorance and delusions even while he lives like an ordinary person having a gross body that lives in, interacts with and is surrounded by the material world of sense objects (42).

43. When this concept that 'I am Brahm personified' is firmly established, when it is firmly ingrained in the conscience of the ascetic, when he is fully convinced of its veracity and authenticity, and when the knowledge of this axiomatic truth is firmly and irrefutably established in his mind beyond any iota of doubt, it is only then that this knowledge can become an instrument for obtaining Moksha (emancipation and salvation). [Otherwise the ascetic would doubt whether or not he is following the correct path.]

On the contrary, those people whose mind and intellect are mired by such deluding notions as 'this is mine' and 'that is not mine' are indeed ignorant of the reality and truth. [They are totally ignorant of the eclectic concept of non-duality and the metaphysical philosophy of oneness and uniformity of creation. Since the same Brahm has revealed himself as 'this' and 'that' as well as 'me' and 'you', then the question of an entity being 'that' and 'this' does not arise in the first place, and therefore the concept of 'this belongs to me' and 'that does not belong to me' has no locus standi.] (43).

44. 'This is mine' or 'this belongs to me'—this notion is the root cause of all forms of longing, attachments, attractions and infatuations with the material things of this world as well as all a progenitor of all forms of relationships that an aspirant develops with others in this world. This erroneous view causes all types of fetters that tie him down to this world; it is entrapping and shackling. On the contrary, 'nothing belongs to me'—this concept is a highly evolved way of thinking and it leads to indifference, detachment and renunciation. This eclectic and wise view leads to automatic breaking away of all fetters that shackle the spiritual aspirant to this world; it paves the way for his ultimate emancipation and salvation.

Therefore, the person who has achieved the exalted state of detachment and equanimity as mentioned herein above should not worry at all either about the

external objects of the material world or about the inner traits and temperaments that are inherently present inside him. [That is, he should not be disturbed at all by the enjoyments or pains coming his way from this external world as well as by his own nature and traits that constantly keep nagging at him. He should completely neglect them and not be perturbed by them; he should pay no attention to them. He should live in a state of exemplary equanimity and total indifference, accepting what comes naturally to him and dealing with things as and when they come his way, without getting upset if something expected is not received or something happens against expectations.]

Oh Ribhu! Discard all sorts of worries because it is an unnecessary and futile exercise; forget about having any kind of reservations, doubts, uncertainties and confusions about ‘this’ and ‘that’. Be cheerful, blissful, happy and healthy; be at peace with your exalted self (44).

45. This external world is there only because one makes a ‘Sankalp’ (literally meaning resolutions, volitions, determinations, promises, vows etc.) about it. It has its existence because the man is convinced that it is there; it is a determination of the mind which makes the man resolutely believe about the world’s existence. He has aspirations and yearnings, and then relentlessly pursues the world to fulfill them. He makes vows and promises, and then strives to keep them. He determines that there are certain things in this world that would give him happiness and comfort, and so endeavours to get them. He has expectations from this world, and when they are not fulfilled he is pained and aggrieved, he gets annoyed and excited and angry.

Hence, the world—complete with all its attractions, its captivating charms, its pains and agonies, its happiness and joys etc.—is witnessed and experienced only because one is determined to witness and experience its existence¹.

Hence, you should discard all ‘Sankalps’ which cause so much of consternation and perplexity for you, and instead find peace and stability by being firmly establishing my non-dual and truthful form in your heart² (45).

[Note—¹The term pain, sorrow, agony, happiness, joy, pleasure, comfort, contentedness, wants, desires, needs etc.—all of them are relative terms and do not have a standard bench-mark to decide what they constitute of and what their intensity is. For example, one feels the pain and grieves only because one is certain that a particular instance is the cause of pain and agony for him. The same situation might just be of no consequence to the other person. For instance, if there is a death in the family, one member is weeping uncontrollably and uncomfortably, while the other is not weeping at all, he is not affected at all. One is attracted to anything only because he thinks that it is worth having or enjoying. For instance, a sick man would loathe food which would make others salivate. A child yearns for toys which are useless for grown ups. Similarly, a man’s threshold level of tolerance would decide the severity of pain he feels, and whether he feels the pain at all or not. A given situation may upset a man, while another would take it in his stride or just overlook it and go on with his life as if nothing has happened. A particular material object might be indispensable for a man, while the other has no need at all for it. So we observe that everything related to this world has only a relative value and importance.

²That is, stop getting hallucinated and being tossed and flung around by so many Sankalps that you and your mind make about this artificial and deluding world. Instead, be steady on one ‘truth’ by abandoning all forms of ‘imaginary truths’. Avoid making futile determinations, resolutions and volitions that you have been making in relation to the world. You should rather focus your attention on my truthful form residing in your heart as the Atma, and you should be firm and unwavering in this spiritual conviction of yours. In other words, do not waste your precious time in

making Sankalps for finding bliss, peace, happiness and tranquility in the outside world, but turn inwards and find them inside your own self. Remember, your 'self' is an eternal fount of these glorious virtues, and since this fount is present within you, why do you search for it outside? Therefore, you should not even make a Sankalp to find Mukti and Moksha by involving yourself in the external world in the way of doing numerous religious exercises, reading of scriptures, doing deeds, keeping vows and fasts, going on pilgrims etc., or attempt to please the Supreme Being by such efforts. Remember that this Supreme Being is a resident of your own self as the pure conscious Atma that resides in the body itself, and hence you need not search for the Lord outside. Say, how can an entity that is present in your own bosom be found outside of your self? This verse has a profound practical import. It stresses that one should first attempt to improve himself before even hoping to find liberation and deliverance from the fetters created by negative traits and characteristics. The aspirant is expected to clean himself spiritually first before making a determined bid for emancipation and salvation, because otherwise he would be facing an uphill tread that would sag his spirits and act as a cumbersome drag on his soul. He should first improve himself and set his own house in order before attempting to improve the lot of the world.

Does this mean that he should not do good deeds or read the scriptures? No, this is not the intent here. The world is a formidably vast proposition of colossal proportions—there is no end of doing deeds and there is no limit of types of deeds one can do that come under the definition of being good, auspicious and righteous, there are so many scriptures and uncountable number of their interpretations. He would be spending a whole lifetime but not even scrap its surface so to say. The scriptures tell him that this world is a manifestation of the Supreme Being, so he goes on searching for the Lord in this world which is akin to searching for a needle in a vast ocean. As compared to this scene is the Atma or the pure conscious self of the aspirant. This Atma is the Supreme Being known as Brahm personified, and it can be very easily reached and experienced by a bit of faith, practice and resilience. So if the easy and attainable path of Mukti and Moksha is available close at hand, why should one go out to search for it in the vast and endless realm of the external world?]

46. Oh the wise one! Spend your time thinking of me (Vishnu, the Supreme Being), pondering on my words and understanding their deep import, and always remember this conversation which we are having now. Have firm faith in me and be steady in your convictions. Spend your time fruitfully in this life in this manner (46).

47. Be of the firm conviction that what is the absolute truth and existential reality here is the principle called 'consciousness'; it is nothing but consciousness, and it is wise and enlightened too.

That elementary principle called consciousness is 'me' (i.e. not my physical body but my Atma, my true self). Not only this, the entire world that I behold is also an embodiment of consciousness¹ (47).

[Note—¹When this direction of the Lord is read with verse no. 46 above, the meaning and implication becomes clear. The devotee is being advised to honour the divine principle of creation manifested as the Absolute Principal known as the 'cosmic Consciousness' when he is advised to worship Lord Vishnu. It is Lord Vishnu in his more subtle form known as the Viraat Purush who has revealed himself in the form of the vast world—both that is physically visible as well as that which is not physically seen but is nevertheless there in a subtle form. The Viraat Purush is actually the gross macrocosmic invisible body of Brahm from which the rest of the creation emerged. In

other words, the world is a metamorphosed form of the Viraat Purush, and therefore it is Brahm revealed in a physical form.

At the macrocosmic level of creation, it is the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm that has first revealed itself as the Viraat Purush, and then assumed a slightly grosser form as Vishnu. The vast world at large is its grossest form. At the microcosmic level of creation, the same sequence is repeated in the form of the individual creature—the Atma is the consciousness known as Brahm, the gross body is the Viraat Purush or Vishnu in this form, and therefore the individual creature is a microcosm of the vast creation.

This happens as a symbolism indicative of the gradual and most imperceptible manner in which an entity that is most sublime and subtle metamorphoses into an entity that is as gross as the physical world. It is the same cosmic Consciousness called Brahm that has revealed itself in the form of each single unit of creation, and these units join together to form an immensely complex entity that is compositely known as the world. But when analyzed, the basic unit is the same consciousness that appears invariably in all the variations in which the world is known to exist.

Hence, since 'I' am an integral part of this creation as much as the rest of the creatures, my own 'self' as well as the rest of the world and all its creatures are nothing but this consciousness revealed in these individual forms. If this world appears to be 'true and real' it is because it invariably harbours this absolutely truthful, self-illuminated and self-evident consciousness at its core, and it is the latter's divine glow that is reflected in the outer transparent veil that is seen by the man in the shape of life in this external world. If the inner light of consciousness is removed, if this symbolic bulb is switched off, the world would be so dark that it won't be visible, and anything that is not visible is not treated as having any life and existence by the mind and intellect that relies on material proofs and tangible attributes or qualities to determine whether anything is true or false.]

48. There is a fallacious notion that there is a 'doer of deed' and there is some 'cause or reason why that deed is done'. This results in a situation where there is an existence of deeds¹. [When a man does anything, there must be a cause for doing it. The actual activity of doing certain thing arises out of this thinking—that certain thing must be done in order to fulfill some obligations. This presumes that it is 'me' who must do the deed in order to fulfill 'my' obligations, and that the deeds done would help 'me' to fulfill them. The man thinks that the deeds are being done by him because he expects some result or reward from these deeds. This is fundamentally erroneous because the 'doer' of deeds here is the gross physical body of the man and not his 'true self', the Atma, which is merely a neutral inhabitant of this body and a mute observer of the deeds done by the latter. Again, the cause arises because the man thinks that this world is true and real because the deeds are done in a physical world involving a physical body. He believes that the particular deed would help him reach his goal, and then he would enjoy its fruits. He forgets in the process that the world is an imaginary creation of the mind which has made so many imaginary 'Sankalps' relating to it (refer verse no. 45 in this context). The world has no substance in it just like the water in a mirage having no reality; it is imagined. The doer is not the 'self', the cause is imaginary, and the actual activity of doing the deed is also being implemented in an artificial world. So the entire chain consisting of doer of deed, the objective of doing the deed, the cause for which it is being done, and the medium in which it is being done is delusory and non-existent. Therefore, a wise and enlightened man does not allow himself to be unnecessarily dragged into a quagmire of deeds and their consequences because he realises that he is not the doer and therefore is not to be bothered by this chain.]

Therefore, you should develop total indifference towards the deeds—as they are being done by some entity which is distinct from ‘you’, because your true ‘self’ is the Atma and not the gross body that is actually doing any deed; the deed is being done in futility out of imaginary causes, and is being done in an equally imaginary world. This eclectic view would help you to cultivate total detachment and dispassion towards the deeds and everything associated with them (48).

[Note—The Niralambo-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 11-12 describes the concept of Karma. The Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 2, verse nos. 23-26 defines what constitutes of true ‘Karma Yoga’. The Mandal Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, 2/4/2-3 describes the philosophy of Deeds. The Adhyatma Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition describes the concept of doing deeds and its effect on the spiritual liberation or bondage of the creature in fine detail in its verse nos. 49-60. The concept of Kriti or Karma has also been elaborately described in Chandogya Upanishad, canto 7, section 21 of Sam Veda tradition.

The concept of Karma Yoga has been described in detail in note to verse no. 35 of Canto 4 of this present Varaaha Upanishad.]

49. The lamp of enlightenment relating to the subject of the ‘Atma’ (i.e. the cosmic Consciousness and the absolute Truth behind the external façade of apparent truth) which has been lighted by a deep study of the Vedas, how can it be blown away so easily?

Discard the fallacious thinking or knowledge that this world ‘has an existence’ which is separate from the Atma. Become freed from all the delusions and tainting affects of ignorance in this regard. This will help you to become free from all confusions and doubts in this matter. [That is, the world has no separate existence from the Atma. As has been pointed out in verse no. 47 above, if the Atma were to be removed from this world, the latter would cease to have any existence. The world has any importance and relevance because it has the Atma present in it. Another example is this—a man’s body is useful only as long as there is life or consciousness in it, for as soon as the consciousness or vital life forces leave it, such as for example at the time of death, the body begins to decay and disintegrate on its own, emits a foul smell, and has to be disposed of immediately. The same body that had its existence for so many long decades, the body that built bridges and fought battles, has been rendered so incompetent and worthless now that it has to be carried by others even for disposal! What a paradox, and what more proof do one need of the importance of the Atma.] (49).

50. Be firmly convinced about the truthful existence of and be devoted to the only principle element called ‘consciousness’ in creation that resides honourably enthroned in your inner self (as your Atma, your ‘true self’). [This is because this Atma is Brahm personified; it is the Supreme Being revealed.]

Just like the two forms of hypothetical skies called ‘Ghataakash’ (the sky or space inside a hollow pitcher) and ‘Mathakash’ (the space within the walls of an abbey or monastery) are not distinct from the ‘Mahakash’ (the vast sky present everywhere outside the two enclosed spaces mentioned here), you should also discard artificial distinctions and imaginary separations that has been created about the universal ‘truth’ in this world, and instead become firmly and steadfastly established in this truthful consciousness residing in your own bosom because it represents this universal truth. [That is, you should not treat yourself as someone different from this consciousness; you must not be deluded into thinking that the term ‘you’ applies to

your body or anything else that is not the conscious Atma. By applying the logic of the three forms of skies mentioned herein above, you must be convinced that this not only applies to you but to everything else in this creation around you. In other words, the Atma that resides in your body is the same as the Atma that resides in the body of your neighbour, and therefore do not treat him as someone else who is either your friend or your enemy. You must develop the highest level of equanimity and evenness in your outlook towards this world. This will give you eternal stability and peace.] (50).

51. The existence of two units of creation—viz. the Jiva or the living being, and Parmatma or the Supreme Being, the Lord of the Jiva—have been artificially imagined in my eternal and infinite form that is like the ‘Chidakash’, the sky which is uniform, immutable, indivisible, eternal, always present everywhere, all-encompassing, all-inclusive, infinite, imperishable and truthful. [That is, as it is impossible to demarcate the sky into different segments separated by metes and bounds by making artificial boundaries and then imagining that one form of the sky enclosed by one boundary is different from the other sky present outside of this boundary or inside another enclosure like the case of the Ghatakash and the Mathakash, it is also similarly imagined that the Parmatma and Jiva are distinct entities. It is a fertile imagination of the mind that they are different and separate as much as it is an imagination that the inherently immutable and indivisible sky can be fractioned in the form of a Ghatakash, a Mathakash, and a Mahakash (refer verse no. 50).]

The Maya (delusion creating powers of the mind that arise out of ignorance of the truth) that makes one become aware of the existence of this ‘dual’ or multifaceted nature of things in creation (i.e. which creates a false sense that there are more than one forms of truthful existence, that all of them have separate existence, and that all of them are true) is quickly shaken off once true knowledge is acquired. [And how will one come to acquire true knowledge? Of course by studying the scriptures, such as the Vedas—refer verse no. 49, and by taking the advice of the wise teacher—refer verse no. 2 of this Canto 2. In other words, just like the case that till the time a man does not know the truth about anything he might be excused of his actions and behaviour, but as soon as he is told the truth it is expected of a wise man that he would immediately rectify himself and behave properly. A person might be excused if he is ignorant of who he actually is, what is his true identity, nature and form is, what is the real implication of the term ‘me’ and ‘self’ is. But once he is enlightened about it, there is no excuse for his indulgences in the body and the world, and pretensions of being ignorant or innocent for he is expected to become aware of the truth and reality, and change his views about himself and the world at large. Only as long as he is genuinely unaware of the spiritual truth about his ‘self’ and the reality of the gross world can he be excused of mistakes, but as soon as he is made privy to the eclectic metaphysical fact that there is no difference between his truthful self and the all-pervading consciousness that is the ultimate Truth of creation, he must abandon all pretensions of ignorance and innocence, and instead take strident steps to reach his destination of liberation and deliverance from the world of artificiality and delusions. He must grasp this golden opportunity with both hands like a sinking man clasps a buoy to reach the shore.]

So, in the present case, as soon as a wise spiritual aspirant is told the truth about the non-dual nature of existence, he would discard the perception of duality caused by the distorted version of the truth presented to him by the Maya that had

been holding his mind and intellect captive till now. He would immediately chuck off all fallacious perceptions of duality in this existence, and become an ardent follower of the universal 'truth' that is inherent in the eclectic spiritual concept of non-duality or Advaitya. He ought to realise the truth of the eclectic philosophy of the Upanishad that espouse the cause of non-duality and universality of the soul (51).

52. The existence of such delusory and fallacious perceptions as 'duality' (i.e. separate existence of the Jiva and Parmatma; the Ghatakash, the Mathakash and Mahakash as being separate from the Chidakash) are known to and recognised by only those exalted and wise ones who are experts in the Vedas and are well conversant with their divine knowledge.

They recognise the fact that everything that is done at the behest or instigation of Maya (delusions and artificial notion of truth) would automatically cease when the Maya itself is eliminated by acquisition of correct knowledge of the truth and reality. Then there would be no sense of duality, and consequentially there would be no such concept of a Jiva and Parmatma—i.e. there would be no sense of dual existence. [This is a very objective conclusion—it is a matter of common sense that 'truth' can be only one and not more than one. In the event that two things appear to be true and exist simultaneously than there must be something seriously wrong somewhere—for there cannot be two truths and therefore one is an imposter. This situation does not apply to 'falsehood', for this entity can have thousands of variations and all of them would be 'truly false'! The philosophy of the Upanishads espouse and expound that the Atma and the Parmatma are the same albeit viewed at different levels of existence, the former at the level of the individual creature while the latter is viewed at the level of the creation at large. This Atma in all the living beings is the same like the water molecules in all water bodies known by whatever names is the same. This world is a visible manifestation of the cosmic Atma known as Brahm which is nothing but Consciousness personified.] (52).

[Note—The concept of Maya has been described in note to verse no. 69 of Canto 2 of this Upanishad below. Refer also to verse nos. 53, 56, 71.]

53. When this enlightened state of existence is reached, one perceives only the eternal, truthful and non-dual 'consciousness' in its absolute and purest form. He is firmly established in this eternal truth and perceives his 'self' as this pure consciousness.

An enlightened and wise person develops the high level of thinking that makes him realise the truth of the fact that just like the sky or space cannot be fragmented into separate segments (such as Ghatakash, Mathakash, Mahakash etc.) because it is inherently immutable, indivisible, universal and uniform, so is the case with the pure consciousness revealed in the form of the 'self'. This eclectic knowledge makes him identify himself with the vast world around him, and he expands his world view to include the entire creation, and stops having a limited and selfish view concerning only his body and its vested interests.

He realises that just like the sky is assigned artificial names (such as Ghatakash and Mathakash etc. as in verse no. 50), the two names given to the Atma or consciousness as Jiva and Parmatma, or as the inanimate and animate world, are also artificial and not reflective of the truthful nature of things¹. These two states of existence or being are attributed to the Atma because of the interference of Maya. The latter creates a smokescreen that hides the truth. As soon as this smokescreen of Maya is removed, the truth comes to the fore. This 'truth' is the pure and only one certainty known as 'consciousness' (53).

[Note--¹The Jiva is referred to as 'inanimate' because it has a gross body which is inanimate and inert. On the contrary, the Parmatma is referred to as 'animate' because it has the word Atma—or consciousness—in it. This leads us to a very interesting deduction—the Jiva is alive only because it has the consciousness—or Parmatma—residing inside its body. Shorn of the 'animate' Parmatma, the Jiva would be 'inanimate'.]

54. The Isha (literally the 'Lord' of creation who is the aim of all spiritual practices, here referring to the Supreme Being) had created this creation because he visualised it and then gave this visualization effect by actually entering this imaginary world created by this vision, thereby lending it credence and truthfulness. [The world was first simply a conception, not even on the drawing board of the supreme Lord. Then he drew the plan and moulded the structure of the creation. But this lacked any signs of life and appeared to be an exercise in futility. So the Lord decided to enter it and give it an instant injection of consciousness and life. And behold what he created—the colourful canvas of this vast and multifaceted creation that is so magnificent, stupendous, magical and unique that no two units of it are exactly alike. This creation is so fascinating that even after endless frame of time that has elapsed since its inception, it is still in an evolving stage, it is still unfolding!]

Similarly, the Jiva (the living being; the creature) first uses the powers of imagination of the mind to create a world, and then begins to see it in the waking state of consciousness. This creates an attraction for the magnificent array of numerous charms proffered by the world and an accompanying desire to step into the world to actually enjoy it and get a feel of it first hand. Then the creature finds that he has landed in a quagmire from which he is unable to pull himself out. The result is that now he desires a way out of it—i.e. he yearns for ways that would give him liberation and deliverance from the fetters that has tied him down in this world and trapped him perpetually. But he forgets what actually is the cause of his entrapment—i.e. he remains oblivious of the fact that it is his own mind and the numerous Sankalps (refer verse nos. 45, 48) that it makes that is responsible and at the root of creation of this world and the desire to enjoy it or remain involved or engrossed in it (54).

55. The entire creation, right from the humble reed up to the colossal and complex world made up of various combinations of elements, is an illusion that has been created by the Supreme Being (by using the maverick powers of the Maya).

The entire expanse of the creation—both in its grosser manifestation as the visible world seen during the waking state of consciousness by the Jiva (creature) to the subtler form consisting of the principle elements as enumerated by the Sankhya Shastra (one of the six schools of Indian philosophy)¹, and ending in the state when the consciousness finds its final rest (i.e. the conclusion of creation)—all are my (Lord Varaaha's or Lord Vishnu's) revelations. [That is, everything in creation is some or the other form of the supreme Brahm who had first revealed himself as the Viraat Purush at the macro level of creation, and the rest of the creation was revealed from this Viraat Purush. In fact, this creation is a visible metamorphosis of the all-pervading and all-inclusive invisible Viraat Purush. Since Vishnu is another name given to this Viraat Purush by the Purans, and since Vishnu has incarnated as Lord Varaaha who is preaching this Upanishad, it follows that the term 'me or my form' refers to the Supreme Being himself. Nothing exists that is beyond the purview of the Supreme Being.] (55).

[Note—¹*Sankhya Shastra*-- This is one of the six great schools of Indian philosophy. It was first propounded by sage Kapil as 'Shankhya Sutras'. A detailed

note on this philosophy is given as note of verse no. 13, Canto 6 of Swetashwatar Upanishad which is Chapter no. 5 of this volume.]

56. Therefore those who seek emancipation and salvation of their soul are wisely advised that they should not allow themselves to get sucked in the bog of confusions created by the concept of duality which creates a dichotomy between the Jiva and the Parmatma. Instead, they should become steady and fix their mind on the principle of non-duality which relates to the one supreme transcendental Divinity and Truth known as Brahm (56).

57. The essential principle of Brahm is 'non-duality', and this is a unique proposition which is characteristic of it. Those who do not know Brahm in this primarily non-dual form are under great delusions. How can they ever expect to find Mukti—or liberation and deliverance—from the delusions and the numerous other traps created by ignorance of the truth? How can they ever expect to find peace and happiness when they are torn between doubts and run hither and thither in utter confusion?¹ (57).

[Note—¹This is the reason why such confused and deluded people would remain churning between this world and the other world like an oscillating pendulum. They would do some good and apparently auspicious deed in the hope of pleasing the Lord but inadvertently and unknowingly get entangled in the web of deeds and their consequences as a result, something that they cannot avoid. The deed, no matter how auspicious and noble, would have its own set of results which would in turn be the cause of other set of deeds and their results. This chain continues till the last moment of the person's life, and when he dies the soul carries over this baggage into its new life. In this new life, the creature would do more deeds, either due to the prevailing circumstances or due to the cumulative effects of his past deeds done in the previous life that has moulded his natural traits and inherent temperament, tendencies, habits and thought processes that characterise his overall personality. So he would be endlessly churning and whirling in the whirlpool of deeds and consequences. He would never find liberation and deliverance from this trap unless he breaks free from this cycle. This is possible when he de-links himself, i.e. his soul which is his truthful 'self', from the activity of doing any deed at all.

Deluded people who aren't aware of the reality and the truth remain skeptical about the concept of 'non-duality' because they can see a clear distinction between two entities in the physical world. They see two separate bodies of water—for example, one is called a well and the other a pond or a river. How they can be one, they argue. But they see only the exterior forms and not the underlying inherent truth in these separate bodies of water—and the underlying truth in all these examples is the presence of 'water' in these entities, and not the external form in which this water appears as a well, a pond or a river. So, the universal truth in all living beings is the presence of pure consciousness, and no matter what exterior form it assumes this fundamental elementary truth about them would remain constant. In other words, there is no basic difference between any two given living beings, which means that they are 'non-dual', that they are 'one in essence'. This 'non-dual essence' is the same in the other person as it is in the aspirant.

Therefore, such people who do not realise that the Absolute Truth that they have been searching in the outside world, the supreme Brahm that they attempt to find in the outside world in numerous pilgrim sites, various religious and auspicious deeds, and in endless volumes of scriptural texts is not to be found there as it is secretly ensconced in his own bosom as the pure consciousness known as his Atma, should never hope to find this Truth or Brahm. They are like those stupid ones who are searching the gem in the haystack while it is here inside their own pocket—for the

supreme Brahm resides in their own self as their Atma and they endlessly and fruitlessly search for him in the world outside.]

58. This notion about the world that this is high or this is low, this is good or this is bad—say how does this matter really? [It does not matter at all.] It is like the case when a person sees a dream and becomes a king or a beggar in his dream, and when he wakes up he begins to search for his kingdom, wondering where it is, or searches for the alms that he had collected during his begging trips undertaken while he was dreaming. [This is a case of hallucination when one sees or hears or thinks or remembers of something that does not exist. What was seen in the dream was imaginary and it vanished with the dream. If a man begins to search for it in real life then it is a height of his foolishness. Likewise, a foolish man would distinguish between two situations or events or things or entities in this world because he forgets their primary and fundamental nature as being the same universal Brahm revealed in all these myriad of forms, and hence there is no real cause for distinguishing between them.] (58).

59. Those who are wise and erudite call the situation when the Buddhi, i.e. the intelligent and analytical mind (that helps to intelligently analyse anything and determine its truth while eliminating falsehoods) is submerged in or veiled by Agyan, i.e. when the Buddhi is engulfed in the darkness of ignorance and mired by and lost in the surging delusions that accompany it, as the state of existence called 'Nidra' or the metaphoric state of sleeping when a man is removed from reality and begins to dream.

When the same Buddhi is in the company of me (the Supreme Being manifested as Varaaha, the Boar incarnation of Lord Vishnu), i.e. when it is in the surroundings of light, knowledge and wisdom which I personify, say how can one be asleep in such a situation? [A man sleeps in darkness and not under the glare of the sun. And unless one sleeps, there is no question of dreaming and seeing imaginary things. Further, one does not see ghosts and other imaginary things during bright daylight; they are only seen in pitch darkness of the night. So, when a person stays in constant contact of Brahm—i.e. when he has inculcated the wisdom that the Supreme Being is omnipresent at all times under all circumstances, he would be under the so-called 'daylight' of consciousness and wisdom permanently. So there would be no darkness of ignorance and delusions surrounding him, and therefore no cause for misconceptions or distorted views of the reality to have any bearing on his thoughts. Such a man would not hallucinate and imagine things that do not have any pith and substance in them. A wise, erudite and intelligent man will not see ghosts and phantoms even in the darkness of night because he knows that they do not exist, so there is no question at all of his ever imagining them to be present in broad daylight! Likewise, an enlightened and self-realised man would never be taken for a ride by the delusions created by this artificial and illusionary world, and he would be at peace with himself upon realisation of the supreme spiritual Truth known as the pure and universal consciousness called the Atma at the micro level of creation, and its parent called the transcendental Brahm at the macro level of creation.] (59).

60. The state of exalted existence when the Buddhi, i.e. the state when the intelligent and analytical mind that helps to intelligently analyse anything and determine its truth and eliminate falsehoods is fully blooming and developed, is equivalent to the state of 'Jagrat' or the metaphoric state of being awake. [This is because a waking man does not dream and he sees things as they actually are. This 'waking state' is a metaphoric

way of saying that the creature is fully aware of the truth and reality, he is alert and vigilant, and the darkness created by ignorance and delusions do not exist.]

For me, the truthful state of 'being awake' is not the mere physical wakeful state of the body, but the state when the creature is free from all mental delusions that create numerous deformations and defects of the mind that cause all sorts of faults, errors of conception and perceptions, and other shortcomings that usually taint the creature's intellect even during the so-called wakeful state of the body. If this does not happen then for me (Lord Varaaha who is preaching this Upanishad) such a person is not 'awake' (60).

[Note—Refer Subal Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition—9/12 and 14/1.]

61. When the Buddhi (the thinking mind which remembers and ponders and determines upon something or its different aspects relying upon the data collected and previously stored in the sub-conscious part of the brain) is freed from any external interference from the sense organs of the gross body as happens during the waking state of the latter, it is then relocated in the various Naadis (nerves of the body) and sustained by the consciousness flowing through them. It is in this state that the man dreams¹.

Therefore it naturally follows that when the mind, i.e. the subtle senses created by the sub-conscious stop flowing through the Naadis, i.e. when the sub-conscious along with all its subtle senses too goes into a hibernating state like external physical sense organ of the gross body (that need an active mind that is alert and outwardly awake, which actively receives inputs from the world and responds accordingly through these sense organs), the man would not dream² (61).

[Note--¹During the phase when the man is awake, the external organs of the body continue to receive an unbroken chain of sensory impulses from the external world, and pass them all to the brain through the network of Naadis (nerves). This data is collated and collected by the mind. Some require immediate action—such as the need for eating something when one sees something enticing or when one is hungry. There are other inputs from the world that the mind stores in the data bank or the sub-conscious that acts like a library for future referral. Some information needs intelligent analysis and is referred to the higher echelons of the brain, called the faculty of the intellect. The intellect either advises the mind with an option or reserves the order for consideration and implementation at a future date. All this continues in an ongoing process throughout the length of a man's life.

Now, when the man is asleep the external organs go on hibernation mode—they neither receive any input nor do they have to respond to any impulse. In such a state when the body is not involved and stops interfering with the working of the mind-intellect complex, the latter is freed from its cumbersome duties vis-à-vis the body and can now find the freedom and the time to act in its own world. So, during early stages of sleep when dreams occur, the mind and intellect remain very much active—but not on the physical gross plane relating to the outside world and the gross organs of perception and action of the body, but at a subtler level of the Naadis and the vital forces of life, called the Pran, moving through them. It is in this subtle state of existence of the consciousness that the sub-conscious has a greater role to play and a dominant say. This is because the mind is now freed from all the 'routine file work of the office' when the man was awake. Now the mind has the time to peep into its data bank and ponder over the collected information to think upon it. This is proved by the fact that it is very usual for a person to 'sleep over complicated matters and then come out with a surprisingly good answer or solution' that had defied all answers or solutions inspite of all his best of efforts during his waking time. Great discoveries, ideas, creative innovations and solutions to often times vexed problems of life have been made while a man had gone to sleep with them on his mind but suddenly

waking up from sleep with the answer. This is because the intelligent mind was working full time in association with the sub-conscious to come up with a solution or answer for something that had been bothering it all along.

This is also how dreams are seen. The sub-conscious plays out the things that the mind knew it is capable of doing but could not do because of the limitations imposed upon it by the gross body. During sleep, such physical restrictions are removed and the mind can fly at its will. That is why one can dream of things that he simply cannot even imagine while awake.

²The man dreams because the active mind is overtaken by its sub-conscious component while the man is physically asleep. This sub-conscious steps in when the conscious mind is dormant, and the man begins to live in a fantasy world created by the former. In this condition, the Pran or vital winds that regulate life and all activities of the body both at the gross level as well as the subtle level, continue to move subtly inside the Naadis or nerves and veins etc. The Pran would not create any movement in the gross body but it keeps the subtle body in an active state. This fact has been endorsed in Paingalo-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 2, verse no. 12 which says that when the creature is in a dreaming state of existence, i.e. when he is asleep, his Prans move along the various Naadis present in the body. This movement has also been described in the Dhyan Bindu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 58-60. The Brahm Vidya Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 17 proclaims that the Prans and the Atma are synonymous with each other. Therefore, when it is said that the Prans remain active even during the sleeping stage of consciousness it is implied that the Atma is also active. So inspite of the external gross components of the body remaining inactive during the phase of physical sleeping, the internal subtle body does remains active and restless, creating what is known as the phase of dreams. In this state the man's Atma is as active as it was when the physical body was awake, the only difference is in the level in which this activity and restlessness takes place.]

62. The consciousness is freed from the buffeting effects of the restless mind during the Sushupta state, i.e. the state of 'deep sleep' when there are no dreams and the mind also goes into hibernation like the rest of the gross body. Therefore, in this state the consciousness does not see or remains aware of anything pertaining to the external world¹. It is at complete rest with itself. There is no interference of any kind that would disturb its poise and calm. It is in this state that the consciousness enjoys great bliss and happiness. [This is the reason why a man feels very refreshed and relaxed if he has a 'dream-less sleep' even for a short while as opposed to a night long sleep full of dreams.] (62).

[Note--¹This happens because during this state both the active mind and the sub-conscious mind are asleep or inactive. It is the mind that perceives this world; it is the mind that has imagined this world in the first place. During the waking state, this mind makes the consciousness 'see, hear, taste, smell and feel' things of this external world through the external organs of perception. During the dreaming state, the sub-conscious mind makes the consciousness repeat the same thing through the dream. Since the Atma or the 'true self' of the creature represented by the pure consciousness has to rely upon the mind for all these perceptions and sights of the world, when the mind retires the Atma finds its peace which it had lost due to this constant nagging and interference by its prime minister, the mind. So, if the wise man realises this fact and keep the mind permanently at bay or under tight leash, if he is successful in keeping this mischief-monger mind at a distance, he can be assured of eternal and everlasting peace even while he is awake just like the transient peace that is obtained while the body is sleeping in the deep sleep state which is beyond the dreaming state of sleep, but it is not permanent as it is short lived for soon the creature would wake

up in this world and then the peace found while he was in this deep sleep state is lost for good.]

63. A truly wise and enlightened man is he who realises that his true identity is the consciousness and therefore he sees everything like the pure consciousness sees them—i.e. he sees everything with total dispassion and in a neutral way as if they have no special qualities worth attracting his attention. He therefore treats or sees everything with stoic equanimity and a neutral disposition. He treats all equally and without any discrimination.

Such a man is indeed one like Shiva (the truthful, renunciate, auspicious, wise and enlightened Lord), Hari (Lord Vishnu, the personification of the supreme transcendental Brahm who is the Supreme Being) and Brahma (the creator). [These three Gods form the Trinity and the most senior ones in the pantheon of Gods. In other words, such a man is deemed to be most honourable and enlightened amongst all his peers and compatriots.] (63).

64. The dream that is long lasting is the cause of all hallucinations and delusory perceptions of the world. It takes a man away from the reality. Hence, a man who drags on his imaginary world of dreams shorn of any reality into the real world never finds happiness no matter how hard he tries. [For instance, if a man begins to 'day dream', if he does not get back to his routine daily life after waking up from sleep and continues to brood over things seen in the dream though he knows fully well that he is wasting his time by such thoughts as they were mere dreams and have no relevance in practical life, then such a man is deemed to be 'mentally ill'. He would never find peace because what he sees in practice has no relevance to what he saw in his dreams. For example, if a man dreams that he is a king rolling in worldly comforts and pleasures while actually he is manual labourer, and if he carries this dream into his practical life, it is clearly obvious that he will never find peace. He would be perpetually depressed and become a mental wreck. Besides this, the very fact that he saw a dream of being a king shows that he has harboured a hidden desire of being a king, because dreams are a replay of the sub-conscious mind. How can desires that are obviously impractical can ever be fulfilled or ever give peace? They would, on the contrary, snatch whatever peace the man had.]

Similarly, the material world of sense objects in which a man allows his mind to remain engrossed in for a prolonged period of time becomes the cause of all his miseries, pains and agonies (much like the case of carrying over the life and experiences of dreams into the practical life of a man).

So a wise, erudite and enlightened man should realise the benefits of the Sushupta state of existence when there is great peace and bliss, and endeavour to emulate this state even during the waking state of existence in this world. In other words, when he has woken up from the deep sleep state of consciousness into the waking state, he should remember only Brahm as the pure consciousness or the universal Truth or the one universal source of eternal peace and happiness that can give that calmness and tranquility which the man had experienced during the deep sleep state of existence known as Sushupta. [This is also called the 'Turiya state of consciousness'. This he can achieve by controlling the mind and preventing it from becoming engrossed in this world. He uses the mind in a routine manner and does not allow it to register anything in its sub-consciousness. This will pre-empt any dreams and mental aberrations.] (64).

65. Though it is well known and a established principle of metaphysics that this world is Brahm personified, but still calling it a 'world' (instead of Brahm) and dealing with this entity as a gross 'world' of material objects is not only a misstatement but a gravely fallacious and misrepresentation of the fact as well. [This is because by applying the term 'world' it is automatically assumed that there are typical attributes present in it, such as it being mortal, perishable, finite, limiting, gross, material, sensual, having duality of 'this' and 'that', good and bad, animate and inanimate, dark and light, inane and inert or lively and active etc. If it is Brahm personified, then these difference and numerous attributes cannot exist, as Brahm has none of them. So they are obviously some grave errors in perception and distortions in understanding of the world.]

It is tantamount to imposing certain characteristics and fractured views upon Brahm which the latter does not posses, and then imagining them to be real and characteristic of Brahm. So, the term 'this is a world' is artificiality which is imposed upon the basically immaculate, untainted, attributeless and unqualified entity that is universal and uniform. This divine eclectic and unique entity is known as Brahm. This Brahm is quite different from what is known as the world, and the difference would be obvious to anyone who compares the virtues of Brahm with that of the world¹.

Just like an elephant that crushes his enemy underfoot and then smells it with its trunk to be assured that the enemy is dead, when a wise and enlightened man crushes all his six enemies² which had been depriving him of his peace and stability, he is able to find steady calmness and bliss. The crushing of these enemies would only take place when he would have crushed the notion that this world exists. Once the world is eliminated, only 'one' entity is left—and that 'one' entity is known as Brahm.

Besides this point, the man also realises that although everything else in this world has been eliminated by properly controlling and fine-tuning the mind and intellect, 'he'—i.e. the man himself—is very much in existence here. No one can deny his own presence; no one can say that his 'self' is false. So he comes to the conclusion that 'he' or his 'self' is that 'one entity' which remains after the multifarious falsehoods and countless illusions created by the mind, which are collectively called the artificial world, are removed from the scene. And since the 'only one' entity that remains after the artificiality is removed is known as Brahm, it follows that the man himself is Brahm personified (65).

[Note—1The difference in the obvious virtues of Brahm and the world creates a lot of confusion in the mind of less wise and ignorant people when they are not able to reconcile between what the scriptures say and what they actually see. The scriptures assert that this world is a manifestation of Brahm, and that this Brahm is uniform, stable, unchangeable, indivisible, infinite, eternal and without any attributes. The world on the other hand depicts just the opposite characters. But this dichotomy occurs because one sees only the outer structure of the world and not the truth hidden behind this exterior. The interior and the hidden aspect of life is consciousness which might assume so many external forms according to the needs of the prevailing circumstances. This also reflects the theory of origin of species that suggests in a nutshell that over time the numerous species evolved as a result of varying and changing circumstances and the adaptation that they necessitated in the living being in order to help it survive in such situations. It would be easily understood if we take a simple example of water in different water bodies such as a well, pond, lake, river, stream, drain, ocean, cloud, ice, hail, steam, mist, vapour, moisture etc. It is obvious that all of them are essentially 'water', and the numerous names assigned to this singular element called 'water' is to distinguish one of its form from the other for practical purposes of day to day life. Likewise, the same Brahm has come to be

known by different names for practical purposes only, and there is no fundamental difference between any on these forms of Brahm.

²The six enemies of the man in his spiritual pursuit are the following—(1) problems associated with birth, (2) problems associated with growth, (3) problems associated with consequences of deeds done and actions taken by a creature in this world, (4) problems associated with gradual decay and decline of the body and its functions, (5) problems associated with old age and its attendant horrors, and (6) problems associated with the ultimate destruction and end of everything that relates to the creature. One will observe that the life of a creature is a continuous graph of sorrows, sufferings and pains of one or the other kind. It is only when the creature realises the truth of existence and who he really is that he begins to disassociate himself from the body and the world, and thus is able to break free from this seemingly interminable cycle of horrors. Refer Mudgal Upanishad, Canto 4, verse no. 6 of Rig Veda tradition as well as Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas, Lanka Kand, Canto 3, verse no. 29.

According to the Varaaha Upanishad, canto 1, verse no. 9 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, there are six Urmis or faults associated with a creature. They are the following—Ashanaaye (hunger), Pipasa (thirst), Shoka (grief and sorrows), Moha (delusions), Jara (old age) and Mritu (death)—refer also Mudgal Upanishad, Canto 4, verse no. 7 of Rig Veda tradition.

There also other six faults that are considered as enemies of a man—Kaam (worldly passions, lust, desires and yearning), Krodh (anger, indignation and wrathfulness leading to spite and ill temper), Lobh (greed and rapacity), Moha (ignorance based delusions, worldly infatuations, attractions and attachments), Mada (egoism, arrogance, haughtiness and hypocrisy) and Matsarya (envy, jealousy, malice and ill-will)—refer Mudgal Upanishad, Canto 4, verse no. 4 of Rig Veda tradition.]

66. For a spiritually enlightened person who is steadfast in his truthful convictions and who has firmly established his mind in me (Lord Varaaha representing Brahm), i.e. who has fixed his attention on the Truth and remains unwavering in his faith in this Truth, it does not matter for him if the gross body is discarded now or it lasts as long as the moon and stars live. [This is because such a man knows that his ‘true self’ is not the body but the pure conscious Atma living inside it, and this Atma is eternal, imperishable, infinite and ethereal. So it really does not matter if the body is shed now or lasts for a long time.]

It is just like the case that the space of the ‘sky’ inside the clay pitcher would remain unaffected whether the pitcher is broken immediately or is kept intact for a long period of time. [This sky or space inside the clay pitcher is similar to the one present outside the body of the pitcher. So the sky element is not at all affected by this thin lining of the body of pitcher which separates the outer sky from the area trapped inside. Likewise, for a wise man, this body is only an artificial boundary between his individual ‘self’ and the cosmic ‘Self’. The principle called the ‘self’ is the same whether or not this body is present. This is a very reassuring idea which gives his mind eternal stability and peace.] (66).

67. The serpent’s cuticle that it has abandoned has no life in it; there is no snake in this cuticle whether the latter is seen outside a mud mound or inside it. Therefore, it would be highly incongruous and ridiculous to even think that there is a living snake when one sees a cuticle lying outside a mound or inside it (67).

68. Similarly, the two types of the bodies of the creature, viz. the gross external body consisting of the organs of action and perception, and the subtle inner body consisting

of the mind-intellect complex, are both like this cuticle of the snake as far as the Atma of the creature is concerned. [That is, the consciousness is a separate entity and distinct from either of the two bodies. The consciousness or Atma lives inside the body just like the snake lives inside the cuticle, but when it sheds this outer dead layer of skin it does not even look back at its former home.]

So sometimes what is apparent is very misleading. [The body shows all the unique characteristic features of life—viz. its gross part consisting of the organs of perception feels, sees, hears, tastes and smells; its organs of action make it go here and there, receive and give, reproduce and enjoy sensual pleasures, and expel waste from the body through the excretory organs; its subtle part consisting of the mind-intellect enables it to think, analyse, decide and remember etc. So for all practical purposes it appears to be the identity of the ‘living creature’, full of dynamic life and vive. This is the outwardly appearance. But is it the fact? The answer is ‘no’, for it is the Atma or consciousness residing in this outer dwelling that actually makes the body appear to exhibit all the signs of life just like the case that if a lighted lamp is covered by a translucent plastic sheet the light of the lamp would make the sheet uniformly illuminated and give the false impression that the sheet itself is aglow whereas the actual light is emanating from the flame of the lighted lamp which is concealed inside and hidden from view.]

Therefore, what you see and observe as ‘true’ in this world is actually ‘false’ and unreal, and you should discard the false impression of reality that you have had till now. This erroneous perception is due to Agyan (ignorance and false knowledge or misconceptions about anything). That is, you get a wrong impression of the reality of anything if you do not see it under the correct light of Gyan (truthful knowledge, erudition and wisdom that helps one to correctly interpret the given data).

So, when you see and analyse things under the light of correct metaphysical wisdom you would conclude that the body which you had so long believed to be ‘true’ and your ‘self’ is not so; it is false. If you analyse things properly and in the correct perspective, you would conclude that neither this gross body nor this subtle body is the ‘truth’ about yourself—i.e. you would see the truth of the scriptural maxim ‘Neti Neti’¹ (not this not this). [In other words, when you analyse things in the correct perspective you will see that what appears to be alive on the surface is not so; what appears as true is actually false. So, when you are asked to assertively say ‘yes’ to one thing as exclusively being the Atma as compared to the other thing when you know for sure that both the things are equally definable as the Atma as their essential nature is the same Atma in equal measure, then you would be constrained to say ‘no, no’, or reply ‘Neti Neti’ about the first thing as being the Atma exclusively. So, while it is true that this world is a manifestation of Brahm, but to positively assert that it is indeed Brahm would not be saying the full truth, and therefore you would be forced to say ‘Neti Neti’. This is why the scriptures, after dwelling on this subject in depth and for countless reams of paper finally declare that all definitions and criteria that one can apply on something extremely divine and holy would fail to define and characterise Brahm in entirety. Whatever is said and known about Brahm is only a ‘half truth’ which is not false but is neither the whole truth.] (68).

[Note—¹The concept of Neti Neti has been expounded upon in other Upanishads also—viz. (a) Shukla Yajur Veda’s Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, 2/3/6, 4/2/4, 4/4/32. (b) Krishna Yajur Veda’s Tejobindu Upanishad, Cantos 4-5, and verse nos. 1-29 of Canto 6.]

69. If one does not develop the high level of wisdom and erudition that is expected of him by studying the scriptures then he would still be deluded and think that the all-pervading and omnipresent Brahm can be attained by doing certain specific auspicious deeds for the purpose (such as doing penance, observing austerities and religious vows, giving alms and donations or holding religious ceremonies, going on pilgrims and observing sacraments etc.). [That is, this person who has not understood the fundamental principle behind the concept of Brahm—that this is a unique invisible entity which is eternal, ever-present and divine that is present even inside his own self as his Atma or pure conscious soul—would try to obtain access to it by adopting so many methods as described in the numerous scriptures. Such persons forget in the process that they need not do anything external to find the ultimate fount of bliss and the source of spiritual liberation, but to search for it inside their own bosom and realise the fact that the object of their search is residing very much in their own self as their Atma, their ‘pure conscious self’. The same Brahm also resides outside their body in the entire creation in a uniform and universal way, without exception. In other words, such ignorant persons are deluded enough to treat an entity known as Brahm that is inherently divine, sublime, subtle, eternal, imperishable, infinite, all-pervading, omnipresent and ubiquitous as being subjected to the limiting effects of things that exist in this mortal and perishable material world that is gross, inane and inert under the false impression that the world depicts the true form and nature of Brahm. They do not understand that what they see is the half truth and not the whole truth. They see only the exterior of the world and think that it is Brahm; they do not have the depth of wisdom and erudition or the aptitude to see what lies behind the exterior. Hence they are deemed to be deluded and under the influence of Maya as described in verse nos. 52-53, 56 and 71 of this Canto 2 earlier.]

Proper study and understanding of the scriptures would help to overcome the lack of wisdom and erudition that has been carried down to this life from the past life as the man’s fate, destiny or lot—called ‘Praarabdh’. As result, when he develops proper level of erudition and wisdom he would be able to eliminate this illusionary and fallacious conception about Brahm, the body and the world that arises out of ignorance of the truth and reality.

In other words, he would be able to overcome Maya in all its three connotations¹ (69).

[Note--¹ *Maya* is a word which has two parts, Ma + Ya. The first half means a ‘mother; a progenitor; something that creates’, while the other half refers to the ‘notion of doubt, of either this or that; the notion marked by uncertainty’. The word ‘Ma’ also means ‘to measure, mark off, by any standard; to show, to exhibit, to display; to infer, to conclude; to be formed, built, made of’. Therefore, the composite word *Maya* refers to a situation which harbours or creates uncertainties, where it is uncertain whether what is said or understood or seen or witnessed or experienced is actually the truth or not. It is virtually the ‘mother of all confusions, doubts and perplexities’. It therefore refers to something or some situation which creates or produces perplexities, doubts and confusions, something that is not real; that which is deluding, illusionary, deceptive, mirage-like and deceitful, and is caused by the ignorance about its truth and reality; something that has no substance or pith; displays no certainty and leads to wrong inference. The term *Maya* is used to define all these complex phenomenon at once. Hence, *Maya* is a synonym used for all that is deceptive, faulty, false, deluding, ignorance-based, illusionary, imposturing, deceitful, invisible and super-natural in the sense that it defies all logic and understanding; all that which has no reality or substance inspite of appearing to be for real; all that is hollow and lacks gravity though appearing to be solid and dense. It creates hallucinations in a creature’s mind leading him to believe that what he sees is the

truth. It is the deluding and magical powers of the supreme transcendental Lord that hides the reality and creates an imaginary world of deceptions and misconceptions.

Maya is the indescribable and inconceivable cosmic power that Brahm employs to create delusions.

Maya has three basic constituent qualities. Hence it is called *Trigunmayi* (त्रिगुणमयि), i.e. one which has the three Gunas or qualities. These three Gunas or qualities are—Sata, Raja and Tama. ‘Sata’ is the most auspicious, virtuous and noblest quality in a man and raises him to a high moral and spiritual pedestal. It marks predominance of righteousness and the highest standards of spirituals and mental evolvement leading to high thoughts, noble actions and righteous behaviour. ‘Raja’ is the medium quality in a person, and it is marked by worldly passions, desires, yearnings and greed. It makes a man more worldly than spiritual. ‘Tama’ is the third and most lowly of the three qualities and is used has a synonym for darkness and evil. Obviously, ‘Tama’ means ignorance, delusions and all the forces or qualities that are evil, mean, lowly, miserly, wicked and base. They pull down a man from high pedestal and virtually dump him in the dust yard of creation to rust and decay.

These *three qualities* together, in various permutations and combinations, decide the innate nature of a man. The greater presence of ‘Sata’ makes a man nobler as compared to a high ratio of ‘Tama’ which makes him wicked, pervert and evil. Various proportions of these qualities will therefore produce innumerable varieties of creatures having different temperaments, thought processes, behaviours, demeanors and mental setup in this world.

When a man understands any ‘Truth’ after rigorously examining the ‘truthfulness’ of that truth, when he has established the veracity of facts, he believes in it more firmly and more convincingly. No matter what other people tell him about the truth being not the correct or the whole truth, he would not listen to them, simply because he has verified the facts for himself, he has witnessed the truth himself, he has logically eliminated all falsehoods to deduce that what he knows is the ‘truthful Truth’. His Truth is based on rigid and solid foundation; he is unwavering and steady in it. If he is steadfast and convinced in his knowledge, no matter how much ignorance and delusions (Maya) try to push him away from the absolute ‘Truth’, he will remain steadfast and unwavering in it. There will be no doubts and confusions in his mind.

The basic idea here is that Maya is like a transparent sheet which covers the supreme ‘truth’ in the creation. Since it is transparent, it assumes the attributes of the truth that it covers, because for all practical purposes an ordinary man is unable to see that veil because of its transparency. This is a simple way of understanding what is called ‘illusion and Maya vis-à-vis the Truth and Reality’. Maya nevertheless hides the truthfulness of the Truth, and instead lends its own attributes and characteristics to that Truth known as the ‘Nirgun Brahm’ by the Upanishads when the latter is observed through this veil, while at the same time assuming the glorious attributes of Brahm itself. So ignorant fools think that the Maya is the real thing, whereas they are actually seeing the ‘veiled truth’ as observed through this covering of Maya, because the actual ‘truth’ is hidden from view by this transparent sheet which has lend it its own colour and hue to it. As a result, that Nirgun appears to have some attributes, and it thereby becomes ‘Sagun’, or the one with attributes and characteristics, by the interference of Maya.

Mantriko-panishad of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, verse no. 3-8, describes Maya in substantial detail. This concept has been described elsewhere also—such as Krishna Yajur Veda’s Tejobindu Upanishad, verse no. 46 of Canto 3; verse no. 20 of Canto 4; and verse no. 12, 33 of Canto 5; Swetashwatar Upanishad, Canto 4, verse no. 10, and Sarwasaaro-panishad, verse no. 15; Paingalo-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 1, verse no. 12; Maitrayanyu Upanishad, cantos 2-4 of the Sam Veda tradition.]

70. When one has realised the supreme truth of Brahm and its principle tenets, there is no difference left then between Brahm, the Lord of all and the Supreme Being, and the Jiva, the individual living being. When one has known that supreme Truth in its essential non-dual form, all sorts of Vasanas¹ are got rid of (70).

[Note—¹Refer also to Canto 4, verse no. 23.

Vasanas are the numerous attractions, desires, yearnings, infatuations and other natural inclinations of the creature that tie him to this world. Vasanas arise because a man thinks that one thing is better than the other and that he must get hold of the better choice.

Classification of Vasanas:--There are many ways to classify the Vasanas. Let us examine them one by one as follows.

(i) These *Vasanas* are of three types—viz. (a) *Lok Vasana*—this is the desire and greed for wealth, fame, sense objects of the material world, territorial gains, authority and powers, majesty, pomp and pelf etc. The Vasanas relating to the world are the various attractions and allurements that his apparently enchanting and captivating world presents to a person. It also refers to the various and endless responsibilities and obligations, real and imaginary, that a person has, or imagines he has towards this world.

Sometimes the Lok Vasanas overlaps the Deha Vasana as often they are interconnected. For example, one's 'Vasanas' pertaining to one's son, property, material wealth and other assets which a person has acquired by the efforts made by his body and which help him to get established in this world and enjoy enhanced comforts and pleasures as well as respect and honour that such acquisitions entitle him to in this physical world also come under this category of Vasanas. All such relationships that exist in this world, such as his relatives, his contacts, his friends, his peers and compatriots, along with his obligations, his contracts and his responsibilities related to them are called Lok Vasanas. It would also include all things done by him in this world to appease those who are related to him with this body.

(b) *Shashtra Vasana*—this is the desire and yearnings related to scriptures and ancient literature, such as a desire to become an expert in them and be recognised as such, the desire to study them more and more, acquiring scholarship and literal expertise in them with its accompanying fame, renown, glory, honour, respect and financial prosperity, become much sought after and acquire a wide followership based on these qualities and honours bestowed upon them by the world by the virtue of their unique abilities and expertise of the scriptures etc. But usually such knowledge is superficial, and the so-called expert of scriptures relies more on their letter rather than on their spirit, engrossing himself in endless discussions and debates leading to confusions and contradictions instead of solving them. The scriptures are vast and like a fathomless sea. Trying to realise the Supreme Truth by delving into the depths of the scriptures is like an attempt at extracting a single piece of pearl by churning the whole ocean. Though it is theoretically possible in thousand of years of continuous effort, but practically it is impossible and incredulous to even think of such a success; it is a too far-fetched notion. It is rare to find a truly wise and enlightened soul amongst worldly scholars and orators, for the latter's erudition is limited to gaining fame and name and nothing more.

(c) *Deha Vasana*—this is the insatiable desire and passion related to the gratification of the sense organs, such as becoming licentious, engrossing oneself in enjoyment of worldly sensual objects, and all other types of indulgences and gratifications. The 'Vasanas' pertaining to the body also relate to the attachments that one has with one's son, property and wealth which a person has acquired and enjoyed with his body, and the world around him—his relatives, his fame, his contacts, his friends, his obligation, contracts and responsibilities. It also means gratification of the

sense organs of the body as well as to appease those who are related to him with this body so that they continue to serve and help him and give comfort and pleasure to his body.

Now, when we talk of the Atma as pure consciousness or an embodiment of light, the question arises ‘how can we obtain the clearest perception of that reality?’ The greatest exponent of Vedanta philosophy, sage Adi Sankaracharya prescribes the following four paths — (i) discrimination between the eternal and truthful, and the non-eternal and non-truthful, (ii) renunciation of desires for sensual gratification and enjoyment of pleasures from this materialistic world, (iii) development of six divine eclectic wealth —self control, surrender, faith, forbearance, peace/tranquility and poise of the mind, and (iv) sincere desire for liberation and deliverance, because it is only then that the creature will try to find ways to achieve it.

(ii) Another classification is based on the proportion of bad or good qualities inherent in and integral to the nature of a man. Therefore, there are (a) Good Vasanas, and (b) Bad Vasanas. Now let us examine them in detail.

These qualities are called Gunas and they are three basic types as follows--(a) ‘Sat Guna or quality’ is the noble, virtuous, auspicious and good qualities present in a creature, (b) ‘Raj Guna or quality’ pertains to worldly passions, desires and ambition etc., while (c) ‘Tam Guna or quality’ is the lowest and meanest of the three qualities leading to various vices, evils, sins, perversions etc. The various permutations and combinations of these three qualities create a particular nature of an individual giving him his individuality and his special characters which are unique to him; they determine his temperament, behaviour, thought process et al. Two individuals having the same external form of the gross body —e.g. two men —might look very much alike but they vary immensely in their nature, habit, behaviour, thinking, outlook, action and deeds, wisdom and way of living. This is what is meant when it said that a creature has to roam in 84 Lakh wombs or forms of life; it is only a metaphor—it does not mean an actual, countable specific number that there are actually and physically 84 Lakh types of bodies of living beings; it only symbolically refers to the huge possibilities that are possible with these three ‘Gunās’ and their different combinations that can imaginably produce a myriad variety of creation that can be created with these three basic qualities and their various sub classes of qualities.

Satvic tendencies are the best tendencies amongst the three. They are positive qualities of service, benevolence, mercy, devotion, wisdom, holiness, piety etc. Rajsic tendencies are the second best quality which produces worldly desires, passions, selfishness, obsession, expansion etc. The Tamsic tendencies are the worst types leading to vices, perversion, delusions, deception, gloom, anger, ignorance et. al.

The *Satvic* quality or Guna is the veil covering the soul like a smoke covering the fire. A slight breeze will remove this smoke. Similarly a little bit of prayer and meditation will remove the Satvic desires; its removal requires the least effort. It is the foremost and the best amongst the three characteristics of a creature such as good and positive virtuous such as righteousness, creativity, noble deeds and thoughts, the positive qualities of service, benevolence, mercy, devotion, wisdom, holiness, piety etc.

The *Rajsic* quality or Guna can be compared to dust on a mirror. In this case some dusting and rubbing is needed to clean the mirror; a greater effort is needed as compared to the case with Satwic quality. Rajsic tendencies are the second best quality which produces worldly desires, ambitions, passions, selfishness, various obsessions, desire to sustain and expand etc.

The *Tamsic* quality or Guna covering the soul is like a foetus in the womb covered by the embryonic membrane—they cannot be removed easily and require diligence, effort, dedicated and careful handling requiring time and patience. It is the basest and the lowliest of the three characteristics, the worst type to possess, and is marked by such negative traits as sin, evil, perversions, immorality, vices, misdemeanors, anger, inertia, delusions, deception, gloom, ignorance et al.

The proportion of the three Gunas decides the nature, natural temperament, tendencies, habits and inclinations of the creature. For example, a person with a greater proportion of 'Satvic' (noble) characteristic will be considered nobler than a man with a greater proportion of 'Rajasic' or 'Tamsic' qualities. So we can say that sages, seers, prophets, scholars and generally enlightened persons have a high degree of 'Satvic' qualities in them; kings and householders who live a noble life are example of those with higher amount of 'Rajasic' quality in them; while sinners, killers, drunks, rowdy elements, cheats etc. are those people with higher 'Tamsic' quality in them. These Gunas have direct bearing on the personality of a man.

The first quality of Sattva is concerned with creation and enhancement of knowledge and wisdom. For this, one has to remain alert and vigilant like Brahma. The Jagrat state also corresponds to that state when the creature is awake and interacts physically with the external world, imbibes whatever knowledge and information that comes to it, gains experience, and physically reacts to that knowledge and information. Further, such people are regarded as seniors in society, and they are best depicted in the form of the old patriarch Brahma. They are awake to the harsh realities of existence and remain so engrossed in the world that they forget who they actually are, what is their true identity, and the very basic fact that what they are thinking as the real is actually not.

Next comes the Swapna state in which a man dreams, and it is a metaphor for imagination and visualization of things based on the experience and knowledge gained during the Jagrat state. In this state a man lives and does things in a virtual manner in a virtual world of dreams. He sustains and nourishes his imaginations, fantasies and conceptions in a world of dreams which is far away from the harsh realities of life in the physical world. He suffers and enjoys in his dreams, then when he wakes up, he sometimes forgets what that imaginary world was like, but at other times there have been incidents wherein he has got new insight and new inspiration while he was dreaming. This is how Vishnu sustains and nourishes the creation created by Brahma. For all practical purposes, a dreaming man appears to be in a state resembling the state of Samadhi, or a state when an aspirant is in deep meditation and engrossed in contemplation, because he remains aloof and oblivious to the external world, and remains absolutely motionless. But this state is temporary, because he would revert back or wake up to the Jagrat state. That is why Lord Vishnu, who represents this quality of Raj, is depicted as perpetually reclining contemplatively on the bed of the coiled legendary serpent floating on the celestial ocean of milk called Kshirsagar. Since without a vision and imagination one cannot grow, develop and rise, Vishnu is regarded as a maverick player of fantastic tricks in order to sustain and enhance his interests of looking after the creation. Out of these Trinity Gods, it is Vishnu who assumes so many forms and adopts so many tricks to do the needful.

The third quality of Tam is represented by Shiva, and that is why he shows certain traits which are so typical of this quality—viz. being short tempered, and destroying at the shortest notice; his external behaviour and attire also represents the excess of this lowest quality in him. The Sushupta state that he represents stands for being totally oblivious of the external world, and remaining in total bliss. This is exactly how Shiva has been depicted—he remains in a perpetual state of meditation, completely indifferent to the external world, unconcerned and detached from the attractions of the enchanting outside when he can find complete bliss inside his own bosom. The Tam quality marks the presence of ignorance in a greater ratio, and this is depicted by Shiva when he remains ignorant of the niceties of worldly behaviour, notwithstanding his exalted stature of being the greatest amongst the Gods.

The Atma subjects the *Bhoot Atma* to the 'radiation' of these 'Gunas'. These 'Gunas' are the three basic qualities present in all the creatures in different permutations and combinations. These 'Gunas' effect the 'Bhoot Atma' differently based on a number of factors—such as for example, the present status of the 'Bhoot Atma' vis-à-vis its past deeds, their cumulative affects, the caliber of its mind and

intellect, the position it occupies in the ladder of spiritual evolution, its willingness to change or subject itself to the effects of such radiation etc.

To understand how the three Gunas affect the Atma, let's take two examples—that of the red hot piece of iron glowing with heat, and the potter moulding various pots from the same clod of earth.

The concept can be understood differently also. A piece of iron, when heated, shows the heat as a 'red hot glow' which fully pervades the iron piece and becomes an integral part of it. The whole piece appears to be one whole mass of something which is red, hot and glowing. When beaten by a hammer, the iron piece bends and can be shaped into any shape. Each new shape, when heated, will show the same glow of red hot fire inside it. Similarly, the Atma provides consciousness to the creature, making it active and lively, subject to receptions of stimuli in the form of various perceptions originating in the external world and received through the organs of perception present in the gross body. The 'heated' body (i.e. the Bhoot Atma made active by the Atma) now becomes susceptible to change (from the impact of the three Gunas) much like the heated piece of iron being hammered by the hammer. The 'hammering' by the three 'Gunas' (the inherent qualities present in every creature) help to cast the individual creature into various moulds or shapes having different characteristics. Even as cold iron is not easily malleable, the creature without the infusion of life injected into it by the Atma is as good as dead and is the least malleable. Here, the allegory is simple—the creature is the iron, the glowing consciousness is the fire, the impinging 'Gunas' is the blow of the hammer, and the Atma is the iron smith.

The wheel of the potter moulds the clay into various shapes, but the driving force of the wheel is the potter. Similarly, the three 'Gunas' mould the characteristic of the creature, but the Atma is the authority, the potter in this allegory, who drives the three 'Gunas'. Just as the potter is not the wheel, the Atma is not affected by the three 'Gunas', it is just an instrument, an implement to shape the character of the creature. Again, even as a wheel is needed by a potter to give shape to a shapeless clod of clay, the Atma needs the three Gunas to mould the characters of the creatures that constitute this creation.

The concept of Gunas affecting the Atma has been elaborately dealt with in various Upanishads, especially Maitrayanyu Upanishad, cantos 2-4 of the Sam Veda tradition. Nearly all the Upanishads expound on the subject, and the chief amongst them, besides the above, are the Chandogya and Brihad Aranyaka Upanishads, an English version of which by this humble author has been published separately.

The concept that 'I', or the person's true identity, is the gross body and not the 'pure conscious soul' leads to ignorance-based ego and a sense of false pride called Ahanakar (अहंकार). When the creature is constantly under the deluding concept of 'I' being the gross body which interacts with this world, it inculcates a sense of possessiveness about the materialistic world in the creature. 'Pure consciousness' mired by ego becomes 'a conditioned consciousness' and fails to remain pure.

This is why ego and pride, called Ahankar, has been likened to a minister of the king; it directs and regulates the actions of the consciousness which, under its influence, loses its independence much like the king who depends upon his ministers for all his major decisions because it is the minister who advises and gives the basic feed back to the king to enable him to make a decision.

This 'conditioned consciousness'—working through the mind-intellect-ego combine is called, inter-alia, 'Chitta' (चित्त). The word also means 'attention and memory'. Hence, this memory acts as a referral library for the intellect. The latter falls back on it and rely on it whenever it is in doubt. The quality of books in the library guides the student; similarly, the quality of inherent tendencies stored in the library of Chitta directly affects the inputs of the intellect, and through it, the mind and successively down the hierarchy to the body and its organs of perception and action.

Although the soul has nothing to do with this command chain (i.e. paying of attention to various inputs and stimuli originating in the outside world, leading to the accumulation of data in the memory bank—the inherent and latent tendencies, passions and inclinations present in a creature (the creature's Vasanas) as well as its ego and a sense of pride (called the creature's Ahankar) that effect the thinking process of the mind and the intellect—the resultant orders issued by the intellect-mind apparatus to the body to take relevant action—the consequences and results of these action and deeds done by the body under the command of the mind and intellect—accumulation of more experience which is stored in the memory—and the chain continues), but for all practical purposes the Atma/soul, which is the true identity of a creature and pure consciousness, is deemed responsible for everything because of its sovereign nature even as a king is held responsible for all that happens in his kingdom, and he just cannot absolve himself of any and all misdeeds done by any of his subjects and subordinates on the plea that they personally should be held responsible for their actions; it is the duty of a righteous king to ensure that everything goes on right in his kingdom.

In Mukti-kopaniṣad, canto 2 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, Lord Ram explains to his most ardent devotee, the wise and enlightened Hanuman the concept of Vasanas and how to purge and control them in order to attain emancipation and salvation. The Lord advises Hanuman here to delineate this conscious soul from the rest of the chain and break the nexus between them so as to allow the glory of the pure consciousness of the soul to shine through. The enlightened soul is akin to the lighted wick of a candle, while the layers of Vasanas are like the sheets of plastic—some black, some colourless and others colourful—surrounding the light emanating from the candle. So, removal of the Vasanas is like removing the various veils from around the candle so that its light can shine brilliantly through in all the directions and slice through the darkness of the room and illuminate all the corners of it.

Generally speaking, the drag of Vasanas and Vrittis (i.e. inherent tendencies, notions, innate habits, desires, yearnings etc.) of a creature, which create a hindrance in its contact with the pure self, can be overcome by the following four methods:- (i) Method of persuasion—the creature tries to convince itself through reasoning, discrimination, self analysis and gentle prodding that its true identity is not the body but the soul or Atma which is the real and truthful self. (ii) Method of purification—the creature loves itself so much that its mind is blocked from all other love. This can be purged by thinking of the wider world as the beautiful extension of the self. Thus, selfishness is gradually reduced and it is replaced by love, compassion and graciousness. (iii) Method of eradication of desires—this can be done by selfless action and removal of ego. (iv) Method of forceful confrontation—the seeker should confront its mind about its wayward behaviour and force it to overcome past habits and tendencies. Efforts should be made to control the mind's restlessness—diligently, courteously and persistently.

'All human actions have one or more of these 7 causes —chance, nature, compulsion, habit, passion and desire' —Aristotle.

'Do not ye yet understand that what so entereth the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? But those things that proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart (and the mind); and they defile the man for out of the heart (and the mind) proceed evil thought, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness (lies), blasphemies. These are the things that defile a man' (Bible, St. Matthew, 15/17-20).]

71. When the 'Praarabdha' (i.e. one's destiny, fate and lot that he has inherited from his past and which has landed him in his present condition) is completely exhausted, the Jiva (living being) is able to shed his mortal coil (body) and free himself from its

fetters. All forms of Maya (worldly delusions and ignorance that had been shackling him for so long)—and even the knowledge that this Maya exists at all—arising out of the Praarabdha are also eliminated simultaneously¹.

It is only as long as this Maya exists that one perceives this deluding and artificial world of material sense objects. As soon as Maya is eliminated, the artificial world is eliminated as well. What remains is something that is not illusionary or deluding—i.e. Brahm, the ultimate Truth, the unequivocal Absolute and the undisputed Reality of creation. [Refer also to verse nos. 52-53, 56 and 69 of the present Canto 2 in the context of Maya.] (71).

[Note--¹The creature takes a new birth because his deeds of the past life have left a burden of unspent and accumulated effects that are yet to be suffered or enjoyed by him. Besides this, the unfulfilled desires and passions force him to take a new birth in the hope of completing his unfinished task in the new life. Then, during his new life, the Jiva indulges in fresher deeds and accumulates, even without his knowing, newer bagful of effects. The past dogs him to the present and tampers with his natural temperaments and thought processes; his mind and intellect become biased and prejudiced. It is like the case of a man who is already biased and mentally prejudiced sitting upon the judge's seat to decide a case—his judgment would naturally be partisan, biased, lop-sided, distorted and not objective. The prejudiced intellect and mind of the man, under the influence of his past—his Praarabdha—would not be able to act independently, and this would in turn distort his way of thinking, his present way of life and dealing with its complexities. He would not be able to 'think straight and analytically' because the mind and intellect are tainted and handicapped by pre-conceived ideas and convictions that have been firmly ingrained in them as a baggage brought forward from the past.

It is here that company of wise men and study of the scriptures come in handy. A man who is fortunate enough to have this privilege is able to know the reality, he would be able to see his own faults and shortcomings himself in the mirror of the teaching of the scriptures, and if he is indeed wise and sane he would realise his past follies and taking cue from the maxim that 'it is never too late to make a start' he would now strive hard to at least mend his future if he can't do anything about the past. So, he would try to dispassionately consume his past baggage of effects of deeds that he had inadvertently and in his utter ignorance allowed himself to be burdened with, a burden that has hitherto hindered his spiritual progress, and sincerely strive not to accumulate any new one further from now on. This is easily achieved by him by remaining mentally and emotionally detached from the deeds in the current life and understanding that the doer of deeds is the gross body which is not his 'self'. His 'self' is the Atma which is expected to neutrally observe all that the body does in a complete dispassionate and detached manner. So there is no question of the Atma being accused of doing any fresh or newer deed—for the doer is the body and not the Atma.

The Atma lets the gross body enjoy or suffer from the consequences of the deeds done by the latter while maintaining a safe distance from them. When the body dies, it is either cremated or buried, and with the body is burnt or buried all the deeds that were done by it. Since the body is out of the picture, since it is cremated or buried and gone, there is no question of the consequences of the deeds done by it remaining after its elimination. The indicted body is dead and gone, and the Atma, the 'true self' of the enlightened man which had remained aloof so far from this quagmire of deed and their consequences, is therefore absolved of all the misdoings and the mischief created by the body.

Since Maya is a metaphor for delusions created by a prejudiced and tainted mind-intellect, when true wisdom dawns upon the man it is natural that he would not be misled by Maya. Thus Maya is also dispensed with along with the Praarabdha. Refer also verse nos. 52-53, 56, 69 of this Canto 2 in this context.]

72. The world exists only as long as it is perceived to be there like the presence of water in the mirage formed on the hot desert sand. As soon as the truth of Brahm is known, as soon as one becomes wise and enlightened enough to realise that the only truth in this otherwise falsehood-ridden world is a non-dual and universally truthful entity known as Brahm, one begins to see the reality in this world just like the case when one begins to see only vast and endless stretches of sand in a desert once one becomes aware that the water seen in the distant is a mirage and completely illusory.

In this enlightened state of being, all the three dimensions in which the world is said to exist, viz. the one seen during the waking state, the one seen during the dreaming state and the one experienced during the deep sleep state, vanish and merge in only one uniform state—and this state is pure consciousness. [The three categories of world also refer to the three world as described in the Purans—viz. the terrestrial world where mortal creatures live, the celestial world where spirits etc. live, and the heaven where the exalted Gods live.] (72).

73. When Agyan (lack of true knowledge and wisdom; ignorance of the truth) has been completely eliminated, how can this world that had its existence because of this Agyan now have any existence at all? [Refer also verse no. 28 of Canto 3 of this Upanishad. Lack of knowledge about the truth led one to believe that the artificial world that he saw was for real. But once the basis of this awareness, i.e. 'lack of knowledge known as Agyan', is done away with, then how can he see the world as real? It is like seeing something with, say, a red viewing glass instead of a colourless glass. The view with the red glass will definitely not be the real thing; everything viewed would be tainted red. The same thing viewed with a colourless plain glass would appear completely different from its earlier version.]

The erroneous concept of this is a Jiva (living being) and that is an Ishwar (Supreme Being), and that they have separate existence, also vanishes with the elimination of Agyan (for basically they are the same consciousness).

Such a wise and enlightened man exclaims—'I, the Jivatma, am the complete and supreme Brahm which is the non-dual and eternal Consciousness in this creation'. With this firm spiritual conviction and faith, he remains serene and established in the only one truth called the universal 'consciousness'. He becomes eternally calm and poised (73).

74. When the moon is said to be devoured by the demon Rahu (the severed head of a demon) during the lunar eclipse, people start offering worship, making sacrifices, doing penances, taking purifying baths, giving alms and making charities, observing austerities etc. so that the Moon God is freed from the demon's curse, but all their deeds are a waste of effort and done in utter ignorance because there is no such event and the darkness on the moon's disc is actually a shadow of the earth falling upon it. This shadow would go away on its own when the time comes even if no such hue and cry is raised by worried worshippers. So it is a height of stupidity and profound ignorance to even think that the Moon God has been cursed or is being devoured, and by doing so many religious deeds it can be freed from its torments.

Likewise an ignorant man held in shackles by Maya does numerous auspicious rites and rituals and other religious deeds such as doing various sacrifices, sacraments, pilgrimages, purifying rites, offering of oblations and libations to Gods and Spirits etc. in the hope of getting liberation and deliverance from the fetters of Maya. All

such activities are futile because the Jiva, the ‘true self’ or the consciousness that is the true identity of the living being, is never held in shackles or fettered by anything in the first place. Therefore there is no question of the Jiva seeking or getting freedom from any kind of non-existent shackles or fetters; it is all imaginary and fictitious. [Refer verse no. 26 of Canto 3 also.] (74).

75. Just like a lump of salt placed in water gets dissolved in it and becomes indistinguishable from water, the merger of the Atma (the pure consciousness) and the Mana (the mind) is called the state of Samadhi (the trance-like transcendental state of existence when the man is unaware of his surroundings, including his own body) (75).

[Note—Refer also to Canto 5, verse no. 75.]

76. To sacrifice the comforts and pleasures presented by the numerous sense objects of the material world, to overcome their alluring attractions and remain aloof from the charms proffered by them is a very difficult proposition. Even more difficult is to have a first hand vision of the sublime and subtle ‘truth’ hidden behind the exterior façade of the world at large. [The sense objects and their allurements are like the smokescreen that hides the reality of the world. That is, one is so much swept off one’s feet by the apparent fascinations and enticements offered by the world that one forgets that all this is a mirage-like situation; the entire external façade of the setup is illusionary and quite the contrary from the actual truth. He forgets that the pleasures and comforts proffered by this world are like the bait thrown by the bird catcher to trap the bird. Once a man falls prey to this world, he would continue to remain in chains till the time he forcefully frees himself from it—but that would require a lot of effort. The few charms are the frontal façade for the mountain of miseries and torments hidden behind it. It is only when one discards this external façade that he is able to peer behind it and see the real nature of the world.]

Likewise, it is very difficult to experience and know about the natural state in which the Jivatma (the individual Atma of the living being) stays in close proximity with the Parmatma (the supreme Atma of the creation that pervades uniformly and universally everywhere) without the help and guidance of a wise, self-realised and experienced Guru (moral preceptor, spiritual teacher and guide). [This is because though the scriptures tell everything in detail, but there must be some one who is experienced and well-versed in the intricacies of this subject to explain them to the spiritual aspirant and remove all his doubts and practical hurdles. The Guru gives him practical tips and eggs him on when he falters and loses hope of attaining success in his spiritual endeavour.] (76).

77. An ascetic who has completed all his ordained deeds in totality and has nothing left to be done, only such ascetics are able to experience the emergence of profound spiritual energy and strength that sprouts within their self. This effulgence of spiritual energy and its inherent strength comes naturally to him; it becomes his natural and characteristic state of existence. [When there is no work left undone, the ascetic finds complete rest; he remains calm and peaceful with nothing to distract him and disturb his stability of mind and calmness of demeanours. He can spend more and more time in his spiritual pursuit, instead of spending the same energy and time in pursuing this world and fulfilling his obligations in it. With sufficient time to meditate and contemplate, his spiritual shine is brought to the fore, the shine which was hitherto covered in dust because of neglect.] (77).

78. Both the mind and water have one thing in common—they are both easily disturbed, are easily moulded in the form or shape the person wants them to be in, and they are constantly on the move and very restless. [The water in a lake appears to be calm and unmoving, but when looked at closely it is found that there are subtle movements on its surface as well as inside it at all times. The surface vibrates and is full of ripples caused by the slightest hint of breeze; the aquatic life such as fish and plants perpetually keep it in a state of internal flux. Even the water in a cup is shaken by the slightest movement of the hand. The water immediately assumes the shape of the container in which it poured or kept. Likewise, the mind immediately adapts to its surroundings, or assumes the contours of the situation in which it finds interest and charm. The mind spreads over the subject matter of its interest like the cloud spreading over the sky or the mist covering the surface on a cold and frosty morning. Both the water and the mind are never at ease or rested. The mind is very fickle and transient; it constantly keeps jumping from subject to subject. This situation is to be compared with the other aspect of water and the mind. If this water is in the form of solid ice, it would not exhibit such easy changeability. Ice has a fixed shape and it retains it even if taken out of the mould; ice does not change its shape according to the vessel in which it is kept. Similarly, the mind can be controlled and put under tight leash should the man wish to do so.]

So if a man acquires the ability to control the movement of the water and the mind he would be deemed to have got such stupendous abilities that nothing remains impossible for him on this earth. [This allusion to controlling the movement of the water is a metaphoric way of saying that if a man can acquire such great abilities that he can exercise control over natural tendencies and inherent nature of the mind, there is nothing that he cannot achieve or do. He would have mastered the art of ‘control’ in its entirety. This ability assumes significance in the context of what has been said in the next verse no. 79 below which states that his ability of successfully doing the Khechari Yoga would allow him to float in the air against the principles of gravity. This ‘floating in the air’ is a metaphoric way of saying that such an aspirant who has been able to control his mind successfully can lift himself from the mundane and rise higher to achieve greater heights of spiritualism.] (78).

79. When a person has fainted, he does not feel any physical pain or agonies or sufferings. Similarly, when a man dies and sheds his body, he has liberated his own Atma or soul from its clutches or bondage along with the endless miseries and innumerable pains that are natural accompaniments of the body.

He who has broken free from all bondages (of the body and the world) is able to rise high and obtain access to the supreme transcendental Brahman just like an ascetic is able to rise high and float in the air when he has successfully achieved expertise in doing the special Yoga practice known as Khechari Mudra¹ (79).

[Note--¹This refers to the special meditation process of Yoga employing what is known as the ‘Khechari Mudra’. This entire process has been elaborately described in Yoga Upanishads, especially the Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse nos. 51-59 of the Sam Veda tradition, and The Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 5, verse nos. 40-42 describe the Khechari Mudra. The entire Canto 2 of the Yog Kundalini Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition is dedicated to the explanation of the Khechari Mudra. Basically, during this Yoga practice, the vital wind forces of life inside the body are controlled and diverted upwards to reach the head. It is a long haul exercise, taking almost twelve years to achieve any tangible benefit from it. The word *Khechari* is derived from the root ‘Khe’ which stands for

the sky, and 'Chari' means to move, to wonder or to roam. Therefore the combined word 'Khechari' means one who can move in the sky.

During the Khechari Mudra, a practitioner of Yoga is supposed to lift himself from the ground and levitate in air. This is a metaphor for his spiritual upliftment and shedding of spiritual grossness that had earlier ties his Atma to the gross world. Remaining tethered to the ground and being unable to rise in the air is a metaphoric way of saying that the creature remains tied by worldly fetters and shackled to this body and the world. Only an entity that is light and subtle would be able to rise higher in this world of grossness and density. For instance, a piece of iron sinks in a pitcher of water while a ball is able to float on the surface. Again, an ordinary balloon remains on the ground while one filled with helium or hot air can rise and move upwards towards the sky. Hence, success in doing Khechari paves the symbolic path of attaining Mukti or Moksha; it symbolises the progress that the spiritual aspirant has made in his path towards obtaining liberation and deliverance from this gross world as well as obtaining emancipation and salvation for his soul.

Briefly, in this Mudra or the posture adopted during meditation, the tongue is inverted backwards and tucked inside the rear of the mouth at the back of the hind part of the upper palate, at the spot where the wind pipe, the food pipe and the mouth cavity converge in the throat. It is generally believed that it greatly helps in focusing attention. It also helps to conquer hunger, sleep, greed, unconsciousness or numbness of the sense organs, and keeps the practitioner alert and focused, etc.]

80. The organs of the body are controlled by the Mana (mind). The Mana is controlled by the Marut or Pran (the vital life forces in the body represented by the vital winds). And the various manifestations of Maruts (i.e. the many forms of the vital winds such as Pran, Apaana, Vyan, Samaan and Udaan etc.) can be controlled by unifying them or merging them and putting them under one command as done during the state of Samadhi¹. This is the mystical state of 'dissolution' when all independent units of existence merge with one another to become one single non-dual unified whole (80).

[Note--¹The winds are very restless and fidgety, and the slightest provocation or inspiration is enough to shift them and set them in motion. They are in fact more restless and edgy than the water as described in verse no. 78 above. Besides this, the winds tend to be playing against each other, causing a 'whirlwind' sort of situation. For example, the Pran wind is upwardly mobile while the Apaana wind is downwardly mobile—obviously both are at odds with each others and create an oscillating affect on the creature's body. Suppose these two winds are combined and their energy and strength are channeled into one direction, say upwards, then it is obvious that the result would be phenomenal. And just like the hot air balloon rises from the ground, their combined effort would lift the body in the air.

All the activities of the gross physical body, whether external or internal, are made possible due to the vital winds. External activities include the functioning of the organs of perception and the organs of action, while internal activities include digestion, distribution of nutrients, circulation, movement of denser excretory products down the body and gases to the upper part of the body to be eliminated by the lungs, maintenance of body pressure and texture of the skin, control of the muscles, nerves and veins, and so many other subtle functions that go on ceaselessly till the body lives. In other words, the winds do not allow the creature to actually rest in the true sense, whether he realises it or not.

By controlling the mind, these winds create dreams during sleep, and therefore ensure that even for the short period when the mind could rest when it is not receiving any external stimuli from the physically sleeping body it cannot do so. This would naturally leave the Atma which is the 'true self' of the creature, agitated and deprived of rest and peace.

All this is taken care of during Samadhi. The consciousness in this eclectic and exalted state of existence is totally detached from the subtle body, i.e. the mind-intellect complex, as well as the gross body, i.e. the organs. Therefore, it is not pricked on the side by either of them, and so it has got nothing to do with the organs, the mind and the winds. As a consequence, the Atma finds total peace and restfulness.]

81. When the ascetic has achieved the state of ‘dissolution’ or non-physical existence marked by grossness (as narrated in verse no. 80), he becomes absolutely steady and calmed. In this state there is no activity of any kind, whether discernible or indiscernible. He lives a life that has become faultless and taintless¹.

All sorts of Sankalps (volitions, desires, aspirations, promises, vows, determinations and resolutions) have no meaning for such an exalted ascetic; he never makes any. Since there are no Sankalps, there is no need to strive to accomplish them or fulfill them, and therefore no need to do anything or get involved in any activity.

This state of dissolution is very mystical and mysterious for it can not be known by words using the faculty of speech (i.e. it cannot be described or learnt by hearing) or reached by the Mana (i.e. the mind cannot imagine and fathom how it is made possible and how ecstatic and euphoric the ascetic feels in this state). It is so unique, profound and astounding state of existence that an ascetic who practices it or who exemplifies it himself becomes an object of research on the subject (81).

[Note--¹This is because any activity is done by the physical body and not by the Atma which is the true self of the ascetic. This ‘true self’ is engrossed in perpetual meditation and is oblivious of and unconcerned with what the body does. A person is deemed to be doing anything or is involved in any activity only if his mind-intellect is involved in this activity. If anything is done with the mind elsewhere, the person would not even remember what he has done or would not expect any rewards from such activity. It is the involvement of the mind-intellect complex that decides whether or not a man can be accused of doing anything. There are instance when great ascetics appear to live a normal life even while being in a perpetual state of Samadhi, then also they are not accused of any deeds just for this simple reason—that though their body is doing something their mind, both the sub-conscious as well as the conscious aspect of the mind, is engrossed in deep meditation, it is fixed elsewhere. Such ascetics remain completely oblivious of what happens around them and what they have done with their physical body. In such cases, the doer is the body and not the ascetic whose ‘self’ is the meditating Atma detached from the physical body. Since all activities would compulsorily produce a result, whether good or bad, it would appear normal to expect that the ascetic should also suffer from the consequences of the deeds done by him—but this maxim does not apply in his case for the basic reason that ‘he’, i.e. his ‘true self, the Atma’ is not involved in that activity. The entity that has done the deed or taken the action is the body and therefore let it suffer the consequences. An enlightened ascetic who has dissolved himself into a state of ‘nothingness’ or ‘virtual non-existence’, the state called Samadhi, does not do anything and therefore no results accrue for him.]

82. A truly wise and enlightened ascetic is he who remains firmly rooted in the thoughts of Brahm internally, while externally he is very careful in what he sees and applies his mind and intellect judiciously to interpret the thing seen. [This statement has two meanings. One is that he acts in a normal way but selects only what is good, auspicious, righteous and noble from the available options during his interactions with the world—he sees things around him in this material world, analyses them intelligently by applying his mind and intellect to what he sees, and then not only acts

intelligently and coherently according to circumstances but decides what is to be seen and registered in his sub-conscious mind and what is to be just neglected and forgotten. His actions and reactions are well thought out and rationale in nature, they are always auspicious and righteous to the hilt. He might be involved in this world but this belies his spiritually enlightened state of being totally non-involved in anything and remaining detached from everything as he is in a perpetual state of Samadhi. And the second interpretation is that he sees things not only on their face value but attempts to peep deep and find out if there is any substance and truth in what is seen. The word 'Brahm' in this context would mean 'absolute truth and reality' which he searches in everything he sees in this world. Such a wise ascetic does not take anything for granted, but analyses them himself to find out if there is Brahm—or any 'truth and reality'—in it before accepting or rejecting it.]

His level of concentration and devotion to Brahm is exemplified by a folk dancer who performs a special dance sequence with a clay pitcher on the head. She would go through all the different rhythms, beats and postures of dance and synchronize them perfectly with the accompanying music, but the pitcher never falls down from her head! [This is because her sub-conscious mind is alert and her attention is permanently fixed on balancing the pitcher on the head so that it does not fall down. All her intricate dance movements and postures cause no hurdle in this concentration and single purpose of balancing the pitcher. Similarly, a wise and realised ascetic would go about his routine life in the world in a normal way without for one moment diverting his attention from Brahm or the supreme Truth at which he targets his life.] (82).

[Note-- The Book of Ecclesiastes, 9/2-20 of the Old Testament of the Holy Bible expresses the same idea in these terms—

“2: All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not: as is the good, so is the sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath.

3: This is an evil among all things that are done under the sun, that there is one event unto all: yea, also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead.

4: For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope: for a living dog is better than a dead lion.

5: For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten.

6: Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun.

7: Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works.

8: Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment.

9: Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for that is thy portion in this life, and in thy labour which thou takest under the sun.

10: Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.”]

83. An ascetic who abandons all worries and consternations, and instead wishes to remain in the blissful realm of Yoga, has only one subject to research on—and it is 'Naad', the cosmic all-pervading ethereal sound that resonates in his entire being. He tries to understand what gives rise to this sound, from where it comes, and then strives to reach the source. [This is because the resonance of Naad inside his being has given him immense and hitherto unknown and inexperienced sense of extreme bliss and

ecstasy. It kind of titillates him, and he is so enthused by it that he forgets everything else and focuses his attention on it.] (82).

Canto 3

[This entire Canto 3 is dedicated to the grand metaphysical philosophy of Advaitya or non-duality.]

1. An entity that is absolutely truthful is invariably and eternally in one, and not two or more, forms, i.e. it is unequivocally and irrefutably non-dual. Therefore, I¹ am immutable, indivisible, one and non-dual; there is nothing besides me¹. Whatever that exists is not separate from me. [In other words, the soul or pure consciousness is a truthful, non-dual and sublime entity.] (1).

[Note—¹The term ‘I’ and ‘me’ here applies to the preacher Lord Varaaaha as well as to the enlightened soul who has realised the true nature of his own ‘self’. It is such a self-realised aspirant who is being addressed here and is hereby advised to think in the terms as narrated above by the Lord.]

2. Whatever is heard or seen cannot be different, separate and distinct from Brahm. This Brahm is always eternal and uniform, transcending the definitions and limits of time and space. It is a pure, uncorrupt and immaculate divine entity. It is eternally free and emancipated. It is one, immutable and indivisible whole. It is an embodiment of bliss and happiness. It is a non-dual sublime entity.

It is a personification of Satya (Truth) and Gyan (truthful knowledge, erudition and wisdom). It is endless, measureless and fathomless.

Such an eclectic, majestic and sublime Divinity is none else but ‘me’ who am indeed the supreme transcendental Brahm. [Again, the term ‘me’ applies to the Atma which is an universal entity, being the same in the individual creature as well as in the supreme Brahm. This is the essential teaching and doctrine of the philosophy of Advaitya Vedanta which is being preached here. If one does not understand this basic idea, then the entire preaching would be wasted on him.] (2).

3. I am an embodiment of Anand (bliss and happiness). I am uniformly and eternally enlightened. I am the supreme and transcendental principle of creation, i.e. I am the ultimate Truth and the Absolute. I am a treasury from which the eternal light of the self-illuminated consciousness emanates (to illuminate everything around).

Just like the clouds which cannot touch and taint the sky though they live in the sky, I too am untouched by the numerous miseries and agonies that hallmark this deluding and artificial material world of sense objects. [The clouds are present in the sky but the sky is unaffected by them. This is proved when the clouds move away, get dispersed, or pour down as rain and get dissipated. The sky retains its original glory and untainted form. Similarly, the Atma of a realised person is not at all affected by its surroundings.] (3).

4. Only when all the miseries and agonies are removed can one hope to find real and unconditioned happiness, peace and bliss. Similarly, only when all sorts of falsehoods and deceptions are eliminated can one hope to find real Truth and the Absolute. And this ‘Truth and Absolute’ is indeed a reflection of the pure ethereal Consciousness

which personifies me. This form of mine is eternal, immutable and indivisible. [That is, my truthful form is the non-dual divine entity which is the ultimate Truth in creation, and it is Absolute and Wholesome. The only entity that possesses these qualities in this visible creation is the pure consciousness known as the Atma. Therefore, what is really 'true' in creation is the Atma.] (4).

5. There is no such thing as 'birth' or 'death'. There is not going anywhere or coming from anywhere. [Refer Canto 1, verse no. 3.] There is no concept of something being Vimal (free from any stain; to be clear and clean; to be spotless and immaculate; to be pure and beautiful; to be attractive and charming; to possess saintly and divine qualities) or some other thing being Mal (having the opposite characteristics of Vimal).

There is no such concept as 'Vedanam'—i.e. there is no separate scripture or a treasure of knowledge called the Vedas that teaches something different or better (from what is being taught here).

For an enlightened and self-realised ascetic, everything is clearly viewed as 'consciousness', and nothing else. [That is, an enlightened and wise ascetic will see the hidden truth in everything that he sees, and is never taken on a ride by its external façade of charms or sorrows. Therefore, he would remain unruffled and steady as the only thing that matters for him is 'the truthful consciousness' and nothing else. He would simply discard the rest as useless.] (5).

6. The Principle that is distinct from what is visible from the exterior is unique and very sublime and subtle. This Principle is marked by the following unique characteristics—it is Satya (truth); it is Chitta (consciousness); it is Akhand (un-fractioned, immutable and indivisible); it is Advaya (non-dual); it is invisible and without any visible attributes; and it is Niramaya (healthy and without any moral or physical ailments or tainting affects that are like a disease that might afflict a person's spiritual well being).

This Principle entity or the Absolute state of being is unique and untainted. It is called the Shiva principle—one that is truthful, eternal, untainted, detached from everything, auspicious and beautiful. [Refer also to Canto 4, verse no. 32.]

An enlightened and self-realised ascetic or any spiritual aspirant who is firmly convinced that 'this divine entity and unique Principle is none other than me in my truthful and essential form as my self or pure conscious Atma' becomes silent and calmed down. [This is because all his restlessness and agitations subside. He has nothing more to learn and achieve. All that his spirit had yearned for till now has been achieved by him. He has found the fount of eternal bliss and peace, so where is the need to be restless any more?] (6).

7. An enlightened and self-realised ascetic or any spiritual aspirant who has come to know the 'irrefutable truth and absolute reality' about himself, about the Atma, about the world at large, and about the supreme Brahm (as narrated above), acquires an exemplary sense of equanimity and fortitude. For him everything is the same—he discards the notion that there is something as birth or death, happiness or sorrow; he keeps a safe distance from getting entangled in dichotomies created by caste, creed, religion, lineage, ethnicity, etc.

He is convinced that these various perceptions of the world which are at odds with each other are all imaginary creations of the consciousness that is also his own self. [In other words, he is certain that he is the one who has wrongly created such

impressions about this world, they are his own creation, and therefore he is the only one who can get rid of them.]

With this conviction, he becomes silent. [Whom else should he blame for all his misconceptions and misgivings except his own self? Who else is to be blamed for his miseries and agonies except himself? So he becomes quiet.] (7).

8. That Absolute Principle is unique inasmuch as it possesses the following virtues—it is complete and wholesome; it is non-dual and one; it is un-fractioned, immutable and indivisible Consciousness; and it is free from the distortions and tainting affects created by this multifaceted and oddity-ridden world.

‘I am this unique sublime entity that is supreme, absolute, transcendental, truthful, conscious, formless and attributeless’. With this firm conviction, a wise and enlightened ascetic or spiritual aspirant becomes silent and calmed down (8).

9. When one has thus become enlightened and has acquired first-hand knowledge of the fundamental truth about the Absolute Principle, he cannot be led astray by delusions arising out of ignorance and made to believe that the ‘absolute truth’ is false.

He remains steady and uniform in all the three dimensions of time—the past, the present and the future. He is not tainted by any delusions and other faults associated with this artificial world.

The sublime and subtle form (of this universal principle known as Brahm as well as the Atma) that has the eclectic virtues of being eternal, steady, uniform, unchanging and omnipresent—verily, it is and has always been my true form (9).

10. My true form and nature is one which has no attributes and qualifications, which is eternal and infinite, and which transcends even the blissful state obtained during the Sushupta (deep sleep) state of existence¹.

Verily, this sublime and transcendental state is my true and eternal form and nature (10).

[Note--¹This Sushupta state is a transitory stage between two phases of sleep. When a man sleeps, he first passes through the dreaming state when his mind remains active, and then when his mind momentarily retires to go to sleep he enters the Sushupta stage. But soon he comes back to the dreaming stage or wakes up directly into the world in the waking state of consciousness. Wise and expert ascetics can practice to make this third stage, i.e. the Sushupta stage, a perpetual state of existence for their consciousness. Since in this stage the mind is asleep, therefore there is no perception of the world, and with the loss of all such perceptions, the world becomes non-existent. And with this defunct world subside all its charms or miseries. With nothing to disturb the tranquility of the consciousness, the latter lies in a perpetual state of eternal and profound bliss and contentedness. This state, if made perpetual and permanent, is called the Turiya state. In this state, even though the ascetic wakes up into this world, he still remains mentally ‘asleep’ and oblivious of this world. These four states of existence of the consciousness have been explained in this present Varaaha Upanishad in Canto 2, verse nos. 59-64, 72.

So essentially this verse proclaims that a truly realised ascetic or spiritual aspirant is one who remains permanently in a state of beatitude and felicity notwithstanding the physicality and grossness of his body or whether the body is awake or asleep.]

11. Even as the darkness of the night is instantaneously removed by the rays of the sunlight, the grave darkness represented by this world is dispelled only when the bright light emanating from the supreme Lord known as Hari shines upon it. [That is,

only when a man takes the shelter of the Lord God is he able to get rid of the horrendous darkness of delusions and misconceptions that has engulfed him from all sides in this world. Darkness has created the fear of imaginary ghosts and phantoms representing numerous miseries, agonies, torments, perplexities, confusions and doubts that are so natural and inherent to this world, but when the presence of the Lord is felt, all such fears and consternations are automatically dispelled. Therefore, a devotee of the Lord has virtually vanquished fears of all sorts in this world.] (11).

12. [Lord Varaaha said—] ‘A Jiva (living being) is freed from the darkness surrounding his inner-self if he has unwavering devotion and faith in me (the Supreme Being). This is achieved by worshipping my holy feet and remembering them at all times.

There is no other means by which one can be freed from the fear of death and its effects. [That is, having unfaltering faith in the Lord is the only means of attaining freedom from the fear of death and what would happen after it. For the devotee is certain that the Lord would take of all for his sake.] (12).

13. Even as a man desirous of receiving wealth from a wealthy person shows respect to him and praises him profusely in order to please him, who cannot get freedom from the fetters of this world by praising and honouring the gracious and benevolent Lord of this world? [When the Lord is pleased by the devotion of the person, he would certainly find ways to set him free from his bondage just like a wealthy man would shower his magnanimity on the seeker of wealth by giving him a huge largesse when he is pleased with him.] (13).

14. As soon as the Sun rises in the horizon, the entire world becomes active and begins to do something or the other. Similarly, when this world comes in my contact, it begins to show signs of life and activity. [Here the Lord is referring to the cosmic Consciousness and the vital life forces of Nature that inject life into this world. Without this infusion of the consciousness and spark of life, the world would have remained inert and dead.] (14).

15. Just as a man imagines that there is a silver foil inside the oyster shell because of the silvery glaze of its inner lining, this entire world, stretching from the great outer reaches of the creation at the cosmic level to the microcosmic form of the creation at the level of this mortal world and its resident individual creature, is imagined to be present in my form. That is, my universal immutable and uniform nature is imagined to be impregnated with so many diverse forms of the creation as one can imagine. This is due to Maya—i.e. my own dynamic illusion-creating ability that this mirage comes into being (15).

16. Remember, I (Lord Varaaha) do not have the numerous forms that are visible in this creation—such as the notion that this is a Chandal (an outcaste), this is an animal, this is a tree or this is an image of some God. I am one single and non-dual entity that uniformly pervades in this creation¹. There is no question of there being duality in my truthful form (16).

[Note--¹The individual entities appear to have separate and independent existence. They have their unique characteristic features and nature. No two units of this visible creation are exactly identical. This is the basis upon which this material world works; this the premise on which a person's unique identity is established. But this notion is

superficial and fundamentally flawed and erroneous; it is a distortion of the fact. The fact is that the same Brahm prevails in each and every unit of creation, and therefore there is no difference between them. This is the enlightened metaphysical and spiritual view. To cite an example we can take the case of the Ghatakash, Mathakash and Mahakash as cited in Canto 2, verse no. 50, or the instance of the mud pot or the golden ornament given in note to Canto 2, verse no. 14 of this Upanishad. It must be remembered that this Upanishad espouses and expounds upon the philosophy of Advaitya Vedanta which is the eclectic spiritual philosophy of non-duality and uniformity in creation.]

17. A person who has lost track of his whereabouts is confused about his bearings and does not have any idea where he is located or in which direction he should move because he has even lost his sense of direction. Such a person gets all the more confused when he sees new landmarks or milestones to determine his location and the direction where he is supposed to proceed, instead of consulting his compass and map in his attempt to find out where he is and where he is headed to. [A person who has lost his spiritual bearings is under delusions. He is as confused as man who is hallucinating. He confuses the directions given to him to go to a place for example, and each time he sees a new sight about which he is not previously aware he thinks that he has gone in the wrong direction. In other words, if a person is not certain of anything, he is bound to be easily misled and become perplexed by countless advises that he is given. If he is not sure about the real intent of the tenets of the scriptures, if he is now wise and erudite enough to judge what is good and what is not, he would be a fertile breeding ground for confusions and doubts caused by numerous interpretations of these tenets and various methods by which the basic philosophy of the scriptures have been explained. This man is no different from a drunken man who begins to hallucinate, who stumbles and falls on his path, and who is so numbed by the effect of alcohol that he loses sight of his destination and target.]

Similarly, for those whose true wisdom, erudition and intelligence have been decimated or eclipsed or mired by utter ignorance of the truth and its accompanying delusions, it is only for them that this delusory world of artificiality and confusions exist. But it does not exist for me (because I am wise, erudite, enlightened and intelligent; because I am not ignorant or deluded about my true identity; because I am the all-knowing and omniscient Consciousness known as the Atma) (17).

18. There is no such thing for me, the enlightened being in this creation, as the gross body and its organs, nor are there any independent entities such as Pran (vital winds), Mana (mind), Buddhi (intelligence), Ahankar (the notion of the self tinged with ego, arrogance and haughtiness), Chitta (sub-conscious and conscience), and Maya (delusions and illusions) at the micro level of existence as the individual creature, nor as the vast and fathomless Akash (sky) etc. at the macro level of existence¹. [That is, when one sees the true form of creation, he understands that all these numerous forms are basically one single Brahm revealed in all these forms. The enlightened man realises that his true 'self' is the pure consciousness known as the Atma, and that this Atma is none but Brahm personified. For such a wise man, the only thing that matters is the non-dual Brahm; he sees nothing else but this single divinity in each aspect of creation. So, all the various units of creation listed herein above are, in essence and truth, nothing but this Brahm revealed in their forms. Refer also to verse no. 16 above.] (18).

[Note—¹This verse can be read in another way also—"For an enlightened and self-realised man like me, the gross body and its component units such as the Pran, Mana,

Buddhi, Ahankar, Chitta and Maya have no relevance; they do not matter for me and I do not bother about them. At the same time, I do not distinguish between the sky at any level of existence—because for me there is no distinction between the sky at the micro level of existence, i.e. the sky present inside the body, and the sky present in the macro level of existence, i.e. the vast sky that is present outside the body. This is because I have come to know that the sky element is one, indivisible and immutable entity like my own ‘self’. Like the case of the same sky assuming different names such as being called a Ghatakash, Mathakash and Mahakash just for the practical purpose of understanding its different forms of existence, the body and its characteristic attributes along with its inseparable components such as Pran, Mana, Buddhi, Ahankar, Chitta and Maya are envisioned or conceptualized just to explain my worldly existence.

This is done as I am an ethereal entity like the sky element, and like the sky I too cannot be seen and be made a subject matter of various perceptions that the body uses to become aware of the gross world of material sense objects.”]

19. There is no doer of anything, no enjoyer or sufferer, and no one who can make others enjoy or suffer from anything. There is no one else except me (the Supreme Being) who is pure consciousness and blissful. And that is ‘me’. [Again, this word ‘me’ assumes two meanings—one, it refers to Lord Varaaha who is preaching this Upanishad, and two, it refers to the enlightened man who has realised the truth about himself.] (19).

20. Just like the case when the image of the sun when seen as a reflection in a water body which is not steady also appears to be shaking, simmering, distorted, fickle and unsteady, when the Atma (which is essentially uncorrupt and steady like the sun here) is associated with Ahankar (the negative notion of ego, pride, arrogance and haughtiness which are all vanities) it produces an ever-changing and distorted view of this world. For a man who perceives this world with the vision tainted with Ahankar, the truth eludes him and he would see a distorted version of the world shorn of reality¹ (20).

[Note--¹When the man sees this world with eyes of ego and selfishness, or ‘Ahankar’, when he thinks that ‘I’ has a distinct and independent existence than the rest of the world, he would see everything that he sees in the context of this ‘I’. This perception is different from the situation when the world is seen with the vision of ‘we’ instead of ‘I’. A vision of the world tinged with the selfish notion of ‘I’ is constantly changing—anything that appears to be beneficial to ‘me’ is acceptable and sought after even though it may cause harm to ‘them’. This self-centered and selfish vision of the world is due to the Atma seeing it through the prism of Ahankar, i.e. thorough the self-centric ego of ‘I’. In this process the creature forgets that this ‘I’ is not what he has made it out to be in his stupidity and ignorance. This ‘I’ is the pure conscious Atma which is supposed to be neutral and egoless. This Atma is a universal and uniform entity; it is present in all the creatures in equal measure. When this wisdom actually dawns upon him, he rejects this notion of Ahankar and disassociates his Atma from its tainting affects.]

21. Chitta (the sub-conscious mind; the ability of the mind to remember and think) is at the root cause of the world. Pay attention on this. It is a great wonder how you have relied upon this world which is the creation of the Chitta. [That is, if the mind wants, the world would cease to exist. This is also one of the main teachings of *Lord Buddha*—that it is the mind that has created the world, and to control the world one

ought to control his mind. Once the mind is controlled, and through it the world, the root cause of all miseries and sorrows would be eliminated.] (21).

22. Think deeply—where is the huge riches of mighty kings? Who is a Brahmin (and who is not)? Where is the world (you are so obsessed with)? Ancient traditions are man-made, and for a wise man they have no existence or significance or worth. For him, they have been destroyed or done away with. This huge and infinite world comes to a naught one day just like drops of nectar evaporate into nothingness. Millions of kings die, fall out of luck and grace, and vanish into the void of history; traditions are created, run their course, and finally get outdated and replaced with new ones that remain in vogue for some time only to be forgotten later. [Nothing is steady and permanent in this world. How can you believe in a certain thing that has no permanence; that is here today and gone tomorrow?] (22).

23. If a wise, erudite and enlightened man is proud of his spiritual knowledge and acumen, then this also comes under the category of vanity and self-pride, or Ahankar. Then such a man is deemed to be of a non-auspicious and non-holy nature; he is deemed to be non-godly and no better than the man who is actually ignorant and worse off than an ignorant man who knows that he is ignorant but is humbled by his ignorance and lack of knowledge.

All his knowledge goes in vain and he is regarded as a stupid man (23).

24. When worldly negative traits called the ‘Vikaars’¹ such as having ‘Raag’ (attachments, infatuations, attractions and strong yearnings for anything or anyone in this material world) etc. are first observed to be making their appearance, and a wise man uses his discrimination and intelligence to burn (eliminate) them in their infancy, there is no scope of their developing into full blown traits (which would then be most difficult for him to uproot and would become a cause of much dismay and agony for the man later on) (24).

[Note--¹*Vikaars* are the numerous faults, shortcomings, imperfections, drawbacks or errors and blemishes in the character of a creature that cast a shadow on the otherwise ideal, immaculate and perfect nature of the subject under consideration. These Vikaars are like the dark shadow of the earth that eclipses the bright disc of the beautiful moon during the lunar eclipse. In other words, they prevent the original beauty and shine of the subject to come to the fore by casting a dark veil of evil tendencies and traits over its surface like the case of the solar eclipse when the moon prevents the brilliant splendour of the sun from being viewed from earth by coming in between the sun and the earth during the solar eclipse.

There are a number of Upanishads listing the different Vikaars, such as the *Yogshikha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 10-11, lists the nineteen Vikaars; the *Yogtattva Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 12-13, lists sixteen Vikaars; The *Shaarirako-panishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 17, lists eight Vikaars; the *Mudgal Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse no. 6 of Rig Veda tradition as well as *Adhyatma Ramayan* of Veda Vyas, Lanka Kand, Canto 3, verse no. 29, list six Vikaars; the *Varaaha Upanishad*, canto 1, verse no. 9 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, and *Mudgal Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse no. 4 of Rig Veda tradition lists six *Urmis* or Vikaars; *Mandal Brahmin Upanishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, Brahmin 1, section 2, verse nos.1, lists five Vikaars.

Besides the above listing of Vikaars, the epic Ramcharit Manas penned by the renowned poet-philosopher Goswami Tulsidas also lists the Vikaars in their various combinations and manifestations—(a) The 4 Vikaars or faults as mentioned in this epic are these: (1) Baal Kand, Doha 285, Chaupai 1/2 states that the four faults are

Mada, Moha, Krodh, and Bhram. (2) Doha 43, Chaupai 3/1 says that they are Kaam, Krodh, Mada and Moha. (3) Baal Kand, Doha 112, enumerates them as Shok, Moha, Sandeha, and Bhram. (4) Baal Kand, Doha 128 says that they are Moha, Matsarya, Mada, and Maan. (5) Aranya Kand, Doha 43 lists these four faults as Kaam, Krodh, Lobh and Mada. (6) Aranya Kand Doha 44, Chaupai 2/1 enumerates the four faults as follows--Kaam, Krodh, Mada and Matsarya.

(b) The 3 Vikaars or faults according to *Ram Charit Manas*, Aranya Kand, Doha 38/A, are the following—Kaam, Krodh and Lobh

(c) The 2 Vikaars or faults according to *Ram Charit Manas*, Aranya Kand, Doha 43, Chaupai 5/1—Kaam and Krodh.

(d) The 1 Vikaar or fault or shortcoming or imperfection which is regarded as the greatest fault however is ‘Moha’ (ignorance-induced delusions and its attendant attractions towards this world and its charms, leading to attachments, infatuations and a sense of belonging to it). This Moha is compared to the dark night in *Ram Charit Manas*, Baal Kand, Doha 116, Chaupai 3/1, and Aranya Kand, Doha 93, Chaupai 1/2. Moha is like a moral disease that afflict all creatures and eat them up like cancer—Uttar Kand, Doha 121, Chaupai 15/1; Moha makes everyone blind—Uttar Kand, Doha 70, Chaupai 4/1.]

25. A man who thinks himself to be perfect and well learned is often observed to be seeing and trying to find faults with others, always pointing out their shortcomings or errors, and lamenting their presence in the other person. Only if such a learned man could divert his tendency and ability of seeing everything so closely and minutely and in great detail, attempting to analyse them and be perfect to the core, to his own self, and attempt to find who he actually is, or what his true form and nature is, or what are the hindrances that have prevented him from achieving perfection and realising the true goal of life which would give him freedom from all fetters that have been shackling his soul to this world of transmigration—then there is nothing in this world which can tie him down and prevent his liberation and deliverance. [That is, instead of finding faults with others, a wise and enlightened man should attempt to see his own faults which have not given him the peace of mind that he so much seeks but which eludes him—as is evident from the fact that he gets agitated when he sees that there is some fault in the other person. He must realise that he has not learnt to be detached, dispassionate and neutral in the first place because he is getting unnecessarily perturbed or annoyed at things that should not bother him at all, and therefore he is not perfect himself. So why should he be pricking holes in others?] (25).

26. Oh great sage (Ribhu)! A person who is not aware of the fundamental principles of Atma but still seeks emancipation and salvation by attempting to obtain it through superficial means such as by obtaining various Siddhis (expertise in mystical powers obtained as a reward of Yoga), by spending huge amounts of money (such as giving large donations and alms, doing huge expensive fire sacrifices and other religious rituals and ceremonies etc.), by Mantra (mystical formulas consisting of letters or words that are chanted or repeated silently and are said to empower the patron with great spiritual and temporal powers), by numerous actions and deeds (going on pilgrimage, doing penance and austerity, observing religious vows and sacraments etc.), by waiting for an opportune time and circumstance (such as an auspicious moment based on lunar or solar calendar, or for the malignant stars and planets to become benevolent, or for old age when he plans to do all the righteous deeds at once to wash off his lifetime of sins, or to wait for the time when he would go to the forest to do Tapa and observe Sanyas, etc.), or by other means (such as employing priests

and faith healers to do the task for them). How incredulous and ridiculous is it? [Refer also to Canto 2, verse no. 74 in this context.] (26).

27. Such attempts (as enumerated in verse no. 26) are not made by those who are self-realised and well-versed with the true concept of Atma, for they think of nothing else but the Atma. Such a man is fully contented and satisfied. He is fulfilled and does not run behind Avidya (false or erroneous knowledge about something being true whereas in fact it is actually false). That is, they do not pursue other methods to obtain liberation and deliverance for themselves (as enumerated in verse no. 26) except to research their own Atma, for the 'truth' and the path of spiritual liberation and deliverance is hidden inside their own self, and it is not to be found externally anywhere (27).

28. The concept that 'this world is there', or 'this world exists' is called Avidya. [Therefore, those people who are convinced that there is something real called 'world' are regarded as being mired in Avidya, or have the predominance of Avidya in them. Such people forget that this is not the truth; they perhaps are not even aware that this is not the truth. This living in a fool's paradise is a characteristic feature of Avidya. Refer Canto 2, verse no. 73 also.]

A self-realised person who has knowledge of the fundamental principles of Atma knows that everything other than the Atma is false. [That is, he knows that this world is non-existent because it is an imagination of the mind, and the fact that anything that is imaginary cannot be true. The only entity that is true is the Atma, first because it is consciousness personified, and second because it has the grand characteristics of being eternal and infinite which are the hallmarks of 'Truth'. This world lacks both.]

How can such a wise and realised man drown in the ocean-like world created out of ignorance? How can he even imagine taking a dip in this imaginary contraption? (28).

29. All the means listed in verse no. 26—such as material wealth, Mantras, deeds and actions, time and circumstances, and all other tricks—can at best provide great mystical powers, or bestow honour, glory, majesty and fame. But it must be clearly understood that they do not aid in the attainment of any spiritual benefits or help one to obtain liberation and deliverance from his worldly shackles. They cannot help him to reach the citadel of spiritual attainment and obtain the supreme stature of being one with the absolute transcendental divinity known as supreme Brahm (29).

30. When all the worldly desires and aspirations are eliminated, and instead of it the only eclectic reward sought is the realisation of the (blissful, eternal, sublime, all-pervading, supreme and transcendental conscious entity known as the truthful) Atma—for such a wise and erudite man who seeks this high knowledge there is no cause for desiring attainment of any Siddhis (mystical and other powers and their accompanying authority). So he cannot as someone who is foolish or stupid in such a case. [That is, only foolish people who do not understand that vital effort, time and energy should not be wasted on worldly pursuits or acquiring powers or authority that cannot permanently liberate and deliver their souls indulge in so many practices as mentioned in verse no. 26. On the contrary, wise people concentrate their energy and attention on self-realisation and finding the path that can lead them to the ultimate Truth of existence by finding which all falsehoods would be automatically eliminated

(like the instance when darkness is automatically vanquished when light is shone). They would rather seek the ‘truth’ about themselves, their pure conscious Atma, and then endeavour to merge it with the cosmic, universal ‘truth’ known as the supreme Consciousness or the cosmic Atma or Brahm so as to break the chain of birth and death to which they are bound in this mortal world. This achievement gives them spiritual eternity, contentedness and happiness along with an infinite sense of peace and bliss.] (30).

Canto 4

[The following two Cantos, 4 and 5, are a conversation between sages Ribhu who has been taught by Lord Varaaha, and sage Nidagh who comes to him with his metaphysical questions seeking the great sage’s answers for them.]

1.1. Sage Nidagh approached the great sage Ribhu¹ and humbly asked him what were the signs of being ‘Jivan Mukta’²—i.e. being spiritually liberated and delivered even while the person is alive and has a gross body which goes about its normal duties in this world? (1.1).

[Note--¹Sage *Ribhu* and *Nidagh*—Sage Ribhu is said to be one of the several mind-born sons of the creator Brahma. With this gene running in his blood, he was by nature wise, enlightened and self-realised, but in order to conform to established traditions he took initiation from his elder brother Sanatkumar who was himself one of the mind-born sons of Brahma. Ribhu was renunciation personified, was unpretentious and free from all shortcomings and blemishes that tainted others in Brahma’s creation. His only attire was his own skin, and he lived in a thatched hut.

It is believed that his first disciple was sage Nidagh who was the son of the great sage Pulastya. It so happened that once Ribhu, during his wanderings, came to the hermitage of Nidagh and saw that he was studying and chanting the hymns of the Vedas. Ribhu felt very pitiful for him and advised him that if one did not the essence of what the Vedas preach and did not come to know the Absolute and the Truth and become self-realised then all this study is an exercise in futility. Thereafter Nidagh accepted his discipleship and learned the intricacies of the knowledge of the Atma and Brahm.

Under the instructions of his Guru Ribhu, Nidagh accepted the life of a householder, married and established his hermitage on the banks of river Devika. After a long time, Ribhu remembered his disciple and wished to see him, and thus came to his hermitage. Nidagh could not recognize him, though he welcomed the guest with the greatest of respect and fed him. After meals, Nidagh asked Ribhu whether he was satisfied with the meal, who he was, where did he come from, and where he was going.

Then Ribhu preached him—‘Oh son! I am not the body or the Pran (life forces livening inside the body) that gets fed or feels quenched of hunger or thirst. The ‘self’ or the Atma is as eternal, infinite, all-pervading and omnipresent as the sky, so there is no question of it coming from anywhere and going anywhere. All these aspects of creation—to be satisfied or not, to come and go—are related to the ever-changing ‘untruth’, so do not repose any trust and faith on such things that are transient, unsteady and fickle. Don’t be wasting your precious life and time in delusions, hallucinating and swinging between this and that. Instead, become uniform and steady on the Truth which is unchallengeable, unequivocal and irrefutable. Concentrate upon your Atma, the pure ‘conscious self’.’ Nidagh recognized his Guru and fell on his august feet in surrender and overwhelmed with gratitude.

After another long spell of time, the Guru once again decided to visit his disciple. When Ribhu reached the hermitage he found there was a great procession passing on the road and Nidagh was waiting patiently to let the procession pass so that he can cross the road. On enquiry he told Ribhu—who he could again not recognize—that the king of Virpur was passing through. Ribhu wished to rekindle the fire of enlightenment in his disciple, so asked him—‘Say, who is that king in this melee?’ Ribhu replied that he was sitting on the biggest elephant. Ribhu asked him to point out some characteristic feature so that he can distinguish between the king and the elephant from a distance. At this seemingly impertinent question, Nidagh pushed Ribhu down and mounted on his back, saying—‘Now, I am the king and you are that elephant’. The wise teacher was unperturbed, and asked to point out the difference between them—i.e. how has he become a king, and how come the man he is riding upon has become an elephant. Shocked beyond belief, Nidagh suddenly realised that the man was no one else but his revered Guru Ribhu. He fell at the enlightened teacher’s feet and asked forgiveness. Merciful and kind as the Ribhu was, he not only pardoned his disciple but preached him the fact that the external body is not the true identity of the creature, and that to recognize someone based on this physical gross feature is the most ignorant and stupid thing to do, something not expected from a so-called learned man of the Vedas. So, finally Nidagh realised the futility of studying the Vedas without understanding the principle enshrined in their tenets. Thereafter, Nidagh finally found his spiritual liberation and deliverance, and though he lived in this world he lived as a ‘Jivan Mukta’—i.e. a person who is freed from the fetters of the world and the body in spite of living in this world and having a physical body but is totally detached and unconcerned about them. When the proper time comes, such persons find ‘Videha Mukti’—i.e. they shed their mortal body even without being aware of it being shed, and merge their ‘self’ with the supreme Self, the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm, never to take birth again. This is because at the instant enlightenment dawns upon them, they stop being associated with any of the deeds done by the body, and remain absolutely neutral. Therefore no consequences accumulate for them, and they do not have to take a re-birth to go through the process of either enjoying or suffering these consequences.

Coming back to the story of Ribhu, when this news reached Sanatkumar, the Guru of Ribhu, he was extremely pleased and impressed, and to commemorate this occasion and to immortalize this unique virtue of forgiveness, he added the first letter ‘Ksha’ (pronounced as a combined utterance of the letter ‘Ka’ and ‘Cha’) of the word ‘Kshamaa’ meaning ‘forgiveness’ in the Sanskrit language, to Ribhu’s name. Thus, henceforth Ribhu came to be known as ‘Ribhuksha’ (Ribhu + Ksha). Since Ribhuksha was ever in a blissful mood, the word of bliss and ecstasy, viz. ‘Anand’ was appended to his name, and it finally became ‘Ribhukshaanand’ (Ribhu + Ksha + Anand).

The great metaphysical preaching of sage Ribhu for the benefit of Nidagh appears in Tejobindu Upanishad, Cantos 5-6 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, and in Maho-panishad, Canto 5 of the Sam Veda tradition.

²Jivan Mukta is a spiritual state of enlightened existence when the Atma of the creature lives in a gross body and goes about the daily affairs of the world instead of abandoning it as done during the time of the death of the physical body. This Jivan Mukti—or freedom from all spiritual delusions and entanglements—is different from being Videha Mukti which entails total elimination of the body. The difference is obvious in the terminology itself. A person who has achieved the eclectic state of being Jivan Mukta is non-attached with the world, while he who is Videha Mukta is not attached with the body itself. A Videha Mukta person’s body may be burning or suffering from some grave disease, but he is not even aware of this suffering. The Jivan Mukta person remains totally aloof from the material aspects of the world, and since the body is an inseparable part of the process of detachment from this world, this marks the earlier stage of Videha Mukti. The latter term is also applicable to those persons who have actually left the physical body and attained emancipation and

salvation for their souls. The Jivan Mukti is a precursor for the Videha Mukti; the latter is a higher state of enlightenment as compared to the former which is the first step towards final emancipation and salvation.

The concept of Jivan Mukti has been the subject of discussion of a number of Upanishads—viz. (a) Krishna Yajur Veda tradition—Sarwasaar Upanishad, verse no. 2; Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 6, 15, 42, Canto 4, verse no. 1, 21-35, 18-33, 42-43, Canto 5, verse no. 56, 59, 75-76; Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 79-80, and Canto 3, verse no. 33; Katho-panishad, Canto 2, Valli 2, verse no. 12-13, and Canto 2, Valli 3, verse no. 4, 6-15; Akchu-panishad, Canto 2, verse no. 32-39; Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 1-32; Brahm/Amrit Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 5; Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 46-47, 144, 151, 161. (b) Shukla Yajur Veda tradition—Paingalo-panishad, canto 3, verse no. 5, and canto 3, verse no. 9-11; Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 1/4/3-4; 2/3/6-7; 2/4/5-6; Adhyatma Upanishad, verse nos. 12 and 4-47; Muktika-panishad, Canto 2. (c) Atharva Veda—Ram Rahasaya Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 11-17; Annapurna Upanishad, canto 2.]

1.2. Ribhu replied that he would answer as requested (1.2).

1.3. People with seven types of ‘Bhumikas’¹ are deemed to be Jivan Mukta (1.3).

[Note—The word *Bhumika* refers to the stages of development of wisdom. It also means the background, characteristics, qualities, traits, attributes or virtues that helps one to become spiritually wise and enlightened. It would mean to view the pure conscious self known as the Atma against the backdrop or background of certain level of spiritual development. Bhumika is also the role certain characteristic features of this creation play in the spiritual evolvment of an aspirant. It involves inculcation of certain auspicious virtues in a man that would act as standards to determine the level of spiritual development or evolvment or enhancement he has attained. The Bhumikas would act as the gold-standard to judge a man’s stature in the sphere of spiritualism. Hence, the term Bhumika would mean certain characteristics that must be present in a person, or certain criteria against which he must be weighed if he is to be called a Jivan Mukta person, i.e. a person who has freed himself from the fetters that shackle others to this mundane life in this world.

Refer also to Canto 5, verse nos. 74-75 of the present Varaaha Upanishad. The Akchu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 2, verse nos. 27-42, describe this concept of Bhumika in the context of Yoga. This is Chapter 23 of this volume.]

1.4. The first Bhumika is to have ‘Shubhecha’—i.e. to have auspicious, righteous, holy and noble desires, wishes, expectations, hopes and aspirations. [Refer also to verse nos. 1.41 and 3 of the present Canto 4.] (1.4).

1.5. The second Bhumika is ‘Vichaarna’—i.e. to consider, ponder and contemplate. [Refer also to verse nos. 1.42 and 4 of the present Canto 4.] (1.5).

1.6. The third Bhumika is ‘Tanumanusi’—i.e. to think deeply, have deep insight and penetrating foresight; to have a sharp and analytical mind that can view things clinically and be able to analytically and surgically dissect them to come to the truth, to be able to analyse things in the correct perspective, to be able to use wisdom, intelligence and analytical abilities of the mind judiciously to deduce the truth and reality of things correctly and consequentially arrive at the correct conclusion. [Refer also to verse nos. 1.14 and 5 of the present Canto 4.] (1.6).

1.7 The fourth Bhumika is ‘Satwa’ or ‘Satya’—i.e. to be able to distinguish between the truth and non-truth, to be able to separate the half truth from the half false, to be

able to distinguish between the half truth and the full truth, or to be able to discriminate between the apparent truth and the absolute truth. It is to think of that entity which has a truthful and real existence, and discard that which is not so. [Refer also to verse nos. 2 and 6 of the present Canto 4.] (1.7).

1.8. The fifth Bhumika is 'Anaasakta'—i.e. the ability to be sincerely free from all attachments, attractions, infatuations and entanglements of all kinds; to remain exemplarily detached, dispassionate and indifferent towards everything and everyone in this world. [Refer also to verse nos. 2 and 7 of the present Canto 4.] (1.8).

1.9. The sixth Bhumika is 'Padaartha Bhavana'—i.e. to having absolutely no concern about material things; to remain oblivious of even the existence of any material things in this world which are not true and do not have any spiritual value in them; giving no thought to anything or substance in this creation except the Absolute Truth personified as the supreme transcendental Brahm who is the Ishwar or the Lord of creation, and seeing this Lord in everything in existence. It also entails never to think that this thing is good and that is bad, this is obtainable and that is not, this is beneficial and that is not, because the same ubiquitous and universal Brahm uniformly pervades in all the things of this creation. [Refer also to verse nos. 8-9 of the present Canto 4.] (1.9).

1.10. The seventh Bhumika is 'Turiya'—i.e. to live perpetually in a blissful state of consciousness that transcends the third stage of Sushupta which is the deep sleep state of this consciousness. [Refer also to verse nos. 2 and 10 of the present Canto 4.] (1.10).

1.11. This seventh Bhumika is akin to the stage of meditation when the ascetic hears the cosmic ethereal sound called Pranav or OM resonating in his entire being. [The vibrations from this cosmic sound help to massage his nerves so as to make him experience an extreme sense of ecstasy which gives him a lot of spiritual thrill, peace and bliss which cannot be measured.]

This ethereal sound of cosmic Pranav or OM has four Bhumikas or components represented by the letters A, U and M followed by the Chandra Bindu (the dot-and-crescent-moon placed on a letter to produce the nasal sound resembling the hum of the bumble bee) (1.11).

[Note—The concept of OM and Naad: Refer also to Canto 5, verse nos. 69-70 of the present Varaaha Upanishad.]

1.12. These subtle components of OM are equivalent to the different states of existence of creation, such as the gross, the subtle and the causal, followed by the 'seed' that is pure consciousness honourably ensconced in the causal body, being the 'cause' that gives life and meaning to the entire setup. [These four states of existence are further defined in the following verses.] (1.12).

1.13. The four components are also equivalents of the four states of existence of the consciousness—viz. Jagrat (waking), Swapna (dreaming), Sushupta (deep sleep), and Turiya (post Sushupta) (1.13).

1.14. Each of the four components of Pranav (here a synonym of the supreme transcendental invisible cosmic entity known as Brahm) can be said to exist in these four states of consciousness.

Hence, the first component of Pranav represented by the letter 'A' has four symbolic states of existence—viz. the first state is the 'Sthul' or the Jagrat (waking) state of consciousness, and is gross in nature (because only a gross body wakes up and interacts with this world which is itself gross and material in nature). This state of existence is called the 'Vishwa' or the world at large (1.14).

1.15. The second state of this 'A' is the 'Sukshma' or the Swapna (dreaming) state of consciousness, and is subtle in nature (because the sub-conscious mind and the intellect are the only active components in this stage as the gross body is inactive). This state is called 'Taijas' or the state of subtle existence when the creature dreams (1.15).

1.16. The third state of this 'A' is the 'Beej' or the Sushupta (deep sleep) state of consciousness, and is causal in nature (because it is the causative state from which the rest of the states originate; it is so-called because it harbours the Atma, the consciousness that is the basic cause and reason for this existence). This state is called 'Pragya' or the state in which the hidden knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment so crucial for the creation to come into being, sustain itself and finally find its auspicious end lives¹ (1.16).

[Note—¹To be 'Pragya' is a virtuous characteristic of the Principal known as the Atma. Another characteristic of the Atma is to be a 'Shakshi' or be a mere neutral witness to all that is happening around it in this world and whatever the body does in with its three component parts—viz. the gross, the subtle and the causal. The characteristic of the Atma as a Shakshi is described below in verse no. 1.17.]

1.17. The fourth component of 'A' is its 'Saakshi' form, i.e. the state of existence of the Principal entity known as the Atma when it neutrally observes all that is happening around it without getting emotionally involved in it. This eclectic principle of non-involvement that the Atma follows is equivalent to and known as the fourth state of existence called Turiya (because it is a perpetually blissful state that has transcended the Sushupta state of consciousness). [When a man is not involved emotionally and internally in the affairs of the world, when he remains neutral and has developed a profound degree of equanimity of disposition, he is ever peaceful and rested, remaining unruffled and unmoved by all the upheavals and turmoil that surround the wise and enlightened man in this world. He remains calm and poised inspite of being physically present in the world surrounded by its miseries and pains because they do not affect him. In this state of Turiya, nothing matters to the Atma; nothing rubs against it so much as to bother it, or either grasp its attention or divert it from its present state of remaining in a perpetual state of blissful existence.] (1.17).

1.18. [The same four states as were applied to the first component 'A' are now envisioned in the second component of OM, viz. 'U' as follows—]

The second component of Pranav represented by the letter 'U' has four symbolic states of existence—viz. the first state is the 'Sthul' or the Jagrat (waking) state of consciousness, and is gross in nature (because only a gross body wakes up and interacts with this world which is itself gross and material in nature). This state of existence is called the 'Vishwa' or the world at large (1.18).

1.19. The second state of this 'U' is the 'Sukshma' or the Swapna (dreaming) state of consciousness, and is subtle in nature (because the sub-conscious mind and the intellect are the only active components in this stage as the gross body is inactive). This state is called 'Taijas' or the state of subtle existence when the creature dreams (1.19).

1.20. The third state of this 'U' is the 'Beej' or the Sushupta (deep sleep) state of consciousness, and is causal in nature (because it is the causative state from which the rest of the states originate; it is so-called because it harbours the Atma, the consciousness that is the basic cause and reason for this existence). This state is called 'Pragya' or the state in which the hidden knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment so crucial for the creation to come into being, sustain itself and finally find its auspicious end lives (1.20).

1.21. The fourth component of 'U' is its 'Saakshi' form, i.e. the state of existence of the Principal entity known as the Atma when it neutrally observes all that is happening around it without getting emotionally involved in it. This eclectic principle of non-involvement that the Atma follows is equivalent to and known as the fourth state of existence called Turiya (because it is a perpetually blissful state that has transcended the Sushupta state of consciousness). [When a man is not involved emotionally and internally in the affairs of the world, when he remains neutral and has developed a profound degree of equanimity of disposition, he is ever peaceful and rested, remaining unruffled and unmoved by all the upheavals and turmoil that surround the wise and enlightened man in this world. He remains calm and poised inspite of being physically present in the world surrounded by its miseries and pains because they do not affect him. In this state of Turiya, nothing matters to the Atma; nothing rubs against it so much as to bother it, or either grasp its attention or divert it from its present state of remaining in a perpetual state of blissful existence.] (1.21).

1.22. [The same four states as were applied to the second component 'U' are now envisioned in the third component of OM, viz. 'M' as follows—]

The third component of Pranav represented by the letter 'M' has four symbolic states of existence—viz. the first state is the 'Sthul' or the Jagrat (waking) state of consciousness, and is gross in nature (because only a gross body wakes up and interacts with this world which is itself gross and material in nature). This state of existence is called the 'Vishwa' or the world at large (1.22).

1.23. The second state of this 'M' is the 'Sukshma' or the Swapna (dreaming) state of consciousness, and is subtle in nature (because the sub-conscious mind and the intellect are the only active components in this stage as the gross body is inactive). This state is called 'Taijas' or the state of subtle existence when the creature dreams (1.23).

1.24. The third state of this 'M' is the 'Beej' or the Sushupta (deep sleep) state of consciousness, and is causal in nature (because it is the causative state from which the rest of the states originate; it is so-called because it harbours the Atma, the consciousness that is the basic cause and reason for this existence). This state is called 'Pragya' or the state in which the hidden knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment so

crucial for the creation to come into being, sustain itself and finally find its auspicious end lives (1.24).

1.25. The fourth component of 'M' is its 'Saakshi' form, i.e. the state of existence of the Principal entity known as the Atma when it neutrally observes all that is happening around it without getting emotionally involved in it. This eclectic principle of non-involvement that the Atma follows is equivalent to and known as the fourth state of existence called Turiya (because it is a perpetually blissful state that has transcended the Sushupta state of consciousness). [When a man is not involved emotionally and internally in the affairs of the world, when he remains neutral and has developed a profound degree of equanimity of disposition, he is ever peaceful and rested, remaining unruffled and unmoved by all the upheavals and turmoil that surround the wise and enlightened man in this world. He remains calm and poised in spite of being physically present in the world surrounded by its miseries and pains because they do not affect him. In this state of Turiya, nothing matters to the Atma; nothing rubs against it so much as to bother it, or either grasp its attention or divert it from its present state of remaining in a perpetual state of blissful existence.] (1.25).

1.26. [The same four states as were applied to the third component 'M' are now envisioned in the fourth component of OM, viz. 'Ardha Matra', the half-syllable represented by the Chandra Bindu as follows—]

The fourth component of Pranav represented by the 'Ardha Matra' or half-syllable called the Chandra Bindu has four symbolic states of existence—viz. the first state is the 'Sthul' or the Jagrat (waking) state of consciousness, and is gross in nature (because only a gross body wakes up and interacts with this world which is itself gross and material in nature). This state of existence is called the 'Vishwa' or the world at large (1.26).

1.27. The second state of this 'Ardha Matra' is the 'Sukshma' or the Swapna (dreaming) state of consciousness, and is subtle in nature (because the sub-conscious mind and the intellect are the only active components in this stage as the gross body is inactive). This state is called 'Taijas' or the state of subtle existence when the creature dreams (1.27).

1.28. The third state of this 'Ardha Matra' is the 'Beej' or the Sushupta (deep sleep) state of consciousness, and is causal in nature (because it is the causative state from which the rest of the states originate; it is so-called because it harbours the Atma, the consciousness that is the basic cause and reason for this existence). This state is called 'Pragya' or the state in which the hidden knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment so crucial for the creation to come into being, sustain itself and finally find its auspicious end lives (1.28).

1.29. The fourth component of 'Ardha Matra' is its 'Saakshi' form, i.e. the state of existence of the Principal entity known as the Atma when it neutrally observes all that is happening around it without getting emotionally involved in it. This eclectic principle of non-involvement that the Atma follows is equivalent to and known as the fourth state of existence called Turiya (because it is a perpetually blissful state that has transcended the Sushupta state of consciousness). [When a man is not involved emotionally and internally in the affairs of the world, when he remains neutral and has developed a profound degree of equanimity of disposition, he is ever peaceful and

rested, remaining unruffled and unmoved by all the upheavals and turmoil that surround the wise and enlightened man in this world. He remains calm and poised inspite of being physically present in the world surrounded by its miseries and pains because they do not affect him. In this state of Turiya, nothing matters to the Atma; nothing rubs against it so much as to bother it, or either grasp its attention or divert it from its present state of remaining in a perpetual state of blissful existence.] (1.29).

1.30. The fourth aspect of existence called the Turiya state of the first component 'A', i.e. the Jagrat (waking) state of the creature when he is deemed to be in a virtual Turiya state, pertains to the first, second and third Bhumikas. [That is, when the creature is in the waking state of existence in this world, his Turiya state of consciousness would deem to be when he observes the three qualities of Shubecha, Vichaarna and Tanumanusi as described in verse nos. 1.4--1.6.] (1.30).

1.31. The fourth aspect of existence called the Turiya state of the second component 'U', i.e. the Sukshma (subtle or dreaming) state of the creature when he is deemed to be in a virtual Turiya state, pertains to the fourth Bhumika. [That is, when the creature is in the state of existence when his sub-conscious mind is fully though his external body is inactive, his Turiya state of consciousness would deem to be when he observes the fourth quality of Satwa as described in verse no. 1.7.] (1.31).

1.32. The fourth aspect of existence called the Turiya state of the third component 'M', i.e. the Beej or causal state of the creature when he is deemed to be in a virtual Turiya state, pertains to the fifth Bhumika. [That is, when the creature is in the causal state of existence in this world, his Turiya state of consciousness would deem to be when he observes the fifth quality of Asanskat as described in verse nos. 1.8.] (1.32).

1.33. The fourth aspect of existence called the Turiya state of the fourth component called the Ardha Matra (Chandra Bindu), i.e. the pure and undiluted Turiya state of the creature when he is deemed to be in a perpetual state of bliss and peace obtained during this most exalted state of consciousness, pertains to the sixth Bhumika. [That is, when the creature is in the post-causal state of existence in this world, i.e. when he is perpetually enjoying the eternal feeling of spiritual, contentedness, bliss and happiness that comes in the fourth state of consciousness called the Turiya state, he would deem to be observing the sixth quality of Padaartha Bhavana as described in verse no. 1.9.] (1.33).

1.34. The state of existence of the consciousness which is beyond the Turiya state, or which transcends the Turiya state, i.e. the 'Turiyaatit' state, stands for the seventh Bhumika. [This is the quality of pure and unadulterated Turiya when the cosmic reverberation of OM is heard and enjoyed by the spiritual aspirant, an unmatched spiritual experience which gives him extreme sense of bliss and ecstasy that is perpetual and never ending.] (1.34).

1.35. An ascetic who lives a life characterised by the predominance of the first three forms of Bhumikas (verse no. 1.4—1.6) is said to be a 'Mumuksha', i.e. one who desires to be liberated and delivered (1.35).

1.36. [Verse no. 1.36—1.39 describe the four levels or categories of ‘Brahm Vettas’—i.e. the hierarchy of those who are said to be experts in the principles of Brahm.]

An ascetic who lives a life characterised by the predominance of the fourth form of Bhumika (verse no. 1.7) is said to be a ‘Brahm Vetta’, i.e. one who is deemed to be well-versed in the esoteric knowledge pertaining to the supreme transcendental Brahm (1.36).

1.37. An ascetic who lives a life characterised by the predominance of the fifth form of Bhumika (verse no. 1.8) is said to be an exalted and honoured one who is given greater respect than ordinary Brahm Vettas, i.e. those who are experts in the knowledge and principles pertaining to Brahm (1.37).

1.38. An ascetic who lives a life characterised by the predominance of the sixth form of Bhumika (verse no. 1.9) is said to be senior than the second type of Brahm Vettas, and are more exalted and honourable in the hierarchy of Brahm Vettas, i.e. he is senior and more respected in the hierarchy of Brahm Vettas (1.38).

1.39. Finally, an ascetic who lives a life characterised by the predominance of the seventh form of Bhumika (verse no. 1.10) is said to be the most exalted and most honoured amongst all the Brahm Vettas. He is the senior-most amongst them all (1.39).

1.40. In this regard there is the following Shloka (verse of the scriptures) which states as follows—(1.40).

1.41. The first Bhumika is ‘Subha Iccha’ which pertains to auspicious thoughts. It is the foundation for Gyan, or truthful knowledge, erudition and wisdom. [That is, only when he has auspicious thoughts emerging in his mind can he expect to acquire knowledge of the Divine and Truth. Otherwise, he would be more contented with the illusionary charms of the world and remain submerged in self gratification. Refer also to verse nos. 1.4 and 3 of the present Canto 4.] (1.41).

1.42. The second Bhumika is ‘Vichaarna’ which is to seriously think, consider, ponder and contemplate upon something. [Refer verse nos. 1.5 and 4 of the present Canto 4.]

The third Bhumika is ‘Tanumansi’ which is to think deeply, have deep insight and foresight; to have a sharp and analytical mind that can view things clinically and surgically dissect them to come to the truth, to be able to analyse things in the correct perspective, to be able to use wisdom, intelligence and analytical abilities of the mind judiciously to deduce the truth and reality of things correctly and consequentially arrive at the correct conclusion. [Refer verse nos. 1.6 and 5 of the present Canto 4.] (1.42).

2. The fourth Bhumika is Satya, and it is to think of that entity which is has a truthful and real existence, and discard that which is not so. It also refers to the ability to distinguish between the truth and non-truth, or to be able to discriminate between the apparent truth and the absolute truth. [Refer verse nos. 1.7 and 6 of the present Canto 4.]

The fifth Bhumika is ‘Anaasakta’, and it refers to the ability to be sincerely free from all attachments, attractions, infatuations and entanglements of all kinds; to remain exemplarily detached, dispassionate and indifferent towards everything and everyone in this world. [Refer verse nos. 1.8 and 7 of the present Canto 4.]

The sixth Bhumika is ‘Padaartha Bhavana’, and it refers to having absolutely no concern about material things; to remain oblivious of even the existence of any material things in this world which are not true and do not have any spiritual value in them; giving no thought to anything or substance in this creation except the supreme transcendental Brahm known as the Ishwar or the Lord of this creation, and seeing the Lord in everything in existence. It also entails never to think that this thing is good and that is bad, this is obtainable and that is not, this is beneficial and that is not, because the same ubiquitous and universal Brahm uniformly pervades in all the things of this creation. [Refer verse nos. 1.9 and 8-9 of the present Canto 4.]

And finally, the seventh Bhumika is ‘Turiya’, and it refers to live perpetually in a blissful state of consciousness that transcends the third stage of Sushupta which is the deep sleep state of consciousness. [Refer verse nos. 1.10 and 10 of the present Canto 4.] (refer verse no. 1.10) (2).

3. [Here the first Bhumika is being elaborated upon.] Am I a stupid person to remain dumb, inert and inane, having no wisdom and intelligence worth the name? Only those who are well-versed in the principle doctrine and the essential philosophy of the scriptures would know my detached and dispassionate bearing. In fact, this is a prelude to my taking the vows of true Sanyas (a life of total detachment from this material world and its sense objects). This inclination that one has to totally renounce everything artificial and non-truth in creation or existence, and instead concentrate one’s energy and attention on the Absolute Truth that is not the subject of debate or further research as it is the ultimate state of consciousness, is called ‘Subhecha’ by those who are expert in the tenets of the scriptures (3).

[Note—This verse can be read in another way also as follows—“I am not a dud or blockhead or a lifeless entity that has no Icha or desires, wants and aspirations. It is not that; I am a living being like the rest, and therefore I too have Icha. The only difference between me and the rest of the less wise ones is that I have auspicious and noble Icha, I have ‘Shubh Icha’ that is desirable and expected from a spiritual aspirant. For instance, I would not hanker for worldly things for enjoyment and gratification of the sense organs of the body, but would rather endeavour to learn about the truth in these things and the real benefit they give to me and the way they affect my long-term welfare. I do all that is required to be done in this world, but I do not get emotionally involved in them and neither do I get upset by their consequences. I acquire material things but internally I remain only a mute spectator to these things and remain totally detached from them and dispassionate towards them. I have renounced this world internally and in the true sense without pretending to do so externally but remaining hooked to it at the mental plane; I remain indifferent to them. Externally my gross body is involved in all sorts of worldly deeds, but internally I am, i.e. ‘my Atma’ is not at all involved in them. This in fact is the true definition and intent of the term Sanyas—which literally means renunciation, detachment, indifference, dispassion and non-involvement. I have forsaken all pretensions. The only thing I wish to remain involved in is the search for the Truth and Reality that is unadulterated and absolute. Refer verse nos. 1.4 and 1.41 of this Canto 4.]

4. The second Bhumika is being explained here. A man is inspired to think, behave and conduct himself in an auspicious, righteous and noble manner when he has

diligently studied the scriptures, kept company of holy and pious men, and practiced Vairagya (non-attachment and renunciation) previously. The natural inclination of auspiciousness, righteousness and nobility that he has developed as a result of this previous study, company or practice is called 'Vichaarna' (4).

[Note—When he studies anything he would ponder into its meaning and implications. New things would come to his knowledge and he would apply his new found knowledge in his day to day life and find that what he had been thinking till now as true is actually false and misleading. Similarly, when he sees the way a holy man lives, when he observes the practical application of the philosophy and tenets of the scriptures being applied in practice in the life of this holy man along with the benefits that are too obvious to be overlooked, and when he hears him speak words of profound wisdom based on his practical experience, these wise words remove any doubts that still might linger on in his mind. In fact, when he observes the life of a self-realised man, he sees the profound spiritual Truth as enunciated by the Upanishads in action. Then he decides to renounce all falsehood himself and apply the teachings of the scriptures and what he has seen first hand in the life of the saintly man in his own life by adopting the life of Sanyas. It is then that he witnesses and experiences the reward first hand and becomes fully convinced of their veracity and authenticity. He is forced to think, ponder and contemplate upon what is correct, true and real, what is auspicious, righteous and noble, and he thereby ignores the opposite. Refer verse nos. 1.5 and 1.42 also.]

5. With the help and constant practice of the first two Bhumikas, i.e. Shubecha and Vichaarana, one develops detachment from and non-attractions towards the sense objects related to the organs of perceptions of the body. Their charm and enticements become weakened and gradually subside. [That is, for example, charming sights of the material world no longer seem attractive to him and he does not yearn to see them or acquire them. Tasty things no longer titillate his taste buds and he no longer desires to eat delicious food to satisfy his tongue. Pleasant sounds no longer appeal to his ears and he does not want to hear even the sweet words of his dear one. The nose does not wish to smell fragrances and perfumes, and the skin no longer yearns to touch delicate, soft, sensual and soothing things.]

This state when things related to the gross body lose their relevance and the mind is detached from them is called the third Bhumika known as 'Tanummansi'. [Refer also to verse nos. 1.6 and 1.42 of this Canto 4.] (5).

6. With diligent practice of the first three Bhumika, the spiritual aspirant gets firmer in his renunciation, and his degree of detachment and disassociation with everything enhances further. When his sub-conscious mind and intellect are steady and unwavering in this way of life, all agitations and restlessness cease, and the aspirant is able to experience the presence of profound calmness, serenity and peace emanating from the pure consciousness called the Atma. This makes him stable and established in the 'truth' (because truth is stable, unwavering and a bestower of peace and calmness). This is called the fourth Bhumika known as 'Satya'¹ (6).

[Note—¹In other words, after going through and successfully passing the first three stages of spiritual practice, the aspirant has finally discovered the 'truth'. He has finally woken up to the fact that what was apparent as truth in this gross existential world of material sense objects was in actuality the so-called 'non-truth' because it was the creation of the mind in the first place and also because it was mortal, perishable and transient. So when he has come to realise the true essence of existence in the way of consciousness, he understands what is meant by 'truth' that is real—i.e. something that is of eternal value, something that is imperishable, immutable and

permanent. He discovers that this 'consciousness' is his own Atma, the 'self'. Thus, he concludes that his 'self' is the real spiritual truth in this existential world which is otherwise pregnant with non-truth except for this one truth known as the consciousness or Atma. He has uncovered the Absolute Truth. Refer also to verse nos. 1.7, 2 and 13 of this Canto 4.]

7. The painstaking pursuit of the first four stages of spiritual practice results in flower of the fifth stage of Bhumika called 'Anaasakti' to bloom. This is total and complete un-attachment which becomes an inborn trait inherent to the spiritual aspirant. With the discovery of the 'absolute truth' or 'Satya' as narrated above, his sense of detachment, dispassion, indifference and renunciation towards everything that is not the truth but illusory becomes steady, robust and firm (7).

[Note—He no longer would have to make efforts to remain detached or dispassionate or non-involved. These would come naturally to him and become his natural behaviour. Now, he would not be attracted by the sense objects of the world or have any desire to gratify his sense organs even if he wants to do them. Such profound degree of 'Anaasakti' or renunciation and non-attachment is the culmination of the practice of the first four types of virtues as narrated in previous verses. Refer also to verse nos. 1.8 and 2 of this Canto 4.]

8-9. Not paying any attention to anything, whether external or internal (i.e. whether pertaining to the external gross visible world which is seen, heard, smelt, tasted or felt, or to the subtle invisible world of the mind and intellect such as the one seen in one's dream), by assiduously following the principles of the first five Bhumikas, by focusing one's attention on researching about one's own Atma [8], as well as by observing the success of those who have practiced this procedure or principle in their own lives, and by concluding that this is indeed a fact by having unwavering faith in this 'truth' for a long period of time—this is called the sixth Bhumika known as 'Padaartha Bhavana'¹ [9]. (8-9).

[Note—¹That is, one is firmly convinced that there is no thing or object that has a real name and form. The only thing that is true has neither a name nor a form, and it is the Absolute entity known as the Atma, the pure consciousness. This eclectic state of existence is a natural extension of the 5th stage. The stage when a person develops 'Anaasakti' of the profoundest degree as described in verse nos. 1.8, 2 and 7 above, it is natural that he would not have anything to do with the material sense objects of the world. He would search for the 'truth' in anything that comes his way. He would not be misled by the exteriors, he would not go after the gross external form of anything, but see the hidden factor of life representing the supreme transcendental Brahman that is hidden behind this exterior. The word 'Padaartha' means a thing, but it does not refer to the exterior grossness of the material thing. Instead it refers to the essence, pith and substance that is of any value—i.e. the 'truth'—in the given entity. This is the best form of Padaartha Bhavana. Refer also to verse nos. 1.9 and 2 of this Canto 4.]

10. Constant and regular practice of the sixth Bhumika for a very long time results in complete vanishing of all sorts of erroneous ideas about the presence of objects having distinct and separate existence from the Atma. That is, the notion of 'duality, distinction, segregation, differentiation or separation' is removed. By diligently practicing and being firmly convinced of the authenticity of this eclectic and most evolved philosophy of metaphysics, the doctrine of non-duality known as Advaita Vedanta, one becomes firmly established in his own Atma as the only truth and reality. [Thus he attains steadiness and eternity that are the hallmarks of the Atma; he

obtains perpetual peace and a steady blissful state of existence.] This is called the seventh Bhumika known as 'Turiya' and is the transcendental state of existence of the consciousness known as the 'self'. [Refer also to verse nos. 1.10 and 2 of this Canto 4.] (10).

11. The first three Bhumikas, i.e. Shubhecha, Vichaarana and Tanumanasi (verse no. 3-5), are related to the waking state of the consciousness when the creature is awake to the presence of the expressed or manifested world. He is able to first see things in their physical form, and then attempts to see, analyse and deduce the difference between two situations and things. He is given a choice of deciding what is true and what is not. It is his intelligent mind that helps him in this decision (11).

12. When one is firmly established in the concept of Advaitya or non-duality, then everything that appears to have a dual existence or which give an illusion of 'either or' (i.e. when a man is not certain which of the two things seen is the real and which is not real) simply vanish. Those who are wise, erudite and self-realised see this material world just like a man sees a dream, i.e. illusory but still appearing to be true only as long as it lasts. This is equivalent to the 2nd state of 'Swapna' or dreaming. [Hence, this world lacks all substance and pith just like the hollowness and unreality of the dream—it is here now and gone the next moment.]

This eclectic and refined view of the world is developed only by the Turiya state of the mind—i.e. the state when the mind and intellect become totally oblivious of the existence of the world and its enticing charms, and sees only the universal presence of one, immutable and indivisible Truth as pervading everywhere in existence. [This does not mean that he would treat even the gross as the truth simply because it appears to be tangible and verifiable as perceived by the sense organs of perception. This is because these organs are themselves gross in nature, and so are incompetent and incapable to judge something that is extremely subtle and sublime. Refer also to verse nos. 17-20 of this Canto 4 which elaborate further on this highly evolved state of existence of the consciousness.] (12).

13. Oh Nidagh! Just like the clouds dissipate and vanish with the onset of the winter season, remove all doubts and confusions, and be established in the Truth which is only and always 'one'. Therefore, forget about the notion of falsehood and be firmly established in the Truth that 'my only form is the non-dual Atma, and the rest is non-existent'. This is the fourth Bhumika called 'Satya'. [Refer verse no. 6 also.] (13).

14. The fifth Bhumika relates to the state called Sushupta (i.e. the deep sleep state of consciousness). When the spiritual aspirant reaches this eclectic state of consciousness, he becomes silent and calmed down. No trace of restlessness caused by factionalism or the sense of dualism that were the characteristics of the earlier two stages of waking and dreaming now remain to disturb the peaceful demeanours and poise of his inner self that is his 'true self' known as the Atma. The only state now is the 'Advaitya' or non-dual state (14).

[Note—During the waking stage a man was in direct touch of the mischief-creating world which left him perturbed by its complexities and confusions. These physical interactions with the world involving the gross body are replaced by sub-conscious interactions in the world created in the dream, but the mind remains busy, involved and therefore equally agitated in both the cases. But this situation vanishes in the deep sleep state when the mind too sleeps and goes into hibernation. Then the man finds real rest, peace and tranquility. This state is the 'truthful state' of the Atma when

there are no confusion and perplexity created by the numerous pulls and tugs of this world. There is no occasion for getting torn between what is true and what is not; there is a state of complete and wholesome peace and tranquility.]

15. When a person has turned his attention inwards, when he is focused on his inner self and has turned away from the external world, always meditating and contemplating on his pure conscious Atma, then all his mental and physical tendencies and natural inclinations to be outwardly mobile and be attracted by the external world and its multifarious material charms, to be extrovert and get attracted by and attached to the material sense objects of this world, subsides and he calms down. The resultant effect is that he behaves like a drowsy man who is tired and weary. He is not interested in anything related to the external material world, so though he would do his deeds and duties assigned to him by fate, he would be doing them without any interest and enthusiasm; he would be detached, dispassionate and indifferent in his approach; he would do the deeds just because he has to do them and not because he has any interest in doing them or expects any rewards and benefits from these deeds. He would be mentally indifferent towards and disinterested in both the deeds as well as their results, and therefore not able to concentrate on and be enthusiastic about doing external deeds (15).

16. When one has been practicing these six noble and auspicious virtues of spiritual upliftment, called the six Bhumikas (as narrated above), he finally reaches the seventh stage or Bhumika wherein all his Vasanas (worldly ambitions, passions, yearnings, desires, lust and infatuations) are totally eliminated. It is a state when he has developed extreme detachment and dispassion towards everything in the world that is gross, material and not related to the spiritual Truth. When this stage is reached, his behaviour and demeanour are like a man in the Sushupta state, or the state of consciousness called the deep sleep¹ (16).

[Note--¹It is known that some people sleep-walk, and during their sleep-walking phase they are known to perform even impossible tasks, but they are totally unaware of what they are doing. This example would help us to understand how what is being narrated in these verses can actually happen. There are numerous instances when it is observed that a man does his duties in the world with a high degree of detachment. People call such a man careless and lacking ambition. If it's a mental disease then of course it is not spiritualism; it would need medical attention. One must not confuse spiritual behaviour with a medical case. What is being talked about in the Upanishads do not relate to a mentally problematic patient but to a highly evolved spiritual man who has risen above the mundane and has attained a sublime state of existence. His external behaviour might be odd, irrational and unconventional, but it is not a mental sickness but a result of his high level of non-involvement and detachment with the actions of the gross physical body which is distinct from his 'self'. He is unconcerned with the results of the deeds done by the body on the one hand, and on the other hand he is perpetually submerged in meditation and contemplation which diverts his mind from the external world of artificially and towards the world of sublimity and subtlety.]

17. In this transcendental state of existence, there is no notion of either truth or false. There is no entity as 'I or me' here, nor is there a lack of it. [That is, it is a state of complete and wholesome neutrality. It is a spiritually sublime state of existence. It is like the state called 'non-being' or 'non-existence' as experienced by astronauts in the void of deep space where there is no gravity and hence a sense of total weightlessness and a sense of expansion are experienced.]

The Mana (mind) stays here in a weakened, withered and deflated state; it becomes inactive, inert and dormant; it becomes defunct for all practical purposes.

When the ascetic firmly cultivates the notion of Advaitya, or non-duality, in its entirety (i.e. when he is firmly convinced of the unequivocal truth of this eclectic philosophy and adopts its doctrines in totality), then he becomes very fearless. [There is no longer somebody else in existence from whom he has to fear, and he has no fear from death either because he would have realised by now that what dies is the gross perishable body and not his soul which is ethereal, sublime, uniform, universal, infinite, immortal, imperishable and eternal.] (17).

18. He is as empty and void (of any feelings, sensations, emotions, sentiments, concepts, notions, beliefs and faiths), both externally as well as internally, like an empty clay pitcher. [The sky or space present inside the body of the pitcher is separated from its principal form outside just by the boundary created by the physical body of the pitcher. When this pitcher is broken, the two forms of sky or space merge into one another even without mentioning of this mixing—it is obvious and natural; nothing to the contrary can happen. Similarly, when such a man dies, he simply sheds the pitcher-like shell of his gross body so that the vital winds called Pran that are present inside simply coalesce with and vanish into the air element present outside the body without even one noticing it. Refer verse no. 50 of Canto 2 also.]

Likewise, he who is full (contented and fulfilled) from the inside is full also from the outside (i.e. he would not want anything from the material world as he has no more desires and wants left unfulfilled). This is akin to the case when a water-filled pitcher is placed in the ocean—there is water inside and water outside, not even a drop enters the pitcher nor a drop spills out of it (18).

19. Oh Nidagh! Become one who has a high degree of equanimity and neutrality, one who longs for none and abhors none, one who accepts nothing (or need not accept anything because he wants nothing as he is not short of anything, and nothing exists for him in the first place) nor abandons anything (or needs to discard anything because he has nothing with him in the first place).

In this way, after having got rid of all fanciful notions and imaginary ideas relating to the external gross world as well as the internal subtle world, you should meditate and contemplate upon, and be firmly established in the ‘truth’ of what is left behind after eliminating all that is non-truth, or that which remains after eliminating everything imaginary and fanciful. You would discover then that it is the Atma—the universal, uniform, pure and truthful consciousness and your ‘self’—that you would be focusing upon¹ (19).

[Note—¹When a spiritual aspirant meditates upon the Atma, he discovers that it is the ‘truth’ that he has all along been searching for during his spiritual quest. The Atma is pure consciousness and it is completely different and separate from both the gross body as well as the gross world. This Atma is also not the mind-intellect complex because the latter is directly related to and dependent upon the gross body. So when the aspirant is advised to meditate and contemplate, he is asked to concentrate upon the Atma and not on the body or the mind. The body and the mind are instruments that he uses in reaching his goal of liberation and deliverance, but they are not the subject matter of his research for the ‘truth’.]

20. Shed the concept that there is a triad consisting of a seer, an object that is seen, and the process of seeing itself. [When you have developed a high degree of sense of non-duality, when you have cultivated a high level of equanimity, detachment and

dispassion from everything and everyone, when you would want and need nothing and see the same universality everywhere, when 'this' would be as good as 'that' for you, there would cease to be any need for you to get attracted to anything charming in the outside world which would be more charming than the subtle world harbouring the Atma. Therefore, there would be no 'seer', nothing to be 'seen' and hence no need to engage in the process of 'seeing'—the three worlds merge into a single point.]

You should dump them along with all related Vasanas (desires and wishes; passions and yearnings). [You should inculcate the habit of naturally having no desire to see anything, rather than suppressing these desires. When you would realise the truth of the fact that everything that a man wants to see in the world because they attract his attention and appeal to his senses are actually worthless, false, imaginary, entrapping like a bird-catcher's snare, and a giver of countless agonies in the long run, you would naturally develop loathing for them and drop them like hot potatoes.]

So, you should employ the first type of Bhumika (Shubecha) to concentrate and research upon your Atma, the pure consciousness and your true 'self'. That is, you should cultivate auspicious and noble desires and wishes while you have to live in this world during your waking state of consciousness. So, instead of seeing the attractions of the external world, seeking pleasure from such sights, and then allowing yourself to get hooked to them, yearn for them and spend your entire life running behind this mirage, you would rather do better and show maturity of wisdom if you divert your mind and intellect to see what the truth is by inculcating deep insight into the world of 'truth and reality' consisting of the Atma which is not only your pure and true 'self' but also the universal and uniform cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm (20).

[Note—The state of existence reached now as described in verse nos. 17-20 is synonymous with the Turiya state which is the highly evolved spiritual state of sublime existence of the consciousness.]

21. When a person develops a uniform and universal view of this world, when he sees a immutable and indivisible oneness in everything in this world, i.e. when he has a maturity of vision and sees non-duality everywhere, he would see this world to be as uniform, universally one, indivisible and immutable as the vast and fathomless sky stretching to infinity¹.

When he is able to cultivate this grand vision of the world, he is deemed to have achieved 'Jivan Mukti'—i.e. spiritual liberation and deliverance even while he lives and interacts with the world². [This is because now he would not be deluded and trapped by the false charms of the world and remain aloof from it. He would not be shackled to the material world and deluded by its astounding magical allurements that are nevertheless artificial, and a man who has no shackle tied around his ankles or a girdle locked around his neck is indeed a free man.] (21).

[Note--¹The *sky* seems to have myriad of colours in all possible shades and hues, appears to be tainted or corrupted by countless things floating inside it, and assumes numerous shapes, sizes and forms according to the shape and size and form of an empty container or vessel—but fundamentally all these characters and definitions attributed to the sky are extraneous to it because the sky element remains one, immutable, incorruptible, uniform and universal entity. Likewise, a wise and enlightened man sees the myriad colours and forms of this world as a diversion that distracts the mind from its basic character of being an illusion. He is not swept off his foot by this illusive charm and remains firmly grouted to the ground of truth. He sees one 'truth' in the ever-changing nature of the world, and this truth is that whatever is seen in this material world is gross and lacking any reality and substance. In other

words, what is visibly seen is an illusion like the appearance of water in a desert mirage or the appearance of a silver lining in the inside of a glistening oyster shell. A wise man realises that since the 'truth' always remains one and unchanging, and since the world is always and constantly changing, it cannot be the 'truth' he is seeking. It is such a great paradox that what he actually sees is false, and what he does not see is true. It is then that he endeavours to find out about that entity which remains uniform and unchanging, and therefore is the 'real and irrefutable truth'. He discovers it to be the consciousness in the form of the Atma.

²This state of exalted existence when a man has discovered the truth while still living in this world surrounded by all the falsehoods typical of it is tantamount to his obtaining the state of spiritual liberation called Jivan Mukti. He has obtained freedom from the fetters of ignorance and delusions that had kept him shackled to this world and its material charms down the ages. He was unaware that the body which indulged in this world is not his true self, and this wrong perception of his 'self' had landed him in the quagmire of births and deaths. Now that he has discovered the truth about himself as being the Atma and not the body, he no longer has the grossness associated with the body, and likewise he no longer is accused for the doings of the body. Such a man is indeed Mukta or freed even while he lives in a gross body and interacts with the world. It must be remembered here that the term 'man' is being applied to his 'self' or the Atma, and not the gross body in which this Atma lives.]

22. A wise and enlightened man who remains completely unruffled and calm under opposing circumstances of fortunes or misfortunes, adversities or privileges, whose mind retains its poise, its composure, its ability to think rationally, analytically and intelligently as its shining glory even under extreme duress and baffling circumstances when it is subjected to the greatest of strain, and who neither feels unhappy nor happy under any circumstance—verily, such a man is deemed to be 'Jivan Mukta'. He is a person who has found liberation and deliverance even while he is alive and has a gross body that interacts with this external material world¹ (22).

[Note--¹As long as a man is alive he would be under a continuous bombardment of impulses from this world. This situation is like the earth being continuously bombarded by space debris while it moves around the sun; but the earth bears them with stoic indifference and burns these debris in the outer layers of its atmosphere even before they can come anywhere near the surface to cause any physical disturbance and harm. Likewise, a wise man should remain unmoved by the ever-changing stimuli that he receives from the world, and bear them with stoic calmness, with utmost stoutness and forbearance. This would ensure his peace of mind and heart. Such a man is freed from the constant irritation caused by a girdle tied around one's neck and its psychological affect that he is a slave and not a free man. With the mind freed from agitations and constant restlessness by remaining involved in this ever-changing world, it would be able to think and decide in a cool, systematic, analytical, rational and intelligent way, the virtue which is its crowing glory and unique ability. It would help the man to see the 'truth' in a dispassionate and clinical way even when he is seemingly surrounded by unending sufferings, or to realise that the pleasures and comforts that he is indulging into now are pith-less, transient and short-lived, and there is no with and sense in getting engrossed in them. He would be better off if he endeavours to seek comfort in the 'truth' because this would be permanent and robust.]

23. A person who remains awake even during the deep sleep state called Sushupta and who has no separate state of wakefulness is said to be Jivan Mukta. That is, a man who remains totally oblivious of his surroundings, who remains in a perpetual state of bliss and contentedness, not wanting or desiring anything like a man in deep sleep,

and whose mind and intellect too go into hibernation just like it does during the deep sleep state even though the man is wide awake and going about his work in this physical world—verily, such a man is deemed to be Jivan Mukta¹.

Such a person's knowledge of the world is devoid of any forms of Vasanas² (23).

[Note—¹The mind is the central medium through which the Atma, which is the 'true self' of the person, receives any input from the external world because it is the mind that is the coordinating center that not only receives all the perceptions gathered by the organs of perceptions of the body but also filters them and separates one from the other to order the organs of action to respond and the intellect to analyse and decide what is important and what is to be chucked off. If there was no mind, the Atma would not be able to receive a single input from the world, and this fact is proved when the man is fast asleep, i.e. he is in the Sushupta state of existence when the mind is defunct. In this state, the Atma is not able to know anything happening in this world. But this level of awareness is related to the gross physical world of material sense objects, and not to the subtle plane in which the consciousness exists. Hence, when a wise man has reached a state of perpetual wakefulness when his consciousness does not 'sleep' even when ordinary men are said to be fast asleep or are in a Sushupta state of deep sleep, such a man is said to be Jivan Mukta. For him, the mind has no role to play for the simple reason that the mind is related to the body as it is considered to be the subtle organ of the gross body, and also because the mind has two levels of existences—one when it is active and alert, and second when it is not active and gone into hibernation as in the case of deep sleep. On the contrary, the consciousness is always alert, active, agile, awake and aware; it never goes to sleep. This is proved by the fact that even during the Sushupta state of sleep when the mind is said to be defunct, the vital life forces and consciousness continues to flow unabated in the body, preventing it from dying. A man whose mind has gone astray, a man who is insane or one who is suffering from some serious disease of the brain, or one who is suffering from paralysis or any other illness that is directly related to the mind and the organs of perception, even this man is alive and not considered to be dead. What has kept him alive if the organs of perceptions and the central all-important authority that controls this world, i.e. the mind, have become defunct? The answer is 'the Atma' which is the spark of consciousness that injects life in the gross body and enables the mind to think and exhibit its stupendous powers, the consciousness that flows in the body to keep it alive. Thus we see that this verse alludes to this consciousness when it says that a man is awake even during the deep sleep of Sushupta. The consciousness never sleeps; it is ever awake. This term 'awake' is a metaphoric way of saying that the consciousness is wise, erudite and enlightened. A person who is aware of this fact is said to be Jivan Mukta as his concept of being awake and sleeping changes.

²Since his mind is defunct, the man is not registering any sort of charming impulse originating from this material world, and therefore he would not harbour any desire to obtain the object from which this alluring signal emanates or have access to it. It is the mind that first receives any input from the external world of sense objects, decides that this is charming and therefore worth acquiring or paying attention to, and then gets into the process of devising means and methods to acquire it by hook or crook or to constantly be involved in its thoughts. But in the case of the Jivan Mukta person, this situation does not arise and he is at peace with himself because his mind does not have any kind of Vasanas—attractions, desires, yearnings, passions, wishes or aspirations—relating to anything of this material world.

The concept of Vasanas has been elaborately described in note of verse no. 70 of Canto 2 of this Upanishad. Refer also to verse nos. 16 and 20 of the present Canto 4.]

24. Such a wise and enlightened man goes about the daily chores of life in this world in a normal way so much so that he may even exhibit such traits as showing Raag and Dwesh (i.e. either having attractions for anything, or having aversions for it), but such traits are only superficially present in him, for internally he is not at all affected or tainted or influenced or moved or bothered by them in the least. His internal being is as untainted, as unruffled, as undivided, as uniform, as uncorrupted, as unconcerned and as un-torn as the sky which always remains uncorrupted, taintless, steady, uniform, universal, immutable and indivisible inspite of numerous things of uncountable variations impregnating it and attempting to tarnish its basically immaculate and immutable character or attempting to disrupt its uniformity, immutability and indivisible nature¹. Such a person is deemed to be 'Jivan Mukta' (24).

[Note—¹The sky has such grand and majestic attributes as being vast, measureless, uniform, immutable, spotless, clean, colourless, calm, all-pervading, all-encompassing etc. The sky is the measurement of Brahm in the sense that if it was ever possible to measure the length, breadth and depth of the sky, it would then have been possible to measure Brahm. But that is not at all the case. The calmness of the higher reaches of the sky is experienced by Para gliders and can even be witnessed on top of mountains which are high above the ground and located somewhere in the space around the earth, symbolised by the sky, where there is an eerie silence. The sky has no colours of its own; whatever colours that we see are actually the scattered sunlight.

Everything that exists does so in any one of these spaces. Every nook and corner where there is no solid or liquid is filled with space or 'Akash', which is a synonym of sky. It is omnipresent, all-pervading and all-encompassing. That is, these three forms of the skies, viz. the outer, the inner and that which is present inside the heart, are all the same; there is no distinction or demarcation or boundary or fundamental difference between any two skies. The apparent boundary or limitation imposed on the sky by the physical body or the membrane of the heart is only deceptive in nature. Once a person dies, for example, his body perishes, and the space present inside the heart merges indistinguishably with the space present inside the body when the body is cremated or decays when buried, and they together merge with the vast space present outside the body.

The 'sky', which was originally conceived as something that was 'void' or 'nothing', gets filled with 'air', simply because void can't exist, and the creation which came into being in this void needed some base for its origin and coming into being. The molecules or atoms of air are in a state of continuous agitation and flux; they collide with each other, they form a chain of molecules which give rise to different layers or strata of air which extend from the surface of this earth to the stratosphere. This continuous turmoil produces 'sound'. Various physical and chemical processes come into play, producing gases of varying density and characteristic features. Air has particles of dust and different gases, which produce the perception of touch. Friction of the various molecules present in the air produces static electricity which is observed as a scintillating display of atmospheric discharge of electrically charged particles in the sky often observed at the poles. This sparkle of static electric discharge is synonymous with 'fire'. Perhaps the Upanishadic sage got this brilliant idea when he observed a meteor shower during the night. The two elementary gases hydrogen and oxygen combine to form the molecule H₂O commonly known as 'water'. With all these essential ingredients in place, the solidifying and cooling down process of nature starts its effect and produces soil and rocks which are symbolised by the 'earth' element. Then gravity and magnetic forces come into play, giving density, gravity and grossness, indicative of the grossness or heaviness of not only the earth but also of the air around it. Previously, before gravity and other forces of nature came into play, this air was subtle and very light; it spread

universally and uniformly to all the corners of the cosmos. But with the gradual formation of different celestial bodies from the primordial cosmic gases, each having its own gravity and other natural physical and chemical forces, the air was pulled or sucked in, leaving the rest of the space beyond the reach of these celestial bodies into a big void.

The sky is pregnant with a wide variety of impurities. It is full of celestial bodies besides cosmic debris. It has the burning furnace of the sun as well as the cool pitcher of nectar symbolised by the moon. The black clouds of a storm with its stabs of ferocious lightening coexist with white fluffy clouds floating lazily across the calm sky. There are birds of prey and there are harmless kites flying in it. There is the polluted haze of the city as is the pristine clear atmosphere of a village and the mountain. There is the brightness of the day and the foreboding darkness of the night. But the wonder is that none of these really affect the sky at all—it remains clear and untainted in its basic nature and form. All these things cited here are extraneous to the fundamental nature and characteristic of the sky. The sky treats all of them with the same magnanimity and kindness. Similarly, a wise man treats all the creatures with whom he has to interact in this world with the same equanimity and fortitude as the sky.

The sky has a unique quality—it harbours the entire creation in its bosom as nothing that exist lies outside the outer periphery of the sky, but still it remains completely detached from each and every thing present inside it. The sky remains unaffected, uninfluenced, unattached with and untainted by anything that it harbours or shelters. Whatever visual attributes that one sees in the sky, such as its blue or azure haze, the changing colours at different times of the day, are only optical illusions created by various factors of Nature. Even the clouds or the sun in the day time and the stars and the moon in the night do not effect the neutral nature of the sky because while the sun is there the sky appears to be bright and sunny, and when the moon rises the same sky assumes the colour of the moonlight with no indication that it was so bright earlier. The overcast sky with dark clouds becomes crystal clear when the clouds go away, and the darkness of the night sky dotted with umpteen numbers of stars can give no indication that it would be brightly lit during the day with no trace of any single star. The plumes of pungent smoke being belched into the sky by factories and fires do not effect the bland and neutral form of the sky, for the sky absorbs them all with great equanimity and fortitude without being affected by them at all.

Everything in existence needs the sky to develop and grow. The fire needs space representing the sky to burn, the air needs it to flow, the earth needs it to remain in its place and move around the sun which in turn regulates the seasons and other environmental factors, the plants need it for their growth and development as is proved by the fact that they become stunted and die in the want of space to grow and spread their branches, the creature needs it to breathe, stand and grow, and so on and so forth. The air can be sucked out from an enclosed space to create a vacuum, but the 'sky' would still be there. The world would die and go into oblivion along with all its components, including the other four elements (earth, fire, water and air) at the time of conclusion of creation, but the sky would still be there; in fact it is in the vast bottomless pit of the sky that the creation would vanish then. And when the time comes for the emergence of the new creation, it would do so in the bowl of the sky. Nothing exists beyond the sky.]

25. A person who has no trace of Ahankar¹ (ego, pride, arrogance, haughtiness and hypocrisy), and whose mind and intellect are not attached to and infatuated with anything or anybody—such people are deemed to be 'Jivan Mukta'. Whether or not they show superficial signs of having Ahankar, whether or not they appear to be attracted towards and attached with anything or anybody, they actually are not. The

superficial appearance of having Ahankar of any kind is very misleading about their authentic internal nature which is totally pure and cleansed of this taint of character known as Ahankar (25).

[Note—¹*Ahankar* has been described in the context of the Antahakaran (the inner self of the creature) as being one of its main components in Shaarirak Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 4; Paingalo Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 2, verse no. 3; and Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 6.

Paingalo-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 1, verse 6 describes the concept of Ahankar in the context of the genesis of creation, and how it was able to influence even the supreme Brahm, in his grosser cosmic manifestation of Lord Vishnu, to get involved in the creation of this delusory world.

How Ahankar affects the creature's nature and temperament has been succinctly described in Niralamb Upanishad, verse nos. 11-12, 20. How it affects the path of spiritual liberation and deliverance of the creature, and why should it be controlled has been explained in Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse nos. 34-37, 150.

How the Mana (mind) creates the notion of Ahankar has been described in Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 6, verse no. 60.

Other references—Subalo-panishad, Canto 9, verse no. 13 of Shukla Yajur Veda.]

26. He whose presence is not the cause of any irritation for other people of this world and neither is he himself agitated by this world, he who never loses his calm and poise and remains perfectly stoic and unruffled—not feeling happy, excited or exhilarated at favourable circumstances or good fortunes, not having any kind of jealousy, malice or ill-will towards anyone, and not having any fear of any kind—verily, such a person is said to be 'Jivan Mukta' (26).

27. He who remains calm and detached from all material things and objects of sense organs in this bewitching world that surrounds him like a web or net, and who has a grand vision that everything that has an existence are meant for the consumption of the society or world at large—such a calm and selfless man is self-contented and fulfilled, not wanting to enjoy anything or hoarding them for his own consumption. So he cannot be said to be trapped in or by this web or net cast around him by the material things of this gross world. He is therefore deemed to be 'Jivan Mukta'.

In other words, a man who is of a charitable disposition and thinks that the material things of the world are meant for the society at large and not for his personal consumption and comfort—verily, such a man is deemed to be 'Jivan Mukta' (27).

[Note--Usually, when a man is surrounded by material things of comfort and pleasures he would hoard them all for his own enjoyments, for his own consumption. He would lock the grain in his warehouse even at the risk of them rotting away instead of giving them to the poor and the needy. He would build a palatial residence for himself and never bother that his own brother, let alone the rest of the family and the society at large, is living in some rundown hovel. He would eat gourmet meal and throw away the leftovers in the garbage bin without batting an eyelid for his less fortunate brethren who perhaps have slept empty-stomached in the night and had not a morsel of food for their hungry stomachs. Selfishness and greed knows no bounds. The character lauded in the verse here is just the opposite of this selfish man.]

28. Oh sage (Nidagh)! When a wise man casts off all the numerous desires and wishes that his mind and heart harbour in the normal course of life in this world, and instead

remains contented with my (Lord's) remembrance—verily, such a man is said to have obtained 'Jivan Mukti'¹ (28).

[Note--¹A man has so many desires related to the sense objects of this material world and he seeks them out with great effort. The reason for harbouring these desires and making an all-out effort to acquire them is his idea, though erroneous, that by acquiring such and such thing he would get comfort and peace. He forgets in the process that he is falling prey to such worldly enticements that would land him in grave trouble. So a wise man remains contented with whatever he has or whatever comes his way without getting undue agitated or worried for them. Here, the phrase 'remaining contented in the Lord's memory' means that he has happily decided to accept what the Lord has willed for him as his lot and destiny, without getting unduly perturbed over the matter and losing sleep. After all, wants and needs are relative things—one thing is very necessary for one man while another is at peace even without it. A non-wanting man would be extremely baffled if he is showered with goodies, as he would not know what to do with them; he would lose his peace instead of exulting at his good fortune and windfall that has come his way.]

29. A man should sincerely abandon all his imaginary ideas, his fanciful thoughts, his sentiments and notions, as well as all sorts of desires and wishes pertaining to the world that keep on endlessly arising in his mind by distancing his conscious self from them. Instead of allowing his 'self' to be distracted by these nagging diversions originating in the mind, he should rather focus his attention on the pure consciousness that resides in his own bosom. That is, a spiritual aspirant is advised to turn the effort of the mind inwards instead of allowing the mind to roam aimlessly outwards, jumping from one object to another.

By thus training his mind and adopting such an eclectic posture of evenness and equanimity he is able to overcome all dejections, dismay and depressions, or all sorts of fears, perplexities and consternations that come in the wake of these imaginations, ideas, thoughts, sentiments, notions and desires relating to the world.

As a result, he finds rest and peace for his 'self', for his Atma, even though he has a gross body which interacts with this gross world. Such a man is called 'Jivan Mukta' (29).

[Note—When the mind is kept agitated by allowing it to run amok and imagine whatever it wants to, then it is like a child let loose in a toy shop or a bull in a china shop. The mind would go berserk; it would conjure up a magnificent world of fanciful things and then go hammer and tong after it to obtain these fanciful things that it has imagined to be true and a provider of happiness to the creature. It is but natural that no one can ever hope to fulfill all his dreams, some would be left unrealized. Even if some success is achieved, this would impel the man to do more instead of becoming satisfied and calming himself down for the simple reason that he would have tasted blood and would wish to have more of it. The chain reaction of wants and more wants is set in motion, a development that can never give him spiritual peace. So the best way is to leash the mind and let it not have any fanciful ideas and imaginary notions. Then the mind would be tamed and learn to just accept things as and when they come, and deal with them on case to case basis without accumulating or storing anything in its memory or sub-conscious which could disturb a person's peace even after the event has passed. The state when the mind does not store anything in its memory and sub-conscious, and instead deals with things as and when they come its way, forgetting about them completely after the event has passed away, is referred to as the 'hollow state of existence when the mind lives in a virtual void' as explained in verse no. 18 with respect to the sky element.]

30. Though it is true that everything is one and non-dual, but if a man thinks, relying upon this tenet, that this visible world is also as true as his own self, then he is sadly mistaken. The reason is that this world is a result of the fanciful idea and a magnificent creation of the imaginative and creative mind, whereas the 'self' is eternal and truthful consciousness. The former is non-truth because it is based on sheer imagination, while the latter is truth because it is not based on imagination but on the reality known as consciousness that is at the very foundation of the phenomenon of existence. The 'self' or consciousness is an entity that even controls the Mana or the mind (refer verse no. 29).

Therefore, a man who never gets such funny and ridiculous ideas that he is inseparable from this gross world and is an integral part of it—such a man is deemed to be 'Jivan Mukta' (30).

31. Be steady in your convictions and firmly rooted or anchored to the fact that it is the supreme transcendental Divinity known as Brahm who has actually manifested or expressed himself in the form of whatever is seen in this world, but this Brahm is detached from it, is distinct and separate from it. It is not at all attached with anything in this creation inspite of the fact that everything is created by it, and it is all-pervading, omnipresent and ubiquitous by nature¹.

When you have cultivated this high thinking and divine views of Brahm vis-à-vis the world and your own self by being taught about it by self-realised and learned teachers and by following the directions shown by the scriptures, you should then enter this high citadel of spiritual realm and become calmed down, steady and rested. [That is, instead of wandering here and there in this world and getting confused in your search for the truth and reality, you should find peace by meditating and contemplating upon one non-dual Truth known as Brahm which resides in your own bosom as your Atma.] (31).

[Note—¹You must draw a parallel between your self and the world by comparing these two with Brahm and its creation. The latter presents a classical case of paradox—because on the one hand this world is said to be a manifestation of Brahm with the latter uniformly and universally present in the former as its integral part and the only entity that gives the creation its shape and life, but on the other hand the eternal and truthful Brahm is totally a distinct and independent entity that has got nothing to do with this perishable, transient and artificial world. Similarly, your 'true self' is the pure consciousness called the Atma and not the gross body which lives in and is a part of the world, being totally engrossed in its activities like fish is in water. This world is imagined by the mind which works under the overall aegis of the Atma for the simple reason that had there been no consciousness in the gross body, the brain would not have functioned, far less think and imagine of anything at all. It is erroneously assumed that the Atma is involved in the world created by it, for actually it is the mind that has first created and then plunged headlong into it. The Atma is neutral and dispassionate—that is why the Atma, the conscience and the pure self, can control the mind and the rest of the behaviour of the man as envisioned in verse no. 28-30. This pure conscious Atma of the individual creature is a microcosmic manifestation of the cosmic all-pervading Atma known as Brahm. The vast world is the body of Brahm much like the body of the individual creature is the body of his Atma. This is as good as saying that Brahm who had created this world is known and recognised as the world itself much like the case of the Atma representing the true 'self' of the individual creature being known and recognised by the creature's body.]

32. [And who is that Brahm; or what is the other name of Brahm? This question is answered here—]

Shiva is the eternal Guru (moral preceptor, teacher and spiritual guide); Shiva is the Vedas personified; Shiva is revealed in the form of all the Gods; Shiva is the supreme Lord. [These stanzas can be interpreted as follows—the Guru is a manifestation of Shiva; the Vedas are embodiments of Shiva; the Gods are none other than Shiva revealed in their forms. Indeed, Shiva is the supreme Lord, the Supreme Being of creation.]

Since everything is Shiva, I too am Shiva. [That is, I am an embodiment of Shiva—the truthful one, the auspicious one, the beautiful one, the wise and enlightened one, the one who is renunciation personified, the eternal and infinite one, the Supreme Being himself in my form.] (32).

[Note—Refer also to Canto 3, verse no. 6 of this Upanishad, and to Rudra Hridaya Upanishad and Skanda Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda which are dedicated to this theme.

This is the great state of self-realisation when the spiritual aspirant exclaims ‘So-a-ham’, i.e. ‘that is me’. This is one of the great sayings called Mahavakyas of the Vedas.]

33. A wise and erudite Brahmin is one who researches this Shiva principle diligently and with a cool head, and once it is known to him he becomes silent and steady in it. He should not get confused and perplexed by studying numerous scriptures and commentaries on them and neither should he engage in endless debates and discussions because they only lead to more confusions than removing them (33).

[Note—It does not mean that one should not read or consult the scriptures, but the basic idea is to first decide one’s objective and then select the correct text related to the subject, and then study it thoroughly. After the required knowledge is obtained, it is a futile exercise to verify if what this scripture says is endorsed by other texts, because they are numerous versions and school of thoughts in this world, with each presenting its own take on the subject from a different angle and with a different perspective, though they all aim and intend to speak about the same universal Truth. Since the language and metaphors and symbolisms used vary from scripture to scripture, for a less wise man this can be a cause of great perplexity and confusion.]

34. Sage Shukdeo (the parrot saint and son of sage Veda Vyas) found Jivan Mukti as did sage Vamdeo. But there was a subtle difference between the two types of Muktis. Those wise people who follow the path shown by sage Shukdeo find the ultimate liberation and deliverance for themselves in such a way that they do not have to come back into this world again, i.e. they obtain final emancipation and salvation. [Refer verse no. 36, 38 of Canto 4 also.] (34).

35. On the other hand, those who follow the example set by sage Vamdeo repeatedly die and take birth in this world. This cycle would continue for them till the time they find the Truth by practicing Yoga in relation to the profound philosophy known as Sankhya Shastra¹, understanding its principle tenets and basic philosophy, besides painstakingly adhering to the theory of Karma (doing deeds correctly, with the proper perspective and wisdom, so that no consequence accrue which would create a baggage that is carried over to the next birth as destiny that forces the creature to enter a fresh cycle of birth and death)². It is then only that they can get Mukti. [Refer also to verse nos. 36, 39-42 of this Canto 4.] (35).

[Note--¹Sankhya Philosophy or *Sankhya Shastra* and its accompanying philosophy of *Sankhya Yoga* have been elaborately described in Chapter this Upanishad as a note of verse no. 55 of Canto 2.

²The theory of *Karma* or doing deeds correctly and with the correct perspective--*Karma Yoga* or the Yoga philosophy based on doing deeds and taking actions is intricately linked to the philosophy 'Kriya Shakti'. *Kriya Shakti* refers to the power of the gross physical body to act as per wishes of the mind and intellect. It is the Kriya Shakti which enables the supreme Authority to carry out its wishes through the organs of the body by taking various actions and doing different deeds. It is the ability of the body to actually do the deeds or take the actions and bring them to fruition. It also represents the ability to enjoy the results of doing such deeds and actions taken by the creature. The word also refers to being active and enterprising and the opposite of being lethargic and indolent. It is the actual ability to carry out his plans to their successful completion, i.e. to do deeds, to take actions and enter into enterprise, because simply sitting and procrastinating endlessly wouldn't give success unless there is assiduous activity and diligent effort, no matter how wise a man is and how determined he might be. The body is prompted into taking action by the desires and aspirations originating in the mind and intellect complex. If these desires are world-centric, then our actions and deeds would be also world-centric and so would be the result. This is because every activity gathers its quality from the texture of the desire that has prompted a particular action or deed. So, when the desire is to enjoy the outside world and its sense objects, the deeds and actions become entrapping and the cause of all world related miseries. On the other hand, if the desires are auspicious and noble, the same deed and action would become an instrument for spiritual upliftment as well as liberation and deliverance. In this context, the term *Karma Yoga* would be to coordinate the effort of the body and the mind not towards fulfilling worldly aspirations that would be ensnaring and enslaving in the long run but to divert them towards the divine goal of spiritual liberation and deliverance. And the tool in this endeavour would be to have auspicious, noble and righteous desires, aspirations and wishes, collectively called the different Vasanas or Ichaas inherent in a man, instead of the worldly ones. Once the desires are purified and chastened, the activities and deeds to fulfill or accomplish those Vasanas or Ichaas are purified and chastened proportionately. At its height, the total renunciation of desires for enjoying anything related to the external world of sense organs and their respective objects is called 'Vairagya'. This Kriya Shakti is more developed in those people who have a predominance of the Raja Guna or the second category of three basic qualities that decide the habits, temperaments and nature of any man. The Raja Guna makes a man more inclined towards enjoying the sense objects of the world and remain engrossed in the activities related to the gross world.

Karma Yoga expounds on the importance of doing deeds and taking actions, but with a different attitude. It stresses that we must not get 'involved or attached' to those deeds or action in as much as we shouldn't be bothered about the rewards or punishments incumbent on such deeds or actions. We must do them dispassionately and with detachment. The action or deed should be treated as one's offering to the God as well as an offering to the sacred fire sacrifice. This will ensure that the actions or deeds are not unrighteousness, corrupt or evil. On the contrary, whatever is done in which a person's subtle sub-conscious says is not the correct thing to do will be deemed to be unrighteous, unethical and unlawful, and therefore cannot be an offering to either the God or the sacred fire sacrifice.

Refer also to Canto 2, verse no. 48 of this Upanishad which deals with the concept of Karma Yog and how one can become free from the fetters created by 'deeds'. Other references are Niralambo-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 11-12; Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 2, verse nos. 23-26; Mandal Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, 2/4/2-3; Adhyatma Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, verse nos. 49-60; and Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 7, section 21.]

36. The two sages Shukdeo and Vamdeo represent two types of creatures created by the God. Shukdeo represents those who are like the birds, while Vamdeo represents those who are like the ant (36).

[Note—Refer verse nos. 38-42 of this Canto 4 which explains why and how the bird and the ant differ vis-à-vis the Mukti.

The bird's chick breaks free from the shell of the egg, hops around for some time and then flies off to some unknown destination, while the ant is always tethered to the ground. The bird represents that living being who takes a birth and uses this opportunity to lift himself from the present situation and reach for higher, sublime goals in life symbolised by the 'flying away of the bird'. For the rest, the ant is an example; they remain bound to this gross world and prefer to be attached to it. The bird flies in the sky and has the privilege of viewing the world from a wide angle and from a distance, meaning a creature is wise if he can acquire a broad perspective of the world and see it with a broad vision like a bird sees this world from high up in the sky. He remains aloof and detached from the world like the bird flying in the sky maintains a clear distance from the ground and has no bother of whatever is happening on it. On the contrary, the ant is bound to the ground, is moribund and is directly affected by its surroundings much like a man engrossed in the material world, who is directly affected by all the happenings around him, and for whom the world is the end.

The bird lives a lonely life, has no permanent companion, and once it flies off its nest when grown up, it rarely comes back to its parents again unlike the ant which lives in a society and spends its entire life serving the colony to which it belongs. Similarly, a wise and enlightened man lives a lonely life and remains detached from the rest of his companions as well as the household and the world like the bird. On the other hand, an ant is known to endlessly strive to forage for food to feed itself and others in the colony like a worldly man who spends his life time serving himself and his dependents.

But it is possible for the two types of men to get Mukti or liberation and deliverance from this world. The Mukti for the man who detaches himself from the world and moves ahead in his spiritual path alone like a lonely bird flying in the sky is obvious, but even a man who works like a slave ant is also entitled for Mukti if he inculcates the grand virtue of doing deeds without any expectations of personal rewards or benefits from them. The ant does remain engrossed in its endless pursuit for food, running to and fro from its dwelling to the food, symbolising the oscillation that the man is subjected to in the form of numerous lives and deaths as well as the chain of deeds and their consequences.

The metaphor of the bird is used to emphasise the fact the facts of life where the creature is born surrounded by a shell of worldly Vasanas and Vrittis, i.e. worldly passions and tendencies, along with numerous other factors brought forward from his previous life. While inside this shell and surrounded by it, the creature feels suffocated and is not aware of what lies beyond it. But when he breaks free from this shell, he discovers there vast infinite sky and wishes to fly to his freedom. This is a metaphoric way of saying that the wise creature would free himself from the fetters of ignorance and delusions that shackle his Atma to this limiting gross world and its illusionary charms which are however perishable and transient, and instead endeavour to lift himself and obtain spiritual liberation and deliverance from the horrors and torments associated with this mortal life. This spiritual liberation from the bondage of the world even while remaining in it and being active in it is called Jivan Mukti, and it is symbolised by the flying away of the bird into the deep space of the sky to its freedom. A spiritually liberated man feels as free and unfettered as the bird.

The creature who is engrossed in this physical world acts like the ant, but if he works selflessly, he is entitled for Mukti because doing deeds and not getting involved in them is also a path of spiritual liberation and deliverance. This is because

if a man is not involved in deeds, he would not be accumulating any rewards or results, and therefore he would not have to take a birth again to suffer the consequences of these results. Besides this point, he should develop the grand philosophical view point that this world is a manifestation of Brahm, the supreme transcendental Consciousness, and with this view his involvement with the world assumes a divine connotation. He no longer remains close to a world which is gross and perishable, a world that is deluding and entangling, but near to his Lord, serving him by each of his actions and deeds, and being in close proximity of the Divinity. Thus, such a man who is like an ant too deserves Mukti; he too becomes Jivan Mukta.

The subtle *difference* between these two types of Muktis is the fact that the one which is like the bird is more advanced and helps one to reach one's destination without much hindrance as the bird can fly to its destination with virtually no obstacles to block its path. On the other hand, the other path which is compared to the ant is more cumbersome and more dependent upon the physical circumstances that an aspirant has to face for the simple reason that the ant is bound to the gross earth (world) as compared to the bird which takes the more subtle path of the sky, a path which is ethereal and free from worldly gross hindrances. Therefore, the ant's path becomes more difficult and tedious as compared to that of the bird.]

37. The great sayings which are universal truths called the 'Mahavakyas'¹ as pronounced by the creator Brahma should always be kept in mind and continuously meditated and pondered upon even while one studies the tenets of Sankhya Shastra, Yoga and Samadhi. [This ensures that the main target of all spiritual practices—which is to establish oneness of the individual creature's Atma or soul with the cosmic Atma or the Consciousness and Truth known as Brahm—is not lost in the winding alleys of scriptures and the catacomb of their numerous interpretations. That is like not losing sight of the tree while roaming in the dense forest!]

Understanding the real meaning and spiritual import of the great sayings called the Mahavakyas incorporated in the Vedas by the creator who had created the Vedas themselves is the prime aim of all spiritual practices such as the study of the philosophy of Sankhya Shastra, Yoga and Samadhi. If this objective is not fulfilled then the entire exercise goes in vain (36).

[Note—¹The *Mahavakyas* are briefly the great universal sayings, declarations, commandments, tenets, or the axioms and maxims of the Vedas which are absolute truths and sum up the essence of their teachings with the reference to the Supreme Being known as Brahm and his counterpart the Atma or soul, which is pure consciousness residing in the bosom of the living being. They are as follows—(i) 'Brahm Is Consciousness' (Pragnanam Brahm) appears in Aiteriya Upanishad of the Rig Veda. It means that Atma/consciousness, which gives life to the material layers consisting of the five sheaths of the creature, is the same as the Supreme Reality/Truth behind the entire universe/creation called by the name of Brahm; (ii) 'That Thou Art' (Tat Twam Asi) is found in the Chandogya Upanishad of the Sam Veda. It means that the infinite, all-pervading, omniscient Supreme Truth/Reality is the consciousness or pure self in you. It is also called a statement of advice to the seekers in as much as it contains advice addressed to the seeker that the supreme reality is the self within him; (iii) 'This Self Is Brahm' (Ayam Atma Brahm) is found in the Mandukya Upanishad in the Atharva Veda. It means that the Atma which is self illuminated and the Supreme Reality/Truth are one and the same (i.e. identical); (iv) I Am Brahm (Aham Brahm Asmi) is found in the Brihadaranyak Upanishad of the Yajur Veda. It proclaims that the conscious principle/element in an individual is nothing other than the total consciousness. This is the statement made by the seeker after attaining self realisation.

There are a number of other Upanishads that describe these great sayings of the Vedas, called the Mahavakyas. Some of them are the following:--

(a) According to Paingalo-panishad, 3/2 of the Shukla Yajur Veda, they are the following—(a) ‘Tattwamasi’—that essence or Tattva is you; (b) ‘Twam-Tadasi’—you are that; (c) ‘Twam-Brahmasi’—thou art Brahm; and (d) ‘Aham-Brahmasi’—I am Brahm.

According to Mandal Brahmino-panishad, of the Shukla Yajur Veda, they are the following—(a) ‘That is me’, or ‘that is I’ is mentioned in Brahmin 2, section 2, verse no. 5; (b) ‘I am Tej or I am energy personified’, ‘I am Pragya or personified knowledge’, ‘I am one and immutable’, ‘I am pure and non-dual Brahm’—these are mentioned in Brahmin 2, section 4, verse no. 4; (c) ‘I am the eternal and immaculate Parmatma’, ‘I am that essence’, ‘you are me’, ‘I am you’ are mentioned in Brahmin 3, section 1, verse no. 6; (d) ‘I am Brahm’ appears in Brahmin 3, section 2, verse no. 1; and finally (e) ‘You are me’ appears in Brahmin 3, section 2, verse no. 2.

According to Shuka Rahasayo-panishad, 22 of Krishna Yajur Veda, they are the following—(1) ‘OM Pragyanam Brahm’. [OM salutations! The truthful and pristine pure knowledge which is all-inclusive, most sublime and eclectic in nature is Brahm personified.] (2) ‘OM Aham Brahmasmi’. [OM salutations! Indeed, I am Brahm.] (3) ‘OM Tattwamasi’. [OM salutations! That Brahm is you; or that art thou.] (4) ‘OM Ayamatra Brahm’. [OM salutations! This Atma, the pure conscious soul or ‘self’ of the creature, is Brahm.]

According to Kaivalyo-panishad, verse no. 16 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, the Mahavakya is ‘That Brahm is you; you are it’. Verse no. 17-23 of this Upanishad also affirms that the truly realised person is one who sees ‘his own self in every aspect of this creation’ simply because the entire creation is nothing but a revelation of one single immutable and truthful entity known as Brahm.

Other Upanishads that highlight the fundamental tenets of the Vedas are Atmabodho-panishad of Rig Veda; Sarwasaaro-panishad, verse no. 12-14 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition; and Atmo-panishad of Atharva Veda amongst others.]

38. When the spiritual aspirant has realised the divinity and glory of his true self by putting into practice the teachings of the great Mahavakyas as done during the practice of Samadhi (the perpetual state of meditation when the practitioner is focused on his Atma or pure consciousness to the exclusion of everything else), he is said to follow the path shown by sage Shukdeo—i.e. he is able to fly like a parrot (Shuk) in the endless sky which presents no physical hurdles in his spiritual path.

They leave this gross physical world and fly off into the vast realm of the fathomless Truth metaphorically represented by the sky without facing any kind of hurdles, and reach their spiritual destination of attaining the supreme citadel called ‘Param Pada’, the stature of being Absolute and inseparably one with the cosmic Consciousness known as the supreme transcendental Brahm (38).

[Note—Refer verse no. 34 and 36 of this Canto 4 also.]

39. If one wishes to attain various mystical powers called Siddhis such as Anima etc.¹ which would give him worldly fame, glory, acclaim and honour, he would endeavour to achieve these Siddhis by following various denominations or forms of Yoga such as Yam, Niyam etc.², including the severest forms called Hath Yoga³ which entails difficult postures called Mudras, Aasans and Bandhas which are specialised Yoga techniques that have great potential power to definitely bestow the practitioner with the mystical prowess he seeks.

But all these paths are ridden with numerous hurdles besides being very risky and dangerous. Should something go wrong, they prove fatal as well. Again, they can

give worldly acclaim and glory but do not liberate the soul and deliver it from the trap from which it should have sought liberation and deliverance. [The acquisition of Siddhis is bonus that comes without asking to those who practice Yoga. These Siddhis would bestow supernatural powers to the practitioner of Yoga. This in its wake would lead to his acquiring great name and fame. People from far and wide would come to him seeking his intervention to help them out of their worldly problems. He would be literally mobbed daily by people seeking his help. The honour and laurels heaped upon him would go into his head and he would be driven far off from the main objective for which Yoga is prescribed in the scriptures in the first place—which is to bring about a ‘union’ (Yoga) between the individual soul and the universal cosmic Soul. Here, such people are said to be the followers of Vamdeo because they believe in obtaining Mukti through making diligent and hard efforts symbolised by their doing Yoga which is rigorous and involves painstaking efforts over a long period of time. Yoga is fraught with a lot of danger and hurdle as compared to the path of finding Mukti through the pursuance of the path of Gyan or acquisition of knowledge and enlightenment based on meditation and contemplation, study of the scriptures and pondering deeply upon their doctrines and other such methods that do not require rigid exercises and hard labour as required by Yoga. Refer verse nos. 35-36 of this Canto 4.] (39).

[Note—¹There are eight *Siddhis* as follows-- (i) ‘Anima’ means the power to become microscopic or so minute that one becomes invisible to the naked eye; (ii) ‘Mahima’ is to have majesty, glory and fame; to be honoured and acknowledged for one’s achievements, knowledge and skills; (iii) ‘Garima’ is to have weight, stature, dignity, decorum, gravity and significance, (iv) ‘Laghima’ is to have simplicity and humility; (v) ‘Praapti’ is to be able to attain or obtain anything wished or desired; (vi) ‘Prakramya’ is to have valour, ardour, strength, powers, prowess, potential and punch leading to triumph, glory and majesty; (vii) ‘Ishwatwa’ is to be able to have lordship or sway over others; and (viii) ‘Vashitwa’ is to be able to control and subdue others.

²The eight-fold path of Yoga are the following—According to Patanjali who is considered to be the greatest exponent of Yoga, the latter consists of 8-fold path. These are briefly the following—(1) ‘Yam’ or self restraint of the senses; (2) ‘Niyam’ or observance of certain sacrosanct rules; (3) ‘Aasan’ or postures for meditation; (4) ‘Pranayam’ or breath control exercises for purification of the body and mind; (5) ‘Pratyahar’ or withdrawal of the mind and its control; (6) ‘Dharna’ or having a firm conviction, faith and belief on the sanctity and truthfulness of the chosen path; (7) ‘Dhyan’ or contemplation and concentration of the faculties of the mind and intellect, such as visualizing the presence of the supreme Brahm in the point of the forehead between the two eyebrows; and (8) ‘Samadhi’ or a perpetual trance-like state in which the aspirant loses all awareness of the external world and even himself, and remains perpetually in meditation. These eight fold path of Yoga have been listed in *Varaaha Upanishad*, canto 5, verse no. 12—12 ½ and *Yogtattva Upanishad*, verse no. 24-25 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, as well as in *Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad*, Canto 2, verse no. 28-34, and *Mandal Brahmin Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse nos. 2-10 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition.

The first five steps of Yoga, i.e. Yam, Niyam, Aasan, Pranayam and Pratyahara are considered external processes or ‘Bahiranga Yoga’, while the last three, i.e. Dharna, Dhyan and Samadhi are called the internal processes or ‘Antanranga Yoga’. Patanjali says in his 12th maxim of the first chapter of *Yog Sutra* that success in Yoga can be achieved by a coordination of practice and detachment. While ‘practice’ obviously implies the observation of rules and steps of Yoga as defined in Yoga treatises, ‘detachment’ means the consciousness that has given up desires for objects either seen or heard of. This detachment should be comprehensive in the sense that

the practitioner of Yoga should also be indifferent towards the three Gunas or qualities of Sata, Raja and Tama that dominate all behavioral patterns in this world.

These eight steps of Yoga designed by Patanjali are meant to guide the spiritual aspirant gradually and in a systematic manner to progress higher in his spiritual endeavours and ultimately achieve the supreme state of eternal blissfulness that comes with inner awakening and experiencing the divine source of light and enlightenment that resides in one's own bosom.

The first two steps, i.e. Yam or abstentions, and Niyam or observances, result in calmness of body and mind which are essentials in success in any enterprise. This preliminary moral training provides the aspirant with the solid ground which helps avoid future digressions from the main path of Yoga. The third step, i.e. Aasan or various sitting postures, helps one to exercise control over the physical body. The fourth step, i.e. Pranayam or breath control, helps to harness the stupendous energy of the different vital winds present inside the body and divert their inherent powers for the spiritual as well as physical benefit of the aspirant's mind-body complex. The fourth step, i.e. Pratayahar or control over the sense organs, helps him to detach himself from the external objects of this distracting world and focus all his attention inwards. These first five steps of Yoga, i.e. Yam, Niyam, Aasan, Pranayam and Pratayahara are considered external processes or 'Bahiranga Yoga'.

Next comes the internal processes or 'Antanranga Yoga' which consists of the last three steps. Thus, sixth step, i.e. Dharna or fixed attention, helps to rivet or fasten the mind to one object which is the aim of Yoga. Constant practice of this sixth step called Dharna leads to the seventh step called Dhyan or continuous meditation and contemplation, without any break. The culmination of all these seven steps is the last stage or the eighth step called Samadhi or the trance-like transcendental state of deep absorption of the mind. The difference between Dharna and Dhyan is that the former is a temporary fixation of the mind while the latter is a higher state of fixation of concentration of the mind where it is not disturbed by any other thoughts. To draw an analogy to explain the relation between Dharna and Dhyan we may cite the instance of water and oil or any other viscous fluid such as honey or jelly. Drops of water dripping from a tap are like Dharna, while the continuous and interrupted flow of oil is like Dhyan.

Patanjali has defined Samadhi as the eclectic and mystical state of the mind when it is full of the revelation of the object concentrated upon, a state in which the aspirant loses awareness of all external as well as internal existence. He even forgets about himself.

It should be noted here that the second last step (Dhyan) which leads to Samadhi is a 'reflective knowledge', i.e. it consists of three elements of knowledge. These are—the 'Dhyata' or the awareness of the person who concentrates, the 'Dhyan' or the process of concentrating, and 'Dhyeya' or the object concentrated or meditated upon. It is like saying 'I am meditating on such and such object'. When these distinctions are removed, then it is the state of Samadhi.

The main thrust of Yoga is not mere arrest of the mind or mere physical exercises, but train the aspirant to realise his true self and its divine nature by rigorously following certain well defined and tested techniques.

Amongst the Upanishads that describe this concept are the Mandal Brahmin Upanishad of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, Brahmin (canto) 1, section 1, verse nos. 3-11; the Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 15-42 of Krishna Yajur Veda; the Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, in its Canto 2, verse nos. 28-34.

³Hath Yoga--The *Hath Yoga* is the Yoga that teaches how to bring about the union of Pran (the breath, the vital wind that resides in the upper part of the body) and the Apaana (the wind that moves down in the body and helps in digestion and excretion, the vital wind that lives in the lower part of the body) by means of strict following of the eight fold path of Yoga such as observance of Yam, Niyam, Aasan,

Pranayam, Pratyahar, Dharna, concentration and visualization of the presence of the Supreme Being in the point of the forehead where the root of the nose meets the middle of the eyebrows, and Samadhi. It teaches the practical aspects of spiritual Yoga. It teaches the practical aspects of spiritual Yoga and includes various exercises—Bandhs, Aasans, Mudras and Pranyam.

The Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 133-134 is very explicit in this.]

40. When a spiritual aspirant engages himself in doing various spiritual practices such as Yoga in its entirety (refer verse no. 39) and is not successful in fully accomplishing the desired results, he takes a new birth in a higher rung of the cycle of birth and death than his previous birth. [This new birth in a better position than the past life is due to the good effects of the auspicious efforts that he had made in the previous life.]

Then as a result of his brought-over ‘Vasanas’ or internal desires, passions, aspirations and yearnings which mould his present life’s temperaments and nature, called his ‘Praarabdha’, he carries forward his unfinished task of the past life. That is, he engages himself in doing more Yoga¹. This cycle continues (40).

[Note—¹The word Yoga here would mean continuous effort in a particular direction with a particular aim in mind so as to enable the practitioner to achieve success in obtaining his desired objective.]

41. Just like a large black ant repeatedly does something to finally achieve success in its enterprise¹, such a spiritual aspirant would finally achieve success if he diligently sticks to his practice and schedule over a long chain of birth and death. He would finally achieve success in obtaining the supreme transcendental state of being one with the Absolute, of reaching the ultimate state of being one with the supreme transcendental Truth and Reality of creation, of being one with the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm (41).

[Note—¹The large black ant attempts to climb a wall or some other steep incline or vertical surface, and repeatedly falls down. But he does not abandon his attempts and finally succeeds in this enterprise. Another instance is when it carries a grain in its mouth to store it in its hole and comes back for another grain. Over a long period of time, the ant would be successful in sweeping clean the floor where the grain was spread and transfer it to some other place of its choice. Similarly, a steadfast and diligent spiritual aspirant who is determined to achieve success in his spiritual path would ultimately achieve his objective like the instance of the ant, but it would be over numerous births.

Refer also to verse nos. 35-36 in this context.]

42. Both these paths (exemplified by sage Shukdeo or the parrot, and Vamdeo or the ant—refer verse no. 34-41) pave the way for Brahm-realisation, and bestow auspiciousness and all round welfare to the practitioner.

One path symbolised by sage Shukdeo (the parrot) is a straight forward path which creates no hurdles and goes straight to the desired destination of obtaining Mukti, or liberation and deliverance for the aspirant’s soul. This enables the practitioner to reach the supreme stature of the Absolute directly without having to follow a round about meandering route.

On the other hand, the second path exemplified by sage Vamdeo (the ant) follows a circuitous path to Mukti. A practitioner of this path would have to oscillate between numerous births before obtaining his objective of getting liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death. It is step-by-step path ridden with pitfalls and hurdles, and so proportionately risky¹.

A person who has cultivated a high level of equanimity and a sense of non-duality, where is the question of his having any kind of Moha (attraction, longing, desire and infatuation) or Shoka (agony of separation and all sorts of distresses and pains associated when one thinks in terms of himself being different from the others)²? (42).

[Note—¹Refer verse no. 36 of this Canto 4 and its accompanying note on this subject.

The parrot or any other bird for that matter flies in the sky which has no physical hurdles, and so after having left its pervious perch it can go straight to its new destination unhindered and without facing any physical obstacle. On the other hand, the poor ant has to face an uphill task to reach its destinations because of the limitations imposed upon it by its contact with the earth and the numerous obstacles that come in the way which would compel us to make a detour and take a circuitous route to the destination. The steep angle of the incline which the ant wishes to climb to reach its destination would force it fall again and again, but its resilience pays in the end and it manages to go to the top.

Likewise, a man who follows the path of Gyan (i.e. the path of wisdom, erudition and enlightenment) by study of the scriptures and keeping company of the learned ones acquires truthful knowledge of what the ultimate destination of his soul is, and then applies his intelligence and wisdom to diligently follow this path and concentrate upon the objective to head straight to his destination of obtaining Mukti. He would not be distracted by what is happening down under in this humdrum mundane life just like the parrot is unbothered by what is happening on the surface of the earth during its flight.

On the other hand, a man who thinks that he would use his manly powers and strength of his body and mind to reach the destination like an emperor conquering his enemy by use of force faces an uphill task like the ant. The path of Yoga and all other paths except the path of Gyan are like going through a meandering and unknown forest-path full of unforeseen problems and difficult hurdles. Indeed they would take the man to his desired destination in due course, but only if he is careful enough to avoid the uncountable pitfalls and temptations. First and foremost pitfall is his success in attaining the various Siddhis which are mystical supernatural powers that come automatically with success in Yoga practice just like a medicine automatically alleviating pain by suppressing the feeling of pain notwithstanding the fact that the underlying cause of the pain is still there. This Siddhis fill the man with pride of achievement, and it is the beginning of his downfall.

Then there is the hurdle of successfully going through the actual rigours of Yoga which entail stiff and very difficult exercises which if not handled carefully are more prone to be detrimental to his spiritual elevation and even prove physically fatal. Besides these, there are numerous other hurdles or pitfalls of Yoga as described in the *Yog Kundalini Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition which is Chapter 27 of this volume, in its Canto 1, verse nos. 56-57, 58-61 and 71.

A stone tied to a string would oscillate to and fro like a pendulum, but with each swing it loses some of its energy and the span of the arc go on reducing proportionately with each swing till the time the pendulum completely stops to sway. Similarly, if a diligent practitioner of Yoga sticks to his practice, he might not succeed in the near future, but his perseverance bears fruit in the long run and he ultimately obtains liberation and deliverance, or Mukti, for his soul. This analogy can be extended to include not only one birth but more than one if he does not succeed in the first attempt. The good effects of the spiritual exercises done in one given birth would be carried to an aspirant's new birth, and he would be motivated by them as well as his intense desire to find Mukti which together ensure that continues on his spiritually auspicious path even during this new life. Every time, his credit balance of good deeds would continue to increase and his bad deeds would continue to get reduced, and by and by only the credit remains. When this happens, he would have

found freedom from the slavery of bad deeds which had forced his soul to be tied to this world of miseries and delusions. He would now find his final freedom. This explains why such a man is compared with the ant which never gives up and continues with its efforts to climb the wall inspite of falling repeatedly, and is finally able to climb it. This state gives the aspirant rest and peace that he had been so assiduously seeking over many births and even during the span of his current life.

Continuous practice of the various techniques of Yoga enables him to reach the state of utter calmness and tranquility, the state called Samadhi. This state marks an important milestone in the spiritual enlightenment of the aspirant. When this state is reached, no external influences of the world would disturb the internal poise and calmness of the person. Earlier, verse nos. 8-9 of Canto 1 of this Upanishad lists the numerous hurdles—both the gross and the subtle—that the spiritual aspirant faces.

²When one thinks that the peace, happiness and comfort obtained by things of this world are greater than the one his consciousness can provide to him, he gets attracted to this world and its material objects. So in the eventuality when he has developed the sense of non-duality, that there is no difference between this world outside and the world inside his own being, and consequentially the peace and happiness that the external world provides after such difficulty is easily and comfortably available to him when he seeks them from his inner self, he is deemed to have become Jivan Mukta and self-realised. This erases the cause of having Moha or attractions, attachments and desires for the world and its material objects.

Similarly, when there is no one else except one's own 'self' in the form of the Atma which is a universal and all-pervading entity, the concept of separation or union lose their locus standi. Hence, there would be no cause of agonies when one is separated from one's dear ones or even when deprived of any object. Likewise, there would be no joy of union because there has been no separation.]

43. A person who is absolutely focused on his target pays no heed to anything else till he has reached the target. Similarly, a man who is focused on Brahm realisation and self realisation, who is determined to experience the pure consciousness first hand, who has a firm resolve to attain liberation and deliverance from this world and its cycle of birth and death, who is determined to obtain emancipation and salvation for his soul, would be so involved in his spiritual pursuit that he would see nothing but Brahm or the pure conscious Atma everywhere. His determination and focusing on the goal has a profound psychological impact upon him. It completely overwhelms his being.

Such a person is said to be freed from all sins and their consequences. [He is not involved in anything related to the gross world. A man is convicted of any crime only if his involvement is proved, and 'involvement' happens only when the man thinks that 'he' is the doer of a particular deed or has some motivation to commit the crime. In the present case, the spiritual aspirant neither regards himself as the doer of deeds nor has he any motivation for any deeds done by the gross body. His mind and intellect that actually makes a man aware of his surroundings are focused elsewhere, and he is honestly completely oblivious of what his body is doing or not doing. So there is obviously no ground for any sins to happen as far as 'he' is concerned, and consequentially no ground for being convicted for them.] (43).

44. For such an exalted and self-realised person, every creature appears to be a manifestation of Brahm, whether that creature is sky bound such as the parrot or earth bound such as the ant.

Such an enlightened ascetic and spiritual aspirant is freed from all sins, even those that have accumulated over numerous past lives of his (44).

Canto 5

[This Canto is dedicated to the practice of Yoga.]

1. After the above discussion, sage Nidagh requested sage Ribhu—‘Oh Lord! Please preach for me the full process of Yoga in detail’.

Ribhu accepted to do so. He began his discourse—‘This body is made up of five elements that form five sheaths or Mandals (which are also known as Koshas). Out of the five elements, the earth forms the grossest, the more firm, thick and harder parts of this body (such as the bones, muscles and skin). [There are five Koshas or sheaths that surround the Atma in the gross body—the food sheath called the Anna Maye Kosh, the wind sheath called the Pran Maye Kosh, the mental sheath called the Gyan Maye Kosh, the intellect sheath called the Vigyan Maye Kosh, and the bliss sheath enclosing the Atma called the Anand Maye Kosh.]

The water element forms the fluid parts (such as the blood, lymph and mucous etc.) present in the body (1).

2. The fire element is in the form of light, heat and energy; it gives energy, vitality, strength and stamina to the body. [The light inherent in the fire element enables the body to see things; the heat of the fire keeps the body warm; and its energy and vitality keeps the body energized, vigorous and active.]

The air element is always on the move, and therefore it not only enables the body to be active but also controls all its movements and functions. [The other name of the air or wind element is Pran, and the latter is synonymous with life and vitality. It is the Pran that keeps the body alive; it is the Pran that controls all its internal functions as well as the working of the external organs of perception and action.]

The sky element is omnipresent, all-encompassing and all-pervading; it fills the entire space between the organs, tissues and cells of the body. [Like the external sky which harbours the entire creation in its bosom and acts as an invisible buffer that protects the countless entities embedded in the sky from colliding with each other, all the internal organs, tissues and cells of the body are kept in their place by the cushioning effect of the subtle sky inside the body between them. Just like nothing exists that is not within the perimeter wall of the sky, no unit of the body exists that is not surrounded by this subtle sky element, or which is not embedded in it.]

A person who wishes to proceed on the path of Yoga must be well conversant with them (2).

3. A man breathes twenty one thousand six hundred times during the course of a day consisting of a day and a night (3).

4. When the air element (as vital winds called the various Prans) present in the gross body is weakened, the eyes become distorted (and this effects the vision of the person).

When the water element present inside the body is weakened, the hairs begin to grey (4).

5. When the fire element (called the ‘Tej’—literally something that is radiant, splendorous, dazzling, glorious, powerful, potent, effective, quick and energetic) present inside the body is weakened, hunger is lessened.

When the air element present inside the body is weakened, the body’s naturally fine and attractive looks such as the radiance and the glow of the skin as well as the alertness and agility of other external organs begin to fade away. The tautness of the muscles and robust structure of the body is affected when the water element gets feeble, and the texture of the body shows signs of dehydration and deflation. In such cases, there is a high probability of the body shaking involuntarily because the structural features become weak and lose their rigidity and tensile strength.

The only element left unaffected is the sky element, but it is not possible for the body to survive simply on this element. [The sky is without attributes, infinite and structure-less. If the body is supposed to be made up entirely of the sky element, then it would expand infinitely and lose all its recognizable features by which it is known.] (5).

6. In this way, when the gross physical body decays and is ultimately shed, the living entity present inside it, the conscious ‘self’, leaves it and flies off just like a huge bird abandoning a decayed and fallen tree and flying off far away from it in the infinite sky (6).

7. This is called the Uddiyan Bandha¹. [An entity that is bound or tied to something would fly off somewhere when it is freed like the bird leaving a cage. In the present case, the cage is the gross body and the freed bird is the conscious ‘self’ or the Atma of the creature which finds liberation when the body dies.]

Hence, a shackled creature (i.e. the conscious ‘self’) runs away at the time of death of the gross physical body just like a lion which has been able to free itself from the cage (7).

[Note—¹Refer verse no. 44 of Canto 5 below.]

8. Even as it is not possible to catch a lion once it has been freed, a creature who has found freedom from the body once cannot be shackled again.

When the fire element is activated in the bag-like abdomen, one feels great pain in the stomach. [This has reference to the pangs of hunger and the cramp-like feeling in the intestines if one has not eaten for a long time and has to do some activity on an empty stomach.] (8).

9. One should not practice Yoga when one is very hungry (i.e. on an empty stomach) as well as when the urinary bladders are full and require urgent evacuation. [One should not suppress hunger and urine to do Yoga. Since Yoga entails rigorous exercises and needs a lot of energy and stamina, the stomach must not be empty as it might cause abdominal cramps and other problems. Similarly, a full bladder is always harmful because Yoga is a prolonged exercise and retaining urine for long times is very harmful for the body. Besides this, the pressures created while doing various Aasans and Mudras, or sitting postures and positioning of the body while doing Yoga, would exert excessive pressure on the urinary organs, and the accumulated urine might spurt out involuntarily which is not a good thing to happen even under ordinary situations.]

A Yoga practitioner should eat light and nutritious meals spread over many sittings (instead of gorging like a hungry elephant at one go). This self-restriction is for his good (9).

10. The various aspects or types of Yoga practices, such as Mantra, Laya and Hath Yoga, should be done gradually, starting on a soft and easy note and progressing slowly to the medium level to finally reach the higher level of Yoga which is very rigorous and painstaking.

These three types of Yoga, viz. Mantra, Laya and Hath¹, are successful only when coordinated with the eight fold path of Yoga known as 'Ashtaang Yoga' (10).

[Note—¹(a) The *Mantra Yoga* refers to practicing Yoga through Mantra. It is that Yoga in which constant repetition of Mantras steadies the mind. The Mantra of the chosen deity is used as the standard common denominator and as medium to focus the mind and attention while practicing the eight-fold path of Yoga as prescribed by Patanjali, the greatest exponent of Yoga philosophy. This Yoga is called Astaanga Yoga, the Yoga with eight branches or organs.

According to Vaayaviya Sanhita, there are five kinds of Yoga, and Mantra Yoga is the first amongst them. As stated above, it is that Yoga in which constant repetition of Mantras steadies the mind. When this is associated with Pranayam or breath control, it is called 'Sparsha Yoga'. This develops into a higher state called 'Bhaava Yoga' when the repetition of Mantra stops automatically and involuntarily, leaving only the feeling of tender devotion and spiritual ecstasy in its wake inspite on one living in this world. When one rises higher in this practice, the world completely disappears and there is no feeling whatsoever, a sort of 'neutrality' or 'zero' effect is obtained. This is called 'Abhaava Yoga'. At the last stage of spiritual evolution, the union with Shiva, the ultimate Truth and the embodiment of Yoga, is obtained. This state or stage is called 'Maha Yoga'.

The use of various Mantras as tools to aid in meditation is called Mantra Yoga. Some of the eclectic Mantras used for this purpose are the following:--

(a) OM = This is the quintessential and evergreen spiritual which is regarded as the universal Mantra for the purpose of Yoga, meditation and contemplation. This has been described in detail in Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 1.11-2, and Canto 5, verse nos. 69-72; Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 9-17; Amrit Naad Upanishad, verse no. 24; Kshuriko-panishad, verse nos. 2-5; Yog Tattva Upanishad, verse no. 19, 21-22, 63, 136-139; Shwetashwatar Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 14; Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse nos. 71, 86, 101-104.

(b) So-a-Ham = This Mantra has been described in a number of Upanishads—viz. (i) Sam Veda = Yogchudani Upanishad, verse no. 83. (ii) Krishna Yajur Veda = Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse no. 34, 78-79; Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 131-133; Panch Brahm Upanishad, verse no. 28; Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 17, Canto 4, verse nos. 1.11-2, Canto 5, verse nos. 69-72.

(c) Mantra for Khechhari Mudra which is used for the purpose of meditating upon the sky element = Yoga Kundali Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 16-23, and Canto 3, verse no. 1.

(d) The Melan Mantra which establishes a union between the individual soul and the cosmic Soul = Yoga Kundali Upanishad, Canto 3, verse no. 1.

(e) The Hans Mantra = Hanso-panishad, verse no. 5-15, Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 59-63, and Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse nos. 31-35, 82-83, 93.

(b) *Laya Yoga*—Technically, the *Laya Yoga* has two meanings. One with a purely metaphysical dimension is the dissolution of the Chitta or the sub-conscious mind and its various faculties so much so that the practitioner remembers the supreme Lord even while going about his daily life and its chores simply because his mind is completely dissolved in the remembrance of the Supreme Being and it is the physical

gross body that does the various deeds associated with the world, resulting in the person remaining absolutely oblivious of what he has done or whatever is happening around him.

Persistent and consistent practice of Hath Yoga results in Laya Yoga, i.e. it helps in the merger of the individual soul of the creature, called the Jiva, with the supreme Soul of creation known as Brahm; it helps to bring about oneness between them. The Chitta (the sub-conscious mind and its power to think, remember and act as a referral bank of the intellect) dissolves in the Atma, and the vital winds in the body lose their inherent restlessness and become calm and quietened.

This has been asserted in verse no. 23 of Yogtattva Upanishad, and verse nos. 135-137 of Canto 1 of Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.

(c) The *Hath Yoga* is the Yoga that teaches how to bring about the union of Pran (the breath, the vital wind that resides in the upper part of the body) and the Apaana (the wind that moves down in the body and helps in digestion and excretion, the vital wind that lives in the lower part of the body) by means of strict following of the eight fold path of Yoga such as observance of Yam, Niyam, Aasan, Pranayam, Pratyahar, Dharna, concentration and visualization of the presence of the Supreme Being in the point of the forehead where the root of the nose meets the middle of the eyebrows, and Samadhi. It teaches the practical aspects of spiritual Yoga. It teaches the practical aspects of spiritual Yoga and includes various exercises—Bandhs, Aasans, Mudras and Pranyam.

Refer *Yogshikha Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse nos. 133-134.]

11-11 ½. Now the spiritual practices that make up the eight-fold path of Yoga, called 'Ashtaanga Yoga', are being listed. They are Yam, Niyam, Aasan, Pranayam, Pratyahar [11], Dharna, Dyan and Samadhi [11 ½] (11-11 ½).

[Note—The 8 *Paths of Yoga*—See note of verse no. 39, Canto 4 of this Upanishad.]

12--12½. The Yam is of ten types. They are the following—Ahinsa (non-violence), Satya (truthfulness), Asteya (non-theft), Brahmacharya (self-restraint over the sense organs and observing celibacy and rigid discipline), Daya (mercy and compassion) [12], Kshamaa (forgiveness), Dhriti (to accept; to keep; to establish; to support; to be firm; to have courage and fortitude; to be steadfast in one's resolve; to be contented and satisfied; to be happy and cheerful under all circumstances), Mit Ahaar (eating in moderation and with restraint), Shauch (to remain pure and clean, both externally as well as internally), and Cheti (to remain alert and vigilant towards one responsibilities; to be conscientious; to be mindful of the voice of the conscience) [12½]. (12-12½).

13-14. The ten Niyams are the following—Tapa (austerity, penance, sufferance for some noble cause), Santosh (exemplary contentedness and satisfaction), Aastikta (to have faith, conviction and belief; to be a believer as opposed to being a heretic, an atheist and non-believer), Daan (charity, donation and alms; magnanimity and broad heartedness that comes with being compassionate, kind and merciful), Ishwar Pooja (worship of the Supreme Being) [13], Siddhanta Srawan (to hear the various principles, tenets or doctrines of the scriptures being taught and discussed by learned people), Lajja (to feel ashamed of doing anything ignoble, unrighteous and inauspicious), Mati (having a correct and fine tuned mind and intellect), Japa (repetition of holy Mantras and constant remembrance of divine principles learnt so that they are not forgotten), and Vrat (strict adherence to vows and principles of auspiciousness, righteousness, nobility, propriety and probity as enunciated in the

scriptures; fasting, abstinence and self-control also come under this category because they entail strict determination to observe vows) [14]. (13-14).

15-16. Oh great sage (Nidagh)! Now I shall tell you about the eleven different Aasans (sitting postures of Yoga) that have been lauded by those who are experts in Yoga. They are the following—Chakra¹, Padmasan, Kurma, Mayur, Kukut, Viraasan, Swastik, Bhadrasan, Singhasan, Muktaasan, and Gomukh Aasan² (15-16).

[Note—¹The *Chakra Aasan* is described in verse no. 17 below.

²The various other Aasans mentioned in this verse are being briefly described now.

(a) Padmasan—To sit cross-legged so that the upper part of the feet (i.e. the opposite side of the sole) along with the toes of one leg is placed on the thigh of the opposite leg (i.e. left toes on the right thigh, and right toes on the left thigh), is called *Padmasan* (literally to sit in a lotus posture). [The soles would be pointing outwards while resting on the thighs and the body would be held erect—i.e. the spine, neck and head would be in a straight line. The hands, with palms facing upwards and resting one on the top of the other, are placed on the folded legs in front of and below the navel. The chin is drawn in and held tightly near the base of the Adam's apple at the pit of the throat. This sitting posture is said to dispel/ameliorate all diseases and counter or antidote all poisons. That is, this sitting posture is very beneficial for the body] (Refer Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, 2/30).

(b) Kurma Aasan—In *Kurmasan* (literally to sit like a tortoise), the two shoulders are virtually tied or clasped by the hands (whereas in *Kukutta Asan* the hands were thrust through closed or folded legs). [To do this Kurma Asan, the legs are stretched out but slightly bent at the knee, the hand is passed under the leg of the respective side and then bent upwards from elbow joint to be taken towards the shoulder of the same side. The other hand is similarly brought out from under the leg of that side and taken to the corresponding shoulder of that side. The neck is bent forward towards the ground sufficiently enough to enable the two hands to grasp each other behind the nape of the neck. In this position, the back would be bent forward to be almost horizontal to the ground, the legs outstretched, chin almost touching the ground in front, and the hands clasped behind the neck. Seen from the front, this posture resembles a tortoise, and hence the name] (Refer Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, 2/42).

(c) Mayur Aasan—A *Mayurasan* or *Mayur Asan* (literally, to sit like a peacock) entails putting the palms flat on the ground, pressing the elbows against the abdomen on either side of the navel, and then balancing the body in a horizontal plane with the hands and open palms resting flat on the ground to act as pedestals (47). In this posture, the head and the legs are turned upwards and away from the ground. This posture resembles the outline features of a peacock. [This 'Mayurasan' has the potential to destroy all sins.] (Refer Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, 2/47-52).

(d) Kukut Aasan—A *Kukutta Asan* (literally, to sit like a cock) is when, after sitting in a normal Padmasan posture (as described in verse no. 39), both the hands are passed under the legs through the gap between the calf and the thigh of the respective side, the palms are spread out on the ground and the body is lifted up (levitated) on the straightened hands with the open palms and its fingers acting as pedestals on which the body appears to be mounted. (Refer Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, 2/41).

(e) Virasan— To sit steady and erect with the legs bent inwards from the knee so that the lower part of the leg (i.e. the shin bone and calf) is tucked under the thigh of the same leg, and the buttocks rest on the upturned feet placed horizontally against the ground under them, with the soles of the feet pointing backwards and outwards—this sitting posture is known as *Virasan*, or the way a warrior should sit.

[There is a variation of this posture in which both the legs are not folded in; only the right leg is closed in, while the left leg is bent at approximate 90° at the knee and its

sole lies flat on the ground. The body is thus supported by one leg fully bent at the knee and one leg at 90° at the knee.] (Refer Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, 2/37).

(f) Swastik Aasan—The sitting posture called *Swastik Aasan* is one in which a person sits cheerfully in an erect position, with the sole of one foot lying against the center of the thigh of the opposite leg. (Refer Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, 2/35).

(g) Bhadrasan—A *Bhadrasan or Bhadra Aasan* (literally, to sit like a gentleman) is to sit in an erect posture by placing the two ankle joints under the buttocks on either side of the suture, i.e. the junction point of the testicles and the anus such that they (the two ankle joints) touch each other, and then using the hands to firmly clasp the soles of the feet of the respective side from the rear side of the buttock (i.e. left foot by the left hand and the right foot by the right hand). [This posture can neutralise the ill effects of all diseases which cause the production of toxins in the body or which are caused by administration of poisons or other toxins in the body; it helps to get rid of diseases as well.] (Refer Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, 2/45).

(h) Singhasan—A *Singhasan or Singh Aasan* (literally, to sit like a lion) is to sit in a posture so that the 'siwani', or the fold of skin between the anus and the genitals, called the suture, is pressed by the ankle bones of the opposite side, and the body is lowered on the legs which are bent or folded in from the knees, while the hands are stretched out and the open palms placed on the bent knee of the same side so that the fingers stretch out like a palm-fan with the open palm resting on the bent knee joint. [Usually in this posture, the mouth is wide open and the tongue protrudes out, while the eyes glare at some point in the distance or at the tip of the nose. This is how a lion sits. This posture makes the body resemble a sitting lion. This is a posture adored by ascetics (Yogis) and it is dedicated to the memory of Lord Narsingh, the half man and half lion incarnation of Lord Vishnu to liberate his great child devotee Prahalad from the torments inflicted upon him by his own demon father. Amongst the benefits of this Aasan is that it clears the voice and removes foul breath.] (Refer Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, 2/44).

(i) Muktaasan—A *Muktasan or Mukta Aasan* (literally, the posture that gives liberation and deliverance) is when the ankle bones of one side of the body are placed under the buttock of the opposite side of the suture joint. The foot is either held at right angles to the ground with its sole pointing outward and the toe pointing inwards, such that the body is held erect on the toes of the legs which would now act as pedestals.

There is a variation of this Aasan. In this, the foot is not held at right angles to the ground but upturned and placed flat on it under the buttocks so that the sole points upwards from behind the buttocks, and the body rests on the legs bent tightly inwards and tucked under the buttocks. In this sitting position, the heels would be pressing against the buttocks from below on either side of the suture. (Refer Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, 2/46).

(j) Gomukh Aasan—To sit steady and erect so that the legs are bent inwards at the knees and the left ankle bones are placed to the right side of the spine while the right ankle bones are to the left side, is called *Gomukh Aasan* because this is how a cow sits. [The body is held erect. The left hand is taken to the back and it hooks itself to the right hand which has been brought to the back by lifting it and crossing it over the right shoulder. The fingers of both the hands are bent inwards towards the palms, and then they hook each other behind the middle of the spine.] (Refer Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, 2/36).]

17. The simplest 'Chakra Aasan' (literally to adopt the posture resembling a wheel) is briefly being described here. The left thigh is placed on the right knee with the left leg bent inwards towards the right buttocks. Similarly, the right thigh is placed on the left knee and the leg bent inwards towards the left buttock. [This ensures that the part of the body below the pelvis assumes a circular shape with the legs bent at the knee and

folded in unlike the usual shape of the body wherein the legs protrude out from the lower abdomen lick two sticks.] Then the upper part of the body is held perpendicular to this wheel-like shape assumed by the legs. [The entire shape would resemble a wheel with an axle.] (17).

18. [Now the process of Pranayam or breath control exercise is described in brief.]

The practitioner should first do Purak (inhalation of breath and filling the abdomen with it), followed by Kumbhak (withholding of the breath) and finally Rechak (exhalation of breath slowly). This three-step cycle should be repeated often.

The vital winds called Pran (which symbolise the vital life-infusing and life-sustaining forces in the body which are synonymous with life and without which the body would not survive even for a moment) move through the body and are distributed in it by means of channels called the Naadis (tubular ducts in the body; the nerves and veins) (18).

19-20. The body of all living beings (humans) measure approximately ninety six finger-widths in length. The central point of the body is said to the point which is two finger-widths above the anus and the testicles. [That is, it is the apex of an equilateral triangle with the anus and the testicles marking its two lower points, and the symbolic central point of the body representing its apex point.

At a distance of approximately half a finger length above the genital is the cluster of Naadis called the 'Kanda'. [The word literally means a tuberous root. This is a clutch of Naadis in the pelvis region below the navel and above the genitals.] (19-20).

21. This Kanda has a dimension measuring four finger-widths in height and a similar diameter. It has a rounded shape like that of an egg. [Hence, it is like a cylinder that is wide at its upper end and tapers at the lower end, almost resembling a dwarfish carrot or radish; or it is like an onion or garlic or turnip.]

It is surrounded by flesh, rectum, bones (of the pelvis region) and blood (21).

22. The Naadi Chakra (the wheel-like structure where all the Naadis have their central origin) is located in this region. This Chakra is like a circular saw with an edge that has twelve serrations. This Naadi Chakra is said to the center which bears the body, which supports the body. [The reason is that if the nerves fail, the entire body's normal functioning fails. Such a body is a burden on its own self though it may be technically alive.]

The Kundalini (the coiled subtle energy center of the body) is also located here (22).

23. [The various important Naadis are being narrated now. These Naadis have been described in other Upanishads also, e.g. Yoshikha Upanishad, Jabal Darshan and Yogchudamani.]

The Sushumna Naadi covers the opening of the Brahm Randhra. (This is a slit-like opening from where the subtle energy of the body enters the spinal cord and moves upwards.) The other two Naadis that accompany Sushumna Naadis are called Alambusa and Kuhu (23).

24. Beyond (after) this Anant (Sushumna) Naadi are present the pair of Naadis called Varuna and Yashaswani. To the right of this Anant (Sushumna) Naadi is present the Pingla Naadi (24).

25. Beyond (after) it (Pingla) are present the two Naadis called Pusha and Payaswani. Behind the Sushumna is located the Saraswati Naadi (25).

26. Beyond (after) it (Saraswati) are located the two Naadis called Shankhini and Gandhari. To the left of the Sushumna Naadi is located the Ida Naadi (26).

27. Beyond (after) it (Ida) are located the Hastijivaha and Vishwodari Naadis. These Naadis are present in a circle like the spokes of a wheel (27).

28. These twelve Naadis bear the twelve vital winds¹. [That is, the twelve vital life-sustaining airs of the body move through these channels of the body to support the entire body and give it its conscious sensation of life and vitality.]

These Naadis are of different colours² just like tubes that are wrapped by coverings of varying colours to distinguish them one from the other. [The colours are probably due to the presence of one dominant wind flowing thorough a particular Naadi. These Naadis are not hollow tubes but are filled with body fluids which help carry impulses from one corner of the body to another. These fluids have varying density, viscosity and colour. Since the Naadis are transparent in nature, the colour of fluid content is seen through their walls, lending them their characteristic colours. It is like having a complex electric gadget with wires of different colours and thickness to distinguish one from the other and mark their separate functions so that there is no confusion between any two of them.] (28).

[Note—¹The vital winds are the following—According to Subalo-panishad, Canto 9, verse no. 1-14 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, there are fourteen vital winds present in the body. It lists their functions as follows—(1) Pran—this controls eyes and the faculty of sight (verse 1); (2) Apaana—this controls ears and the faculty of hearing (verse 2); (3) Vyan—this controls nose and the faculty of smell (verse 3); (4) Udaana—this controls the tongue and the faculty of taste (verse 4); (5) Samaana—this controls the skin and the faculty of touch (verse 5); (6) Vairambha—this controls speech (verse 6); (7) Mukhya—this controls the hands (verse 7); (8) Antarayama—this controls the legs (verse 8); (9) Prabhanjan—this controls the anus (verse 9); (10) Kurma—this controls the genitals (verse 10); (11) Shyen—this controls the Mana or the thoughts and emotions (verse 11); (12) Krishna—this controls the discrimination, intellect and wisdom (verse 12); (13) Shwet—this controls Ahankar or the notion of ego, pride, arrogance, vanity etc. (verse 13); (14) Naaga—this controls the 'Chitta' or the faculty of concentration, memory, sub-conscious, reasoning (verse 14).

According to other Upanishads such as Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 77-87 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, there are ten Prans, viz. Pran, Apaana, Samaana, Udaana, Vyan, Nag, Kurma, Krikar, Devdutta and Dhananjay. So, it is hard to say which two Prans has this present Upanishad of ours has avoided in the absence of any specific names. Perhaps the remaining two winds flow thorough the two Naadis mentioned below in verse no. 29.

²Colour of the vital winds—The DhyanaBindu Upanishad, verse nos. 95-99 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition not only describes the 'colours' of the five principle winds but also their 'Beej Mantras'.]

29. In the area of the navel, there is whirling subtle energy center called the 'Nabhi Chakra'. [Nabhi = navel; Chakra = wheel.] The two glorious Naadis called the Naad-dhara and the Jwalanti are located here. [Refer verse no. 22 of Canto 5.]

The Naad-dhara¹ is kept active because of the cosmic vibration called Naad resonating through it. The Jwalanti², as the name suggests, is radiant and splendorous with the cosmic energy flowing through it. [It is believed that this Nabhi Chakra is a symbolic center of the cosmic Sun in the body, and its energy flows through this Naadi.] (29).

[Note—¹The Naad is the cosmic sound that is created by the background vibrations in the cosmic ether that generate energy which powers the dynamo of creation. The word Dhara means a continuous stream, an unbroken flow like that created when oil flows on a smooth surface. Hence, the composite phrase 'Naad Dhara' would mean the Naadi in which vital life forces continue to ceaselessly pulsate throughout the life of an individual. This vibration caused by this pulsation is like the somber humming sound heard when one stands under high-tension overhead electric cables. This vibration keeps the generator of the body running; it provides the subtle spark of life to it and the energy that would keep the body up and going. By corollary, if this Naad Dhara stops, life comes to an end inside the body of the creature. This Naad Dhara can be practically heard by anyone by sitting in a quiet place and closing the ears with the finger or thumb. A distant roar is heard, and it reminds one of the roar of the distant ocean, or the humming of the overhead wire cited above.

²The word 'Jwalanti' literally means one that is live, hot and burning, one that is lighted, radiant and energetic. It reminds one of the sun which is a live example of something that fits the bill of being a Jwalanti. So we observe here that the kinetic energy of the Naad Dhara has transformed into the heat, light and energy represented by warmth, stamina, strength and vitality symbolised by the Jwalanti.

Thus, while the Naadi which carries the Naad Dhara is central to the existence of life inside the body and keeps its dynamo running, the actual energy generated by it is carried to other parts of the body by the Naadi called Jwalanti much like the cables that carry the electric generated by the power station to the electric grid and keep our homes lighted.]

30. The other two glorious Naadis present here are Para-randhra and Sushumna. All these four Naadis (Naad-dhara, Jwalanti, Para-randhra and Sushumna) are radiant and glorious like gems. All of them are blocked at their lower end by the mouth of the Kundalini (30).

[Note—Following the two primary Naadis described in verse no. 29, two more important Naadis emerges from this point of the body—one that goes to the top of the head till it reaches the Brahm Randhra, the hair-like slit on the cranium, and the other that goes down. The first Naadi is called the 'Para Randhra' and the other is called 'Sushumna'. These Naadis are called 'gems' in a metaphoric sense to indicate their indispensability and importance in the hierarchy or network of Naadis—they are the most precious amongst all the Naadis present in the body. This is because notwithstanding their importance vis-à-vis Yoga and spiritual practices, they represent the central nervous system, and without them the body would be as good as dead.]

31. In this way, those who are wise and erudite understand about the importance and significance of the Naadis and the vital winds or airs flowing thorough them. They bear the more important ten vital winds or airs¹ in them (31).

[Note—¹The ten more important vital winds or airs in the body are mentioned in other Upanishads such as Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 77-87 of

Shukla Yajur Veda tradition. These are the following—Pran, Apaana, Samaana, Udaana, Vyan, Nag, Kurma, Krikar, Devdutta and Dhananjay.]

32. For meditation, the spiritual practitioner should sit calmly without moving in an erect position with the spine, neck and head in a straight line. He should concentrate upon the Turiya state of existence, which is the Absolute state when nothing else except the supreme consciousness prevails everywhere. This meditation is done by concentrating the external vision on the tip of the nose and the internal vision at a point in the core of the heart where the conscious Atma is said to have its subtle presence (32).

33. One should visualize that drops of Amrit (the eternal elixir of spiritual bliss and ecstasy) is dripping on this point in the heart as well as the tip of the nose.

Simultaneously the anus is closed by restricting the rectal muscles and the Apaana wind is pulled upwards. [Normally this wind has a tendency of escaping down through the anus, so when the anus is closed it is natural that this wind would try to move upwards when the pressure in the lower intestines build up. This is the Bandha Mudra.] (33).

34. This Apaana wind is pulled up silently with the help of Pranav or OM. [This refers to concentration of the mind and gathering all the strength of the body while holding breath and humming the ethereal Mantra OM which helps in controlling the breath and providing sufficient energy and concentration to the practitioner that enables him to actually pull up the Apaana wind by diverting all the stamina and energy present in the body to achieve success in this difficult task. It is a difficult proposition because the Apaana wind has a natural tendency of moving down and not up, so to pull it upwards against the forces of gravity and laws of nature is not an easy thing to accomplish.]

The vital energy, vigour, strength and stamina of the body are compositely represented by the 'Sri Beej' which is the symbolic Mantra for Shakti or the dynamic energy and vitality present in the body. [This 'Sri Beej Mantra' is like the various symbols used in science or mathematics to denote certain entities for the purpose of representation.]

These two, the OM and the Sri Beej, are both employed for the purpose of lifting the Apaana wind. [While the Mantra OM helps in controlling the breath and concentrating the mind on Yoga, the Sri Beej Mantra provides the required dynamism, energy, strength and stamina to sustain the painstaking efforts of Yoga and help the practitioner to reach the end successfully. While the Mantra OM helps to create an upward pull during the three phases of Rechak, Purak and Khumbak done during Yoga, the Sri Beej stokes the fire in the lower half of the body, thereby heating it and infusing it with energy that helps to push the Apaana wind upwards. The combined affect of pulling and pushing done by the OM and the Sri Beej result in the Apaana wind becoming upwardly mobile.]

Then he should concentrate his attention on the spot where the Amrit (the elixir of bliss and ecstasy) and the Sri Beej (the source of the dynamic energy) are located (34).

35. When he has tasted the nectar of Amrit (i.e. when a person has experienced the bliss and ecstasy attending self-realisation) he becomes so engrossed in it that he is not aware how time flies. Anything upon which a man puts his mind and heart is

easily obtainable. [This is because he would be very sincere in making an all out effort to achieve his dream object for which his heart longs and which his mind has told him is very beneficial for him. The chances of getting success in any enterprise rise dramatically if one is mentally and emotionally involved in it.] (35).

36. Just as it is impossible for fire to live in water, it is also impossible to be certain about anything in this world. Nothing said about this world can be said with firm conviction and faith that it is a reality and truth; nothing in this world is definitive, certain and convincing (36).

37. When the vital airs in the body are restricted and focused on the oven-like core of the body present in its center (i.e. the Nabhi Chakra and the Kanda area—refer verse nos. 19-22 of Canto 5), they help to stoke the latent fire element representing the inherent dynamic energy, vigour, stamina, strength and vitality present in the body which has become dormant and weak over time.

This fire would heat up the body and dry up the excess of water element inside it, and the result is that the body becomes strong, robust, sturdy and one with a high tensile strength (as if it was made of steel)¹ (37).

[Note--¹This can be understood if we take the example of a tree. A green log of wood does not have the same strength as dry wood; no one makes furniture of green wood. Green, tender branches of trees can easily be bent, scrapped, cut and felled, but dry and seasoned hard wood requires a lot of effort and labour to even make an incision on its hardened bark. An ordinary kitchen knife is able to cut open tender vegetables, but hard wood makes a man sweat while using a saw or an axe to cut it. Even chopping of dry trees is harder as compared to a green tree. River bridges and beams of houses are made of completely seasoned and dried wood simply because of its durability and strength. Similarly, a body which is lean but muscular is surely much stronger as compared to one which is flabby and puffed up due to accumulation of water in the tissues. Accumulation of excess of fluids in the body creates medical problems such as oedema, pleurisy, dropsy, diarrhea etc.]

38. When the anus and genital openings are closed by constricting them, the Apan wind is made to rise up and mix with the Samaan wind (38).

39. The practitioner should focus his attention on the Atma (pure conscious 'self') and its stupendous glories and potentials. He should simultaneously meditate upon or focus his attention on the nectar-like Amrit that drips and spreads out from it, overwhelming him and filling him with extreme sense of bliss and ecstasy. [That is, he should meditate upon the Atma which is a fount of elixir that provides spiritual bliss and happiness upon its realisation. This sensation of bliss and its attendant ecstasy is very uplifting for the person experiencing it; it overflows all over him, drenching him and soaking him from all sides. It gives him a feeling of expansion; he no longer feels restricted to and by his gross physical body but expands to cover all available subtle space. This sensation is aided when, as he progresses in his spiritual practice, he hears the cosmic sound called Naad reverberating through his entire being. He then feels very light and all-pervading as if he has dissolved himself in the sky element to hear the sound of Naad in a stereophonic way.]

He should commence his Yoga practice with diligence and vigour from this central doorway. [That is, he should start Yoga exercises by first practicing the closing of the anus and genitals to control the vital winds from escaping, or from

pushing stool, urine or sperms out of the body due to the build-up of internal pressure that is usual during advanced stages of Yoga.] (39).

40. The Pran wind and Apaana winds are allowed to mix, and then the practitioner should visualize that his vital winds are moving upwards. This is considered the best form of Yoga and shows the light of success in the path of Yoga (40).

[Note—The Pran wind flows in the upper part of the body and it is usually defined as breath, while the Apaana wind dwells in the lower part of the body and is known as flatus.]

41. Even as a broken bridge interferes with the smooth flow of water of a river, a wise and erudite spiritual seeker should treat the gross body as an impediment in his spiritual success. [The body would create numerous hurdles, such as for example the body would resist hardships, it would squirm at the thought of sufferance, penance or austerity, it would rather pamper itself than sacrifice something so that others can benefit from it, it would prefer gratification of its sense organs over renunciation and detachment, it would need food to eat and drink to quench its thirst and find hard to desist from them, it would prefer rest and comfort instead of painstaking labour, it would want a reward for any effort made by it and would balk at even the thought of doing anything for free as a means of social service or what is called ‘selfless service’. Refer also to verse no. 9 of Canto 1.] (41).

42. Similarly, the various Naadis are likened to snares that tie a creature down. [This metaphor is very apt because the Naadis—the nerves and veins—are indeed like ropes or strings with which one is tied to a pole. The pole here would be the physical gross body because these Naadis are responsible for sustaining and protecting the body. The nerves keep the body alive with sensation of life, and the veins circulate blood and nutrition throughout the body. Besides this, the vital winds that sustain the body and responsible for all its activities also move along these Naadis—refer verse no. 28. So the Naadi is like a fetter that ties down the Pran of the creature or the vital life forces representing his Atma to this gross body.]

When the creature remains tied by these Naadis to the gross body, he would have to appease the various Gods who preside over the different organs of the body and keep them in good humour (so that they do not become malignant and unnecessarily torment the creature by creating various diseases etc.) (42).

43. Suppose four paths converge at a point. A wise man would first decide which path is the best one that would take him to his desired destination and give him the desired result, and then he would close the rest of the paths or forget about them to avoid confusion (43).

44. When the anus and genitals are closed, and the flow of the vital winds in the Naadis is controlled, the Udaan wind in association with the Pran wind pulls up all other winds in the upper direction. This is Uddiyan Bandha. [Refer verse nos. 6-7 of this Canto 5.] (44).

45. Since the closure of the anus and the genitals or urinary organs help to close all outlets of the body through which the Pran or the other vital winds could escape when pressure is exerted on them while doing Pranayam, it is called ‘Samput Bandha’ or comprehensive closing of the subtle apertures of the body. This is also called ‘Mool

Bandha' because the Mool Kand is located in this area, and also because it is the area that acts as the foundation that supports the rest of the body. [It is a most vital and sensitive area of the body. One can imagine what would happen to the body if the stool and urine are suppressed or the fate of creation if the genital organs become impotent.]

This is the way how the three classical Bandhas of Yoga are achieved. [Refer also to verse no. 68 of Canto 5.] (45).

46. One should practice Yoga of controlling the vital winds continuously day and night just like the wheel of day and night turns continuously without pause or break (46).

47. Constant practice ensures that the process of controlling the vital winds becomes an easy and normal affair as if it was a routine matter of daily life. The benefits are obvious—the latent fire energy, heat, stamina and vitality of the body gradually begin to increase, and this result in a better cooking in the intestines of the food eaten by the creature, which in turn improves digestion so that whatever is eaten becomes more beneficial for the body (47).

48. When the food eaten is properly digested, the body is supplied with more vital nutrients and this improves the basic health and vitality of the body. This manifests in the form of an overall improvement of health and increased stamina, energy, strength, resilience, vitality and vigour of the body (48).

49. When the body's inherent elements get a boost, when the basic nutritional requirements of the body are properly taken care of, the brain functions at the peak of its capacity. This helps a man to gradually acquire more knowledge and skills (both pertaining to the gross world and to the spiritual world).

With acquisition of true knowledge and wisdom, his sins and their consequences begin to ebb and die out in a phased manner¹ (49).

[Note—¹A well-nourished body harbours a healthy and alert brain which is needed to study, understand and analyse intelligently what is being studied, and remember what has been studied for application in practice. A malnourished body would not be able to sustain mental labour, and fatigue would soon set in. With increase in the level of alertness of the mind and its accompanying virtues of wisdom, erudition and knowledge, with the ability to concentrate his attention and study the scriptures, understand their profound tenets and interpret them in an intelligent and correct manner would a man become aware of what is deemed to be auspicious and righteous, and what is not. It is only then that a wise man can make a choice between the good and the bad. Once he decides the auspicious path, he would diligently follow it, getting rid of his baggage of sins. A healthy body harbours a healthy mind, and they are pre-requisites for a man being able to overcome sins or follow the auspicious and righteous path shown by the scriptures. For instance, a hungry man would not have any second thought on stealing food, and a man in dire needs for the basic essentials of life would not have any compunction about acquiring them by any odd means available to him, even though he might be aware of the improper way he has to acquire them, in order to survive in this harsh and uncompromising world. But if the stomach is full and a man's basic needs are met, there would be no reason or need for him to commit sins and do anything that is not right.]

50. The Mooladhar Chakra is triangular in shape and is located between the anus and the genital organ. The supreme Shiva in the subtle form of a 'Bindu' (drop or point

source of cosmic dynamic energy represented by the sperm and the vital energy restricted in the Kundalini) is located here. It is from here that he shines and illuminates the surroundings. [Refer verse no. 53 of Canto 5 also.] (50).

51. It is here that the coiled dynamic energy center of the body called the Kundalini is located. It is here that the vital winds accumulate (upon putting pressure on the Mool Kand) and the subtle fire energy of the body is ignited or enhanced (51).

[Note—Refer also to Yogshikha Upanishad, 1/168, 2/6 and 6/3 in this context.]

52. It is from here or due to the activation of the Kundalini's subtle energy that the Bindu¹ develops and the cosmic Naad² is enhanced.

The practitioner also hears the subtle sound of breath coming in and going out of the nostrils, the sound that resembles the nasal sounds made by silently hissing the two letters 'Ha' and 'Sa' of the Sanskrit alphabet. The combined effect of continuously hearing these two sounds in a cyclic manner as the practitioner exhales and inhales breath is the formation of the word 'Hans' which means 'a divine Swan'. [In other words, by continuously practicing Yoga, a stage is reached when the spiritual aspirant realises that he has obtained an exalted spiritual stature and has been successful in his endeavour of doing Yoga. This achievement is indicated by the fact that his sub-conscious mind hums and constantly reminds him that he is as pure and holy as the Swan—the 'Hans'. This word is also used as a Mantra. Refer Hansopanishad, verse no. 5-15, Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 59-63, and Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse nos. 31-35, 82-83, 93.]³

From this arises the Mana (i.e. the desire and inclination of the mind to enjoy the bliss and ecstasy that comes with experiencing the pure conscious 'self' or Atma, in all its glory and magnificence, during meditation) (52).

[Note—¹The word *Bindu* literally means a drop of some liquid, for instance a drop of nectar. At an advanced stage of Yoga when the practitioner is able to activate the Kundalini, control his vital winds and successfully implement other aids of Yoga such as correctly and persistently doing various Aasans, Mudras and Bandhas for a prolonged period, he would automatically experience rewards inherent to the practice of Yoga. Therefore, he would experience extreme bliss and ecstasy that would appear to drip upon his inner self and overwhelm him. His mind and heart would be submerged in enjoying this nectar that would drip drop by drop like honey effusing from a ripe and full honeycomb. This concept of Bindu in association with Naad has been used to name a special Upanishad called the 'Naad Bindu' Upanishad. Other Upanishads also deal with this subject, e.g. Dhyan Bindu, Amrit Bindu and Amrit Naad Upanishads etc.

²At the same time as experiencing this dripping of nectar of extreme bliss and ecstasy, the Yoga practitioner would also hear the Naad which is a subtle roar of the vibration present in the cosmic ether that is now reverberating in his entire inner being. This happens because the body has the subtle sky element present inside it as much as the presence of this element outside of it. This Naad resembles a roar of the ocean, or the rumbling of clouds, or a train trundling away in a distance. In fact, Naad more closely resembles the roar of a fiercely burning fire—which is symbolic of the fact that the subtle fire element which was hitherto dormant and only smoldering inside the body of the practitioner has now been kindled and activated by the practice of Yoga and its attendant activation of the Kundalini by stoking it with the powerful vital winds such as Pran, Apaana, Samaana, Vyan and Udaan. Thus, the cosmic dynamic energy that is inherently present in the body of all living beings, but unfortunately had become dormant and inactive, is now re-ignited into its finest form.

The Naad is therefore the sound of the raging fire element present inside the body. So when a practitioner of Yoga hears the Naad he feels certain that his Kundalini as well as the latent energy of his body has been activated and the internal fire is burning vigorously. Refer Naad Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 33-36, Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 2/2/2, and Hanso-panishad, verse no. 16.

³Traditionally, Swan is regarded as a holy and pure bird. It is said to pick up pearls from amongst an array of gems and jewels, and drink milk while leaving aside water and other additives that have been added to adulterate the milk. Its high position in the hierarchy of evolution, especially that aspect which relates to wisdom, erudition and skills, is proved by the fact that it is the mount of Goddess Saraswati, the goddess of wisdom, erudition, skills and knowledge. So, when a practitioner of Yoga has reached the stage when he begins to hear Naad and his breath humming silently the word 'Hans' as it comes in and goes out of the body during normal course of routing breathing as well as during the actual time when Yoga is being done, i.e. during the Rechak and Purak phases of Pranayam respectively, he would understand that he is successful in his endeavour.]

53. There are said to be six subtle energy centers in the body called the 'Chakra', such as the Mooladhar Chakra¹. [They are called Chakra because they resemble a swirling wheel of energy, much like the whirl-wind. Refer also to verse no. 50 of this Canto 5.]

The area between the throat and the cranium is called the 'Shambhav' or the abode of Lord Shiva. [That is, it is this area of the body where auspicious wisdom, knowledge and enlightenment along with intellectual skills and erudition have their seat, all of which are symbolic of Shiva, the Supreme Brahm personified.]² (53).

[Note—¹The word *Chakra* refers to the subtle energy centers present inside the body. According to Yoga texts, when the vital energy trapped in these Chakras are activated, a person acquires immense potentials, including spiritual and mystical powers. They have been elaborately described in Upanishads dealing with Yoga and mystical forms of ritualistic worship involving meditative practices in order to enable to practitioner acquire astounding mystical and supernatural powers.

The main six Chakras are the six main subtle energy centers of the body which act as power houses which supply energy for the various functions of the body. They are the following—(1) The 'Mooladhar Chakra' is located between genitals and anus in the area called the perineum. It is the site of the symbolic Shiva Lingam (Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 168) and the route through which the Apaana wind finds its entrance in the Kundalini (Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 13). It is also here that the ascetic hears the Naad. It is said to be a symbol of Shakti or the dynamic powers of Shiva principle (Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 8, 11-12 and Canto 3, verse no. 2). (2) The 'Swadhisthan Chakra' is located in the region of the groins of males and the Bhug area of females. It has a 5-headed male phallus like a sprouting seed and its counterpart in the female is the clitoris. (3) The 'Manipur Chakra' is located in the navel area, is shaped like a gem and is surrounded by the network of Naadis (nerves) called solar plexus. It is also the site of the Sun energy. (4) The 'Anahat Chakra' is located in the chest between the heart and lung area and it is shaped like a swan looking downwards. It is also assumed to be like an 8-petal lotus facing down. It is also called the Hridaya Chakra because of its close proximity to the heart and close association with it as the Atma or pure consciousness resides in the subtle space of the heart. (5) The 'Vishuddha Chakra/Kanth Chakra' is located in the pit of the throat. To the left of it passes the Eda nerve representing the moon, to its right goes the Pingla nerve representing the sun, and in the center is the Sushumna nerve through which the Kundalini energy rises up from the base of the spine to the skull. (6) The 'Agya Chakra or Bhru Chakra' is located between the eyebrows and root of the nose. It is also called the third eye of enlightenment and wisdom. It represents the 'Mahat' (that which

transcends the elements) and its Beej (i.e. its root syllable) is the Sanskrit monosyllabic word OM.

²Earlier, verse no. 50 of Canto 5 has stated that Shiva is established in the Mooladhar Chakra where the genitals are located. This form of Shiva represents the cosmic Shakti principle or the dynamic powers of the Supreme Being that is responsible for creating this world. That is why sexual method is the mainstay for propagation of creation, and the organs that help in this divine mandate are called the abode of Shiva. The present verse refers to that aspect of Brahm, the Supreme Being, which is related to the divine virtues of purity of thought and wisdom, the possession of the eclectic virtues of erudition, sagacity, knowledge and enlightenment. A man is honoured and remembered not for his sexual activity but for the level of wisdom, erudition, wisdom, intelligence and knowledge that he has, for even animals can reproduce and indulge in the sex act. Such a man would have natural and in-built scrupulous that would prevent him from doing anything that is not auspicious and righteous. This would set him apart from those who are pervert and sinful. The virtues mentioned above are the functions of the mind and not the gross body, so a man who has a well-developed mind and intellect as his advisor is deemed to be a wise man as compared to one who is driven by the impulses of the gross sense organs of his gross body. Hence, the area of the body where these auspicious and holy virtues have their origin and abode, i.e. the head, is said to be the abode of Shiva—the auspicious, the divine, the holy and truthful One.]

54. The Naadis have their base or foundation in the Kanda or Pinda (literally a ‘ball or egg like structure). [Refer verse nos. 20-22.]

These Naadis are the base for the various Prans or vital winds that sustain and protect the body. [This is because if these Naadis do not carry consciousness or life-impulses to all corners of the body, the latter would die. The Pran is a word used to indicate ‘life’ and not death. Therefore, as long as a creature is alive, it is deemed that the Naadis have Pran flowing and pulsating in them. Refer also to verse no. 28 and 31.]

These Prans are the basis of life in all Jivas or living beings. [Pran is a synonym for the wind or air element that helps sustain life on earth. No living being would survive if there was no air on earth.]

And the Jiva is the abode for the Hans, i.e. the pure consciousness known as the immaculate and wise Atma that resides in the body of the living being called the Jiva. [The Atma is the true self of the creature, and the body is merely its habitat.] (54).

55. This Hans (the Atma; the pure consciousness) is the divine and sublime entity which provides the ‘Shakti’, the dynamic force, the basic energy, the vitality, the strength and the vigour that sustains and protects the entire edifice of this creation consisting of both the animate and the inanimate world. [Here the animate world refers to the creatures that have mobility, i.e. members of the entire zoological kingdom, and inanimate world is the immobile forms of life such as trees and other members of the plant kingdom.]

An ascetic should have no doubts and be free from all confusions and consternations in this regard. [This way he would be able to concentrate upon meditation and contemplation.] He should be cheerful, and practice Pranayam (breath control exercises) carefully and diligently (55).

56. An ascetic is regarded as expert, wise and erudite if he is able to focus his mind and concentrate his attention on researching the essential principle of creation, the

supreme Absolute, inspite of being physically tied by the three types of fetters. [The gross body of the ascetic in which his 'self' lives is the *first fetter*; the external world and its numerous demands is the *second fetter*; and the baggage of past deeds and their consequences is the *third fetter*. An ascetic who remains internally detached from all these, who is unconcerned by the constant nagging and irritations created by these three fetters, who just neglects them and instead concentrates the energy and abilities of his mind and intellect to find out the ultimate spiritual goal of life and find ways to reach it, who aims his gun at the target without being disturbed by extraneous factors and does not allow these three factors to divert him from his objective, who enjoys the bliss of self-realisation inspite of living in a gross body and an equally gross world with the burden of past deeds and their consequences weighing down heavily on his shoulders—only such an ascetic is regarded as the correct candidate for Mukti—spiritual liberation and deliverance, spiritual emancipation and salvation.] (56).

57. He should symbolically catch hold of the three factors (as mentioned in verse no. 56) that are acting as fetters for his soul and churning it endlessly for many generations by doing the Purak phase of Pranayam. Then they should be held captive during the Kumbhak phase, and finally eliminated by the Rechak phase. [The Purak phase involves inhaling breath—a metaphoric way of saying that he brings the fetters closer to him and catches hold of them. The Kumbhak phase is holding the breath inside the body—a symbolic way of saying that the three factors are held under strict control as one keeps a prisoner in control. Then the Rechak phase entails exhalation which symbolises the exiling of these enemies of the soul.]

He should fix his attention on the target which is paramount for him. That is, he should fix his mind on the realisation of the supreme Brahm and on obtaining permanent freedom for his 'self' (57).

58. [Now a metaphysical meaning is given to the three phases of Pranayam.]

All the external sense objects of this material world are equivalent to the Rechak (exhalation; elimination) phase of Pranayam—i.e. they are better shunned and done away with; they ought to be eliminated as waste product that would poison the 'self' if retained.

Acceptance of knowledge and wisdom contained in the scriptures is equivalent to the Purak (inhalation) phase of Pranayam—because they are like whiff of fresh breath which injects life in the form of wisdom, erudition and enlightenment in the otherwise gross life of a creature bound by ignorance and delusions. This knowledge and wisdom lights up the inner self of the creature and rejuvenates the spirit.

The Khumbhak (holding of breath inside the body between the Purak and Rechak) is equivalent to meditating and contemplating upon the pure consciousness residing inside one's own bosom as one's Atma or 'self'. This is done by deep pondering and contemplation upon the teachings of the scriptures and understanding their esoteric meaning. Since Kumbhak refers to the holding of breath inside the body, this phase symbolically would refer to the aspirant not only studying the scriptures but permanently inculcating the auspicious virtues they teach in his own life (58).

59. A man who has experienced this 'truth' (i.e. the supreme consciousness residing in his bosom as his Atma, and the supreme Consciousness that prevails uniformly in this creation at the cosmic level) and firmly convinced in it is said to be liberated, delivered and emancipated. There is no doubt about it.

This realisation is symbolically achieved during the Kumbhak phase (59).

[Note—The Kumbhak phase is when the body is full of air held inside. This is a metaphoric way of saying that when the ascetic experiences the presence of super conscious Atma inside his being, he is completely fulfilled and overwhelmed with this experience so much so that nothing else can enter his mind anymore. He is soaked and completely drenched with the effusing sense of beatitude and felicity that accompanies self and Brahm realisation. Kumbhak phase is preceded by the Purak and followed by the Rechak. But in order to fill any pitcher it has first to be emptied, so for all practical purposed, the Rechak phase is done first, followed by the Purak which culminates in the Kumbhak phase.

So, in order to achieve truthful form of self and Brahm realisation, a spiritual aspirant should first purge all his spiritual impurities and corruptions from his inner self; he should eliminate all delusions and it's after effects from his mental horizon; he should determine that he has got nothing to do with this artificial world and its material sense objects. This symbolises the Rechak phase of Pranayam.

Having thus emptied his inner self, he is now ready to accept knowledge and wisdom pertaining to the Truth for which he had set out in his spiritual journey in the first place. This is achieved by a thorough study of the scriptures, deeply pondering upon their teachings, and discussing their profound doctrines with those who are expert in them and themselves self-realised. This is equivalent to the Purak phase of Pranayam because it helps one to imbibe knowledge and fill one's self with auspicious, righteous and noble thoughts and ideas that are cumulatively rejuvenating for the spirit.

Then comes the Kumbhak phase which stands for actually retaining these grand virtues in one's inner self, thereby undergoing complete overhaul and re-moulding of the self from one that was tainted by worldly delusions to one who is as fresh and fragrant as a newly blossomed flower.]

60. [The following verse nos. 60-64 describe the physical exercise of Yoga and its utility to conquer the various 'Peeths' or the symbolic abodes where the different Gods who represent different forces of Nature reside in the body of the practitioner. This is a metaphoric way of saying that a successful practitioner of Yoga acquires such mystical powers and superior authority that he can not only command even the Gods but becomes superior to them. Since the Gods represent the various forces of Nature, such an aspirant is able to overcome all the hurdles created by these forces in his spiritual progress and attainment of self and Brahm realisation which are the ultimate aim of doing Yoga.]

While doing Kumbhak the practitioner of Yoga should visualize that the body is indeed like a 'Kumbh'—a hollow pitcher. Like one fills a pitcher with water or air, he should fill his inner-self with the Shiva Tattva, i.e. with the auspicious Principal and the supreme Absolute in creation that is known as Brahm or Shiva, the principle of truthfulness, auspiciousness, righteousness, eternity, imperishability and beauty.

Then, in this context, the Rechak would be to open the mouth of this pitcher represented by the throat. That is, after the phase of Kumbhak is over, the Rechak phase is done by exhaling breath through the opening of the throat, which is in the nostril (60).

61. After filling the inside of the body with air through Purak and Kumbhak phases, the practitioner of Yoga should sit calmly in a erect posture with his legs and hands remaining steady and unmoving; he should not be fidgety and restless (61).

62. He should pierce or rupture or open the four 'Peeths'¹ by doing the three steps of Pranayam (Purak, Kumbhak and Rechak). [When Pranayam is practiced properly, the practitioner gathers sufficient strength and energy that he is able to un-clog the previously blocked glands and other knot-like structures in the body which hinder the proper flow of vital forces of life, such as the vital winds and the stimuli of consciousness, throughout the body. This is akin to clogged drains, blocked pipes, chocked chimney or stuffed ventilators in a house; they need to be cleansed thoroughly and de-clogged to maintain proper flow of water and air in the house.]

Then the vital winds of the body should be made to enter the 'gate leading to the Maha Meru'. [The Meru is the mythological mountain where the Gods have their abode. This refers to the head where the supreme Shiva is said to have his abode—refer verse no. 53. The gates which have to be opened so that the Meru can be reached refer to the four Peeths mentioned herein above. By opening them through the practice of Yoga, the ascetic is able to witness the divine Shiva first hand.] (62).

[Note—¹Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 169-175 describes the location of the *four Peeths*. (i) The first Peeth is called the 'Kaam Roop Peeth' (verse no. 169-171). (ii) The second Peeth is called the 'Purna Giri Peeth' (verse no. 172-173). (iii) The third Peeth is called the 'Jalandhar Peeth' (verse no. 174). (iv) The fourth Peeth is called the 'Uddyan or Uddiyan Peeth' (verse no. 175).

This Upanishad is Chapter 21 of this volume.]

63. When the two doors are closed (i.e. when the nostrils in the upper part of the body and the anus in the lower part are closed during Pranayam) the vital winds or airs present inside the body are naturally made to swirl inside and subtly shake and vibrate the blocked knots and channels in the body. [That is, all the clogged nerves, veins, arteries, glands and other tissues are shaken and vibrated subtly to shed off their lethargy and indolence, and instead get activated, revitalized and rejuvenated.]

When this trapped wind force of life meets the other cosmic forces present inside the body, such as the subtle energy of the sun, the moon and the fire symbolically present in the navel, the heart and the throat regions respectively, the practitioner begins to experience the presence of Amrit, the symbolic elixir that provides extreme bliss and ecstasy, inside his own body in the form of the thrill and exhilaration that comes with realisation of the pure consciousness called the Atma. [When the grossness and rigidity of the body are eliminated, it becomes light and relaxed. Only such a body is able to enjoy anything. A man who is physically exhausted and weary will not enjoy even the choicest of food and drink. Even his favourite music would seem to create a headache to him. Everything is enjoyed by the body when it is rested and relaxed.] (63).

64. The Gods move in the Meru, and this movement of the divine Gods is revealed as life throbbing and pulsating in the spinal cord or the vertebral column which supports life in the body.

[The vital forces of Nature, the sensations and impulses that govern all activities of the body and its various organs, as well as the movement of the all-important consciousness that controls the very being of all living beings that have a body, moves along the nerves that form the spinal cord which passes through the vertebral column (the back bone). In other words, the spinal cord throbs and pulsates with life to symbolise the movement of these Gods inside the body. The Gods are the personification of the various auspicious forces of Nature that reside inside the body and control all its functions because the body is a microcosm of the creation. Therefore to say that the Gods move along the path of the spinal cord represented by

the Sushumna Naadi to reach the top of the head where the Mt. Meru is located, an aphorism for the location of the brain which is the center of the mind and the intellect is to metaphorically say that the sensations and impulses from various corners of the body travel along the nerves and reach the command and control center of the body located in the brain which is situated in the head. The instructions of the brain are then taken back to the different parts of the body through the same channel. This to and fro movement of the vital forces of life and consciousness inside the body which keep it alive and active is symbolised by the movement of the Gods inside the body. If the Gods represent the forces of Nature in a personified form, then obviously the authority that controls these forces would be the Lord of all Gods, and it is the Shiva located in the head. This Shiva thus personifies the stupendous abilities of the mind-intellect to think, contemplate and analyse, to discriminate between the good and the bad, and to instruct the creature to act auspiciously, righteously, nobly, properly and judiciously with probity and propriety.]

In its attempt to reach the head (during the process of Pranayam etc.) the Vayu (vital winds) successively overcome various hurdles that come in its way by piercing through them. The first to be ruptured or overcome is the Brahm Granthi¹. [It is a common observation that air can enter an enclosure through the minutest of slit through which even water cannot perhaps seep in. In the present context it refers to the entry of the trapped vital winds—which are put under great pressure because of the closure of the external openings of the body, such as the anus, mouth and the nostrils, as done during various Bandhas and Pranayam—into the vertebral column and their subsequent massaging of the nerves that pass through this column. This subtle massaging by the warm air titillates the nerves and rejuvenates them. On the one hand it gives the practitioner a sense of great thrill, and on the other hand it revives even the defunct nerves.] (64).

[Note—¹The word *Granthi* literally means node, a nodule or module or knot or a wart-like or a gland-like structure. It has various connotations depending upon the context in which the word is used. For instance, it might symbolically mean the different gates in a strong fort which must be overcome or broken before one enters the fort or overruns it as done during war times.

From anatomical point of view, the Granthis refer to the ganglions that help to coordinate the different nerves just like major junction boxes in the network of electric wires in a building. The word Granthi also refers to the glands that control all the major functions of the body, including those of the nerves and veins. Just like a knot that helps to tie something, these Granthis of the body bind the subtle energy present inside the body and prevent it from being dissipated or going to waste; it helps to preserve energy and stops it from being released if not wanted. If we treat them as representing the ganglions then it means that by the process of Yoga in which the subtle energy of the Kundalini is released in the spinal cord, or the Sushumna Naadi to be precise, these hitherto clogged and inactive ganglions are reactivated and they begin to function in prime shape. If we consider them as glands then it would mean that the functioning of these glands is restored by the process of Yoga, and this in turn helps the body to work properly.

The Granthi symbolises the center of power and authority because it is the nodal point from where all the authority needed for governance of the body spread out. It is also like the seat of power and authority of a king, much like the strong fortress from where he rules over the kingdom. They represent the nodal points in the body where the Trinity Gods, i.e. Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer and protector, and Shiva or Rudra the concluder, have their symbolic residence, and it is from here they control the functioning of the body of the individual as well as everything that he thinks and does. If the individual is regarded as the microcosm of the entire creation,

then the Atma would be the supreme Brahm, and the various patron deities of the organs would be the different Gods of creation. The Brahm Vidya Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse nos. 70-71 describes the three main Granthis where these three Gods have their symbolic abodes in the body of the individual creature—viz. Brahm Granthi, Vishnu Granthi, and Rudra Granthi. They have also been described in Krishna Yajur Veda's Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 86-89, and Yog Kundalini Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 67-68, 85-86.

These Granthis can be also regarded as aphorisms for the numerous spiritual hurdles faced by a spiritual aspirant in his spiritual journey. The three Granthis are like the three forts that have to be overcome before the final victory over the citadel. If the body is considered as a metaphoric prison for the Atma of the aspirant, then rupturing of the various Granthis is like his breaking free from its walls and finally escaping to the world outside to gain freedom by rupturing the Brahm Randhra located on the top of the head in the final stages of Yoga.

The location of the Granthis is very significant in this context. Let us have a look at this aspect and see why these have been considered as formidable fortresses in this discussion.

The first Granthi known as the 'Brahm Granthi' is located in the region where the sexual organs are located. The very fact that Brahm in his manifestation as Brahma the creator is responsible for creating this world, the Granthi is so named after him because the sexual organs are responsible for creation. Overcoming this Granthi is tantamount to control over one's sexual urges which is a very formidable task under normal circumstances. Control of sexual instincts requires a lot of self-control, and once this is successfully achieved the person retains his internal energy that is otherwise wasted in sexual indulgences. The power to create new life by the sexual process makes a man equivalent to Brahma the cosmic creator and the first of the Trinity Gods.

The second Granthi is known as 'Vishnu Granthi' and is located in the region of the subtle heart. Lord Vishnu is responsible for sustenance and taking care of the creation with care and love. The heart is associated with the virtues of emotions and sentiments as well as of love, compassion, kindness and graciousness as well as longing and desires. This Granthi symbolises the natural characteristics of the heart. It stands for worldly involvement and attachment with the numerous charming material sense objects of the world. It is the heart that makes a man emotionally and sentimentally involved and attached with the world. The obstacle of the heart is so formidable that more often than not the heart prevails over the sane advice given to the creature by his mind not to pursue certain things, and this overbearing nature of the heart only lands him in immense troubles. To overcome the natural impulses of the heart and bring it under control is tantamount to piercing of the second Granthi. Involvement with the world and its affairs is symbolised by the word Vishnu who is the second of the Trinity Gods.

Finally, the third Granthi is called the 'Rudra Granthi' as it is located in the head where the brain symbolising the mind and intellect with their formidable abilities is located. It is called 'Rudra' because when a man is unable to satisfy his urges and cannot obtain his desired objects, if his ego and pride are hurt, if he fails in any of his endeavours, if he finds that his compatriots succeed in anything in which he has failed, it is natural that he becomes angry, vengeful, wrathful and fretful. In other words, he displays the virtues of being 'Rudra' personified. It is an equally daunting task to control one's anger and its accompanying wrathfulness. Once an aspirant is able to control his anger along with the control of the other two natural urges, he becomes a truly self-controlled and realised soul. Display of the virtues of Rudra makes a man equivalent to Lord Shiva, another name of Rudra, who is the third of the Trinity Gods.

According to Tantra literature, there are three Granthis—viz. Brahm Granthi, Vishnu Granthi and Rudra Granthi. They obstruct the upwards movement of the

energy or power of the Kundalini. Each of the six Chakras (whirling energy centers of the body) has two Granthis on either side.

The Brahm Granthi is situated between the Muladhar Chakra and Swadisthan Chakra. The Vishnu Granthi is situated between Manipur and Ahahat Chakras. The Rudra Granthi is located between Vishuddha Chakra and Agya (Gyan) Chakra. The energy or cosmic divine powers of the Kundalini has to pierce through these three knots before it can reach the Sahasraara Chakra at the top of the head.

The Yog Kundalini Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 67-74 and Yogshikha Upanishad, verse nos. 86-89 describe how the energy of the activated Kundalini passes through these Granthis to reach the top of the head and provide the practitioner of Yoga the exhilaration, ecstasy and bliss of experiencing the consciousness in its divine form.

According to the metaphysical interpretation of this term, the various Granthis are like the knots present in the heart that shackle the Atma and prevent its liberation and deliverance. These Granthis stand in the way of a man obtaining freedom from his fetters and keep him tied to this world. Once he is able to rupture them, he finds liberation even while he is still alive in this world. This fact has been clearly emphasized in Katho-panishad, Canto 2, Valli 3, verse no. 15 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.

The term is used in Yoga philosophy—that relies on numerous physical exercises to enable a practitioner to liberate himself and his soul from the fetters that tie it down to this body and achieve deliverance as well as to harness the stupendous cosmic dynamic energy that lies trapped and hidden inside his own body—to indicate the various hurdles that come in the way of obtaining success in this spiritual endeavour. Refer Yog Kundalini Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 67-68, 85-86, and Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 86-87, 89.]

65. After first piercing through the Brahm Granthi, the vital airs break through the second and third Granthis called the Vishnu Granthi and the Rudra Granthi in succession (65).

[Note—The Vishnu Granthi and the Rudra Granthi have been described in not to verse no. 64 above.]

66. Once the Rudra Granthi is pierced, the next hurdle to be overcome in the spiritual path is Moha Granthi (the numerous attachments to and infatuation with the sense objects of the material world, longing for them and having a strong desire to acquire them and enjoy them—which together act like formidable spiritual blocks or knots or hurdles that need be dismantled or overcome before a spiritual aspirant can actually claim true freedom from the fetters of this world).

This Moha Granthi is such a hard nut to crack that it is made possible to do so only by the good influences of auspicious deeds and thoughts brought forward from one's past, as well as by the grace of an enlightened Guru (moral preceptor, guide and teacher) (66).

[Note—The negative virtues of having 'Moha'—i.e. possessing a sense of attachment with anything, having longing for it, being infatuated with it. Usually, this term Moha is applied in relation to the material sense objects of the world, but it also relates to one's attachment with the body, with other people around him, as well as to acquire name, fame and wealth. Moha also means delusions and it's attending horrible spiritual consequences. Moha acts like a veil that obscures the truth from being viewed by the man. It leads him to commit errors and sins inadvertently because he is not even aware that he is acting wrongly. His mind is biased, deluded and corrupted. Moha is therefore like a formidable Granthi or knot because it is hard to crack like a nut.]

67. Only those ascetics who diligently practice the principles of Yoga are easily able to break these Granthis or knots which are like spiritual hurdles for a man.

There are three main Naadis, viz. the Ida, the Pingla and the Sushumna. The latter is located between the first two. These three Naadis are employed simultaneously to attain success in Yoga practices. Their coordinated effort is needed to successfully break this above mentioned Granthis. [The reason is that the process of Pranayam entails inhaling and exhaling breath in a controlled manner through the left and the right nostrils represented by the Ida and the Pingla Naadis respectively. The Sushumna Naadi is the path through which the Apaana wind and the subtle energy of the Kundalini rise up the spinal cord to reach the forehead, and finally the top of the head. The entire process of Yoga involves a number of complicated Asanas, Bandhas and Mudras besides Pranayam. All these individual exercises are to be coordinated properly like a symphony orchestra being played in order to enable the practitioner experience the bliss and ecstasy for which Yoga is so famous. On successful completion of Yoga, an ascetic can hear the Naad (cosmic vibrations) and taste the Bindu (drop) of Amrit (elixir of beatitude and felicity) that fills his entire being with extreme ecstasy and unbound bliss.] (67).

68. The various 'Mudras'¹ (bodily postures) of Yoga that help in practicing the different 'Bandhas'² (closures of the apertures of the body) are able to divert the vital winds of the body towards the head. Their gradual practice done patiently, diligently, silently (without any show, pretensions and advertisement) is potent enough to destroy all the sins of the practitioner.

[Since these Mudras and Bandhas are very difficult to practice, it is advisable for a beginner as well as for an ordinary practitioner to practice them in moderation. There are dangerous, and if not handled properly or done with proper care can be fatal or gravely injurious to the ascetic.]

However, if one has developed sufficient expertise and confidence to do them for a prolonged period of time and in a more robust form, it is then certain that these Mudras and Bandhas do have the potential and the power to provide Moksha (emancipation and salvation) to the practitioner. [Whereas when practiced at a lower level they can provide the benefit of freedom from sins, when they are practiced in their higher level they can reward the ascetic with complete liberation and deliverance altogether. Thus it is to be observed that Yoga presents a comprehensive solution to all the worldly problems of the ascetic.] (68).

[Note--¹The word *Mudra* means 'bodily postures taken during meditative or Yoga sessions'. These are the following—'Yoni' (योनि), 'Beej' (बीज), 'Khechari' (खेचरी), 'Mahankush' (महानकुश), 'Mahonmadini' (महोनमादिनी), 'Sarwawashankari' (सर्ववशंकरी), 'Sarwakarshini' (सर्वकर्षिणी), 'Sarwavidravini' (सर्वविद्राविणी), 'Sarwa Sankshovini' (सर्वसंक्षोभिणी).

The Vijay Tantra explains the esoteric meaning of Mudra thus—'the company of the good leads to liberation and evil company to bondages; closure of evil company is termed as Mudra'.

The Mudra is a special body posture and positioning of its various external organs such as the hands, legs, head, etc. along with the various modes in which the mouth, tongue, eyes etc. are held. These Mudras form an integral part of formal forms of ritualistic worship involving Tantras (charm instruments) as well as during Japa (repetition of Mantras). These Mudras are said to harness the latent subtle and divine energy inherently present in the body of the worshipper and harmonize it with the

cosmic energy of the deity being worshipped in order to bring about an integration between them and enabling the practitioner to become one with the deity.

The Mandal Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, 1/3/5; and 2/1/5, 8 describe some of the Mudras and their benefits. They have been also listed in Yogtattva Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda in its verse nos. 26-27. The Yog Kundalini Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda describes the Khechhari Mudra in great detail in its Canto 2 which is dedicated entirely to it.

²According to Yoga Kundalini Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 41 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition says that there are three main types of Bandhas—Mool Bandha, Uddiyan Bandha and Jalandhar Bandha. The word *Bandha* literally means ‘the closing of the subtle apertures of the body through which the Pran or the vital winds could escape when pressure is exerted on them while doing Pranayam’. Thereafter, verse nos. 42-52 describe these Bandhas in the context of arousing the latent energy of the Kundalini and helping it rise up in the Sushumna Naadi which ultimately lead the practitioner of Yoga to experience the bliss of consciousness realisation.

Refer also to Canto 5, verse nos. 6-7, 44-45 of this Varaaha Upanishad which says that the Bandhas are the following—Uddiyan Bandha, Samput Bandha and Mool Bandha.]

69. The ascetic should practice to pronounce the syllables of the ethereal Mantra OM consisting of the three alphabets (A, U and M) for a protracted time in such a way that there is no pause, gap or break between pronouncing any two letters of OM, or between pronouncing two OM's one after another, just like the way oil flows in a continuous and unbroken stream on a flat and smooth surface.

This causes a resonance of the ethereal sound of Naad in the head which resembles the reverberating sound of a heavy gong hitting a huge brass bell (69).

[Note—Refer Canto 4, verse nos. 1.11-2 of this Upanishad.]

70. This practice of hearing the Naad and pronouncing of OM helps the spiritual aspirant to get acquainted with and have an easy access to the cosmic Divinity known as Pranav or Brahm which is otherwise not known and not accessible as it is formless, unqualified, invisible, beyond the reach of gross organs of perception, and has no attributes whatsoever. This experience provides him with a sense of extreme ecstasy and contentedness at having had a contact or communion with this entity that is divine and cosmic.

The three letters of OM, viz. A, U and M are metaphors for the three stages of Brahm realisation. The first letter ‘A’ stands for the awareness and the first sign of the presence of Pranav or Brahm in the form of cosmic vibrations heard as Naad and conceptualized in the form of the eclectic word OM. This is what those who are experts in the chief doctrines of Vedas assert.

The protracted or prolonged sound of the second letter, the vowel ‘U’, is symbolic of the Bindu or the ‘dot’ which is placed on the top of the first vowel ‘A’ to produce its nasal sound. [That is, the letter ‘A’ with a dot on the top would sound as ‘rum’ or ‘come’ or ‘sum’. Sometimes it is also pronounced as ‘rung’, or ‘clung’. If this combination is pronounced for a protracted time, it would have a resonating affect.]

The concluding letter is the third one, viz. ‘M’, which is indicative of final rest when the ascetic has managed to take his Pran (vital winds) to the Brahm Randhra (the slit-like opening on the top of the skull) from where it finally escapes out of the body to provide final liberation and deliverance to the ascetic. After pronouncing ‘M’ the Mantra ends and the mouth is closed. This is also a metaphoric way of saying that the ascetic has found his final rest and ultimate peace.

When this Mantra called OM begins to resonate in all the twelve Naadis (listed in verse nos. 23-28), it is greatly enhanced because of the presence of the twelve vital winds in them as well. [Refer Canto 5, verse no. 28, 32-34 in this context. The enhancement is made possible because the vibrations created by the humming or chanting of OM produce strong currents in the vital winds already present in the twelve important Naadis which result in a dramatic increase of the decibel level in which the cosmic Naad is heard. By and by the sound completely overwhelms the ascetic to such an extent that he hears nothing else except the sound of the Naad.]

When this stage is reached, it is said that the ascetic has gained full benefit of the Mantra and has consequentially gained the mystical powers that accompany such accomplishment. Now, he can use this Mantra to successfully finish any task he wants to do (70).

71-72. This Mantra of Pranav or Brahm, viz. OM, is potent enough to eliminate all spiritual obstacles.

There are four Bhumikas (stages of development of spiritual wisdom as described in detail in Canto 4)—viz. (i) ‘Aarambha’—the beginning or initiation when one decides that he would find true wisdom and the correct path that would provide him with final emancipation and salvation; (ii) ‘Ghat’—the acceptance and the subsequent filling of the inner self with noble thoughts and wisdom, becoming stable, calm, quiet, unmoving and unruffled like the air present inside an empty pitcher; (iii) ‘Parichaya’—introduction to, becoming aware of and getting acquainted with the cosmic Divinity that is present inside one’s inner-self as the all-powerful consciousness known as the Atma; introduction to and acquaintance with the highly evolved and developed path of erudition, enlightenment and wisdom that enables an aspirant to become aware of his pure conscious self and the fact that this ‘self’ of his is the same as the cosmic ‘Self’ of creation that is known as the all-pervading and almighty Consciousness that universally resides in the bosom of all living beings as their ‘self’, and that this is the only spiritual Truth in this existence [71], and (iv) ‘Nishpati’—completion or consummation of this process which implies the hearing of the cosmic Naad and tasting of the elixir of eternal bliss and ecstasy, known as Amrit, that comes with self-realisation and Brahm-realisation, and reaching the final frontier of spiritual practice which culminates in obtaining liberation and deliverance of the soul, the final emancipation and salvation whereby the individual soul merges with the supreme Soul of the cosmos, never to take birth again. This is the ultimate goal which any wise and enlightened spiritual aspirant would yearn for, would strive for, would aspire for and endeavour to attain.

Now each of these four stages is being elaborated upon. The ‘beginning or initiation’ is when the spiritual aspirant abandons all his involvement with the external world and its activities that have three causes¹ for coming into being [72]. (71-72).

[Note—¹The *three causes* that on the one hand result in the creation of the world and on the other hand can find a solution for this malady itself are the following—(i) Upaadaan—the word means ‘acceptance, acquisition, knowledge; restraining of the sense organs; a material from which something is prepared, the ingredient’. All these connotations can be applied here. For instance, the man first acquires the knowledge of this external material world and all its sense objects, and then accepts its existence as a matter of fact. Since the existence of this world is based on belief and information, and since this world can be accepted only through the medium of the sense organs of the body, it can be eliminated by the same means. That is, elimination of the deluding and artificial world can be achieved only by acquisition of correct knowledge and beliefs along with practicing restriction of the sense organs. These

organs are responsible for the man becoming aware of the existence of the world and its most alluring charms, no matter how illusionary or transient or painful they are in the long run. They entangle him in their web and tie him down in a vice-like grip with false promises of happiness, pleasure and comfort. If a man falls prey to this bait, he is trapped, while if he has the right knowledge and wisdom he would see right through the trick and avert a catastrophic destiny for himself.

(ii) Asamvaachi—to attempt to unite two dissimilar things into one entity; to try in futility to bring harmony between two basically disharmonious entities. For instance, it is like trying to unite water with fire. In the present case, this would mean to imagine something to be true although it is fundamentally and irrefutably false. That is, to imagine that this world is true and that it would indeed give peace and happiness is as incredulous and ridiculous to believe as imagining that the water seen in a desert mirage would actually quench one's thirst. As is obvious here, this utterly fallacious and basically erroneous conception can be removed only by correct knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment that comes with study of the scriptures and good company of saints and other holy men.

(iii) Nimitta—the word means 'motive, cause, reason, factor etc. which is the progenitor of something or some event; something done on behalf, or on account of'. For instance, the potter is the creator of the clay pot; he is a means by which the formless clod of earth is given a definitive shape, design and size. So if there was no potter, there would be no pot with this shape or size. In the present context, the spiritual aspirant researches the cause of the coming into being of this world although it is universally accepted in the scriptures that it is false and illusionary. He wanders how this happens—one the one hand it is false, and on the other hand he can actually experience and witness the presence of the gross world first hand thereby proving that it does not exist. It is then that he begins to ponder on the great metaphysical doctrines and axiomatic maxims enshrined in the scriptures, and espoused and expounded by them repeatedly. Regular and discreet study of the scriptures with an open mind and a sincere desire to learn and benefit from their teachings helps the man to discover the hidden 'truth' that cannot be seen by the physical eye of the body. He finds that it is his imaginative mind that has visualized this world to appease the sense organs. Therefore the remedy is also in the mind itself—and it is to stop imagining and become real. The mind, the aspirant realises, has to be leashed in and channelised properly to derive real spiritual benefit from its stupendous powers that were being misused by it in pursuance of falsehood and artificiality known as the world. He discovers that what is seen, heard, felt, smelt and tasted is not always the 'real and irrefutable truth' of any thing or event. It is often misleading and far from the actual thing. For instance, the water in the mirage seen in the hot desert is very evident, but everyone knows that there is no water in it. Similarly, vested interests spread false rumors about certain things to suit their purpose, but it would be highly foolish to rely on them. When one suffers from high fever one feels extremely chilly though it may be a hot summer day with a scorching sun beating relentlessly down on earth. A sick man may not be able to relish any taste in food which might be as delicious and tasty as it can ever be for a healthy man. Artificial scents create an impression of fragrant flowers in the vicinity though there may be none nearby.]

73. Instead (of being outwardly and extrovert, instead of allowing his sense organs to run after their objects in the external world), a wise and enlightened aspirant should concentrate upon the activities that are related to the inner-self, and focus on its purification and enhancement. He should endeavour to turn the focus of his mind and intelligent inwards in researching the truth about his own 'self' and the pure cosmic Consciousness that resides in his own bosom as his Atma.

The vital winds of the body control all its functions and activities, both the external ones as well as the internal ones. Therefore it is of utmost importance to control and harness them.

[That is, all the organs and tissues function under the influence of the vital winds. If one wind fails, the relevant organ or tissue suffers and stops to function properly. In other words, the tendency of the organs of perception to be outwardly can be effectively checked if one can check the relevant vital wind. Refer Pran Agnihotra Upanishad, verse no. 11 as well as this Canto 5 of the present Varaaha Upanishad which describe how Pran is controlled. So if a person is able to check all the vital winds, he can put a tight leash on this entire body and control even the involuntary actions such as digestion and hunger, circulation of blood and breathing, passage of stool and urine, etc. The mind would be then freed from the constant bombardment of impulses that are gathered by the organs and the necessity of issuing constant guidance to them. Then the freed mind would have the time and the inclination to concentrate its energy and strength on achieving successes in higher goals of life. That is why great emphasis is laid on first controlling of the vital winds during Yoga, because without this nothing worthwhile is achievable.]

When the vital winds are controlled and put under tight leash, the spiritual aspirant is able to overcome all hurdles and become stabilized in his body (i.e. is able to overcome the natural tendency of the body to remain restless and fidgety) just like the air inside a pitcher is stable and unmoving as compared to the air present outside the pitcher¹ (73).

[Note--¹This is the *first Bhumika*. This entails turning away from being extrovert and preventing one's sense organs from being outwardly mobile, and instead become focused on the inner self. It means to control the organs of the body and the mind to get naturally attracted by the charms proffered by the material objects of the external world, and instead concentrate their combined energy on realising the stupendous potentials of the 'self' and the pure conscious Atma.

The various Bhumikas have been described in detail also in Canto 4 of the present Upanishad.]

74. Those who are experts in this spiritual field, are wise and erudite, call the stage when an aspirant is able to control his vital airs and thereby become self-controlled, self-restrained, serene, unruffled, calmed and tranquil, symbolically indicating the attainment of a high degree of stability and steadfastness which are absolute necessary pre-requisites for success in any endeavour, what to speak of spiritual endeavour which is all the more difficult and painstaking as compared to worldly successes. It indicates steadiness of purpose, calmness of demeanours, a settled mind and fully restrained organs of the body—i.e. a stage when the spiritual aspirant has been able do away with all the restlessness and the fickleness that are so typical of the mind and the body.

This is called the 'Ghat Bhumika'¹ which marks a significant progress in his quest for spiritual enhancement, and attainment of final liberation and deliverance (74).

[Note—¹The *Ghat Bhumika* has two connotations as follows. (i) When the spiritual aspirant has become steady in mind and body, he is said to have attained the exalted stage which is compared with the Kumbhak phase of Pranayam when the winds are steadily held inside the body which is completely steady, calm and unmoving with all external exit points, such as the nostrils and anus, being closed. The man then becomes focused on his inner-self in the absence of all external disturbances, instead of routinely running outwards towards the sense objects of the material world.

(ii) There is another connotation to this symbolism as indicated by the word 'Ghat' which means a pitcher or vessel. The air inside the closed confines of this Ghat is completely calm and still; it is not all affected by the strong gust of wind blowing outside the body of the Ghat. So, the Ghat Bhumika refers to the stable state of the aspirant's mind and body which is comparable to the steadiness and calmness of the air inside the pitcher as compared to the ever agile, ever mobile and ever fickle nature of the air present outside the body of the pitcher. The spiritual aspirant becomes absolutely calm and quietened as he has reached the higher stages of Yoga and has sufficiently advanced in his spiritual quest. The turmoil of the external world does not disturb him in the least. Even as the air inside the pitcher remains calm and unmoving inspite of a fierce storm raging outside the pitcher, the aspirant remains calm, serene, indifferent and in quietude inspite of the turbulent world outside. He is absolutely unruffled and exemplarily unconcerned and detached from everything.]

²The Ghat Bhumika is the *second Bhumika*.]

75. It is the Atma, the pure consciousness and the true 'self' of the ascetic, that is responsible for creation of this world through the medium of the body consisting of both the gross organs such as the organs of perceptions and organs of action, as well as the subtle organ of the mind-intellect complex. Hence, being the creator or progenitor of this creation (world), it is the Atma itself which can conclude it or bring it to an end, and no body else.

Therefore, the stage when the spiritual aspirant has realised this quintessential truth about the Atma vis-à-vis the body and the world is said to be Jivan Mukta—i.e. one who has obtained liberation and deliverance even while he is alive, has kept his gross body, and lives normally in this world. [This is because he would not be 'personally' involved with either the activities of the body or the world. The word 'personally' here would not mean his body but his Atma which would remain a mute spectator and non-involved with everything and in anything. It is like freeing oneself from the serfdom of the body as well as the world. The Atma disassociates itself from everything related to the gross and perishable body as well as the equally gross and perishable world.]¹

When this thinking and behaviour becomes natural to the aspirant, when it is not artificially done by him to gain praise and honour, when he is not acting as an imposter trying to pose as an upright, wise, self-realised and enlightened man to deceive others with ulterior motives, when he has no pretensions of being holy and pious man while slyly eyeing this world and its material objects which would be showered upon him by faithful devotees who would fall prey to his deceitful behaviour—it is then that he is said to have accomplished complete success in obtaining his spiritual objectives. He is fulfilled and complete; he has obtained the 'Nishpati Bhumika' which is the last of the four Bhumikas and the culmination of Yoga and spiritual practice². (75).

[Note—¹This awareness of the Truth is the *third Bhumika* called the 'Parichaya Bhumika'.

²This 'Nishpat Bhumika' is the *fourth Bhumika*. Refer verse no. 71-72.]

76. Thus ends this Upanishad and its profound auspicious teaching.

He who studies and implements the tenets of this Upanishad becomes as exalted, honourable and auspicious as if he was the offspring of the Fire God, i.e. he becomes as pure, potent and powerful as the fire element. He becomes as exalted, honourable and auspicious as if he was the son of the Wind God, i.e. he becomes as pure, potent and powerful as the wind element.

This Upanishad is so potent and spiritually effective that if a man studies it diligently and implements its principles in his life he is absolved of the misdeeds done under the influence of drinking wine. Similarly, he is freed from the sin of stealing gold¹.

Such a man becomes 'Jivan Mukta'—i.e. he becomes freed from the fetters that shackle him to this delusory world and the gross body even while he is alive and interacts with both the world as well as the gross body.

All that has been said and asserted in this Upanishad has been proclaimed in the Richas (hymns or Mantras) of the Vedas and affirmed by them.

The attainment of the supreme stature of liberation and deliverance is akin to attaining the divine abode of Lord Vishnu. A wise and enlightened aspirant focuses his sight on it. This supreme abode is glorious and illuminated, and it is here that all the Gods have their exalted abode as well. It is here that all the enlightened souls go to take their final rest. This is such an exalted and divine abode of Lord Vishnu as described and asserted by the Upanishads.

[This divine abode of Vishnu is actually the abode of the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic, all-pervading and invisible form of the Supreme Being known as the transcendental Brahm. In other words, the soul of the spiritually enlightened person seeks to become one with the Viraat Purush and become uniformly dissolved like the latter in the vast fathoms of the cosmos. That is, an enlightened ascetic hopes to shed his gross body and become a universal soul that has no physical boundaries and attributes like the body. Now, he can ever remain free and unshackled.]

OM salutations! Oh Lord, protect us, give us peace and tranquility. OM (Pranav or Brahm) and Hari (Vishnu) are indeed the Absolute and the only Truth in creation. Amen! (76).

[Note—¹It must be clearly understood that this immunity from punishment is not intended to be a blanket license for breeding sins and evil. It is meant as a device for those persons who have committed sins and other spiritual errors unawares and sincerely wish to atone for their sins and misdemeanors. The scriptures provide a ray of hope to them for their redemption. It must be remembered that the main purpose of the scriptures is a man's spiritual redemption and not to gain sadistic pleasure in his sufferings. A man is liable to commit wrong in his life; after all 'to err is human' goes the saying. But a wise man would be called 'wise' if he wakes up and endeavours to redeem himself instead of allowing himself to roll in the filth which he had inadvertently stepped into. So, this Upanishad like many others shows him the path for redemption and salvation.]

-----Shanti Paath-----

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Chapter 31

Kalisantaran Upanishad/Kalisantarno-panishad

This is a very short Upanishad belonging to the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, having only three verses. It was revealed by the creator Brahma to the celestial sage Naarad.

The name of the Upanishad has three parts, viz. ‘Kali’, ‘Sant’, and ‘Tarna’. The first word ‘Kali’ refers to the present fourth era of the 4-era Hindu celestial cycle, an era considered as the most sinful and full of perversions from which a person finds great difficulty to find liberation and deliverance. The second word ‘Sant’ refers to saintly and pious people, and the third component ‘Tarna or Taran’ means to actually find liberation and deliverance or protection from some kind of spiritual snare or from a most difficult and perplexing situation. Hence, the combined word means an Upanishad which provides an easy formula by which saintly and pious persons can find emancipation and salvation as well as protection for their selves even in this difficult period of their lives.

It extols the glory of the holy and divine name of the Supreme Being called Hari, also known as Lord Narayan or Vishnu, in his two incarnations as Lord Ram and Lord Krishna. Therefore it is often referred to as *Hari Naam Upanishad*—an Upanishad which is a main proponent of the divinity and glory of the holy name of the Lord and espouses the effectiveness of it as the all-inclusive and infallible panacea for all spiritual ills faced by an aspirant desirous of Mukti (liberation and deliverance) as well as Moksha (final emancipation and salvation) during the most difficult phase of creation, i.e. the present corrupted and evil-ridden era called Kaliyug.

The Atma or pure consciousness of a living being is covered by a veil which prevents the latter from realising the former and experiencing one’s closeness with the supreme Brahm, because though the Atma is a manifested Brahm living inside the gross body of the creature it is prevented from being witnessed due the veil representing numerous worldly shortcomings, delusions and ignorance that surround it. The holy name of the Lord is the powerful implement that can cut through this veil and make the Atma and Brahm realisation possible. When this veil is removed, the splendorous illumination of the indwelling divinity known as the glorious Atma shines through like the brilliant sun breaking through the shroud of clouds.

The Upanishad prescribes the great well-known and most popular Mantra of the Lord which has sixteen words and relates to the holy names of Lord Vishnu in his two incarnations as Ram and Krishna. The Mantra ‘Hare Ram Hare Ram, Ram Ram Hare Hare; Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare’ is set to different tunes and is sung, either alone or in groups, in a symphony called ‘Kirtan’ sung most melodiously and with great devotion by the devotees of the Lord. Its singing is heart-felt and is accompanied by various musical instruments like any rendering of classical music.

The Upanishad concludes by emphasizing the spiritual benefits that are derived by repeating the most holy and divine name of the Lord in the form of this Mantra.

-----Shanti Paath-----

Please see appendix no. 1 for the meaning of this Shanti Paath.

1. At the end of Dwapar Yug (the 3rd era of the Hindu 4-era celestial cycle of creation and destruction), the celestial sage Narad¹ went to the great grandfather of creation known as Brahma and asked him, 'Oh Lord! Please tell me how I can hope to find emancipation and salvation for myself inspite of having to wander endlessly in this world (i.e. keep on moving endlessly in a cycle of birth and death in this mortal world) during the current era called Kaliyug?'²

Brahma replied cheerfully, 'Oh son! Today you have asked me something which is very pleasing to me (as it concerns the welfare of all my off springs—i.e. all the living beings created by me). Therefore, I shall tell you today the most secret of mysteries enshrined in the great tenets of the Vedas. [That is, I would today reveal something hitherto unknown in this creation, something which is the essence of what the Vedas and other scriptures proclaim, stress and expound so emphatically, something that shows the easy and practical method by which an aspirant can find access to the eternal fount of bliss and happiness, find access to the holy path that leads to emancipation and salvation.]

So listen carefully. You shall be able to cross this ocean-like world by merely hearing it (i.e. by becoming aware of it, because then you'll know what to do to get a convenient and easy way of finding liberation and deliverance from this mortal world consisting of an endless cycle of birth and death and its accompanying horrors, pains and miseries).

A man can vanquish and destroy all the faults and sins, all the drawbacks, flaws and imperfections associated with Kaliyug by merely pronouncing/uttering the holy, pure and divine name of the 'Adi Purush' known as Narayan² (1).

[Note—¹Narad-- The celestial sage Narad is said to be a manifestation of the Supreme Being's Mana (mind and its thoughts, intentions, hopes, desires and wishes, as well as the heart and its emotions and sentiments). The Supreme Being implements his wishes and expresses his intentions and wishes by making Narad his spokesperson. Purans list uncountable instances when Narad has approached people—both the good and righteous as well as the demonic and unrighteous ones—to tell them the path best suited to them, and the wise ones treated this advise as the Lord's wish while the unwise ones still benefited from it because Narad's intention was always to turn a living being away from his sinful ways and lead him towards the good.

Since he is a personified Mana, he is as fickle, unstable and transient as the Mana—never staying at one place for more than a fleeting moment, always roaming here and there in the entire creation, having nothing to stop his path as he could go anywhere he wished. And the remarkable thing is that he was never unwelcome anywhere—even the demons welcomed him with the same respect as did the Gods.

It is believed that he is born in each Kalpa to carry out the wishes of the Supreme Being. [1 Kalpa is equivalent to 4.32 billion human years.] He was a Gandharva (a semi-God who is a celestial musician) named Upbarhan in the previous Kalpa. He was physically very charming and an expert musician. Once he showed his amorous intentions towards Urvashi, a celestial dancer, in the presence of Brahma the creator where he was supposed to show exemplary restraint, and this overt show of lust resulted in his being cursed by Brahma that he would become fallen and take birth in the mortal world as a Shudra (a low caste). So, he was born from a maid servant of low caste working as a devoted servant of a learned Brahmin. Under the constant companion of this great Brahmin, Narad developed noble and auspicious virtues in

him even though he was a mere child of five years. He was very modest, devoted, pious, noble hearted and diligent.

Since he had the Lord's genes in him, his inclinations were more inclined towards the Spirit than the worldly charms of material sense objects which he detested from childhood. As luck would have it, once some wondering mendicants came to spend the four-month period of the rainy season in the hermitage of this Brahmin. Narad served them with great devotion. Impressed by his service and having some inner vision of his high spiritual stature and the spark of divinity that was lying hidden in him waiting for an opportune moment to leap up and shine through, they blessed him, taught him meditation and contemplation, besides initiating the child into the path of the Lord.

Thus, the dormant fire of renunciation and spiritual awareness was immediately ignited in Narad's little heart and he wished to take to Sanyas (a renunciate's life marked by constant wandering as a mendicant in search of the supreme bliss and Truth), but he did not wish to hurt his mother's emotions. But the Lord had other plans for him, and soon his wish was fulfilled when his loving mother died of snake bite while milking a cow. Instead of grieving at such a loss in human terms, the child Narad felt happy as if the last fetter was broken and he was liberated from worldly obligations.

He immediately headed north towards the mighty Himalaya Mountains to do severe Tapa (penance and austerity) to attain access to the Supreme Being. The little one walked on and on, and finally he was so tired and exhausted that when he saw a cool lake he drank water, ate fruits that he found there, and sat under the shadow of a tree and became lost in meditation. Lord Vishnu revealed himself in his four-arm form in his heart, but Narad was so thrilled and excited with this divine vision that he wished to see the Lord in practical terms with his physical eyes rather than the subtle eyes while he was in deep meditation. But as soon as he opened the eyes, the Lord vanished. Most sorry and overwhelmed with this loss, the child began to cry bitterly. Then a cosmic formless reverberating voice said—'Oh son! Your penance is accepted, and I do love you. Though I bless you with an eternal life and that your memory of me would never be erased, but you would not be able to see me with physical eyes in this world. So go back to the world and carry out my divine mandate for me. Become my messenger and go preach the path of my devotion and holy name to this world so that other unfortunate creatures also can get liberation and deliverance from the fetters in which they have bound themselves with no one to show them an easy and practical way out of their predicaments. Go and preach my message to such people in every corner of the earth; go and preach my devotion and let them have faith in my holy name. Your salvation would come naturally and automatically to you as an unasked reward.'

Narad turned back with this divine mandate of the Lord to be carried out just like the great Apostles of Lord Jesus Christ had went, on the Lord's instructions, to spread his message to the people on this earth. Henceforth, he wandered in the entire creation like a mendicant, with an Indian lute upon which he sang the Lord's glories and his divine name, spreading the divine message of the Lord's mercy, compassion, benevolence and love everywhere, attempting to turn everyone towards the Lord and away from this sinful and mortal world so that each individual creature could get his spiritual liberation and deliverance. Such are the ways of great and holy saints that instead of being selfish to seek his own liberation and deliverance from the Lord as the grant of a boon and letting the rest of the world go to hell, Narad chose to sacrifice his own life, liberation and deliverance at the altar of larger good of creation and to fulfill the wish of the Lord. Of course there is another twist to this tale—the Lord does not select everyone to carry on his own divine agenda, and a soul who the Lord designates for this purpose is indeed the most favoured and lucky one—because the Emperor chooses only those upon whom he has utmost confidence to carry out his

personal task. It is just like Jesus choosing his disciples and ordaining them the task of spreading his glorious Gospel of love and salvation.

Therefore, Narad, the apostle of the Supreme Being, is the most loved disciple of the Lord, and it is evidenced by the fact that he is the only saint who has unrestricted access to the abode of the Trinity Gods (Lord Vishnu the sustainer and protector of creation, Brahma the creator and Shiva the concluder of this creation) besides every nook and corner of creation without hindrance and even without seeking any previous permission and appointment from anyone, be it a God or a Demon or anybody else. Narad's visit was always for the host's long term good, so he was always welcome and revered.

When the time came and the age of the physical body ended, he left the mortal coil like a serpent leaves its cuticle and went to heaven to sing the Lord's holy and divine name in the presence of Brahma, the old patriarch of creation. At the end of the Kalpa, at the time of Doomsday, he merged and became one with Brahma, the creator.

When the new cycle of creation came into being, he was born again from the Mana (mind) of Brahma the creator after the Sankadi sages were born. That is why, in the present Kalpa, Narad is called the 'Manas Putra' of Brahma, i.e. the son born out of Brahma's mental powers or his wishes. With this heritage and gene running in his blood, it is natural that he is highly respected and regarded as one of the greatest devotees of Lord Vishnu who is the Supreme Being personified. It is from the navel of Lord Vishnu that Brahma, the creator of the visible world, was born atop a divine Lotus that emerged from it while he was reclining on the bed made of the coiled body of the legendary serpent named Seshnath who floated on the surface of the celestial ocean of milk called Kshirsagar.

Narad preached renunciation of this material world and an extreme sense of faith in and complete devotion for Lord Hari (Narayan, Vishnu, the Supreme Being). But this was against the process of creation, because if everyone followed the path preached by Narad and renounced the material world then the process of propagation of the world and its inhabitant creatures along with its development would come to a naught. So, when Narad preached renunciation and detachment from this material world of sense objects that was mortal, transient and never a giver of peace and happiness to the ten thousand mental sons who were created by Daksha Prajapati (the first male from whom the rest of the human race was born and who was assigned the task by Brahma to propagate creation) in order to propagate this human race, Narad obviously annoyed him. These sons were preached by Narad and they all became mendicants, renouncing their attachment with this life and all charms of the material world along with the desire to enjoy it, gratify their sense organs and remain entangled in affairs of this world. Daksha Prajapati was exasperated and he created another set of ten thousand sons. But when Narad again played spoil-sport, Daksha cursed him that Narad would have to remain on the move always and he would not be able to stay at one place for more than two 'Gharis'. [1 Ghari = 24 minutes. In practice the term means a very short period of time; a fleeting moment as small as batting an eyelid.] As a result of this curse, Narad became an ever-wandering mendicant. But this suited the divine mandate of the Lord—for now Narad was forced to keep on the move and reach newer corners of the worldly and celestial realm to preach the Lord's message amongst the mortal creatures on earth and the Gods and Spirits in the heaven.

It is believed that Narad is immortal and is symbolic of the stupendous powers of a man's mind. The mind is ever-wandering like Narad, and the subtle message in the entire lore is that one should tame this restless mind and train it to turn away from this mortal engrossing material world and instead turn towards the Lord for finding permanent liberation and deliverance from this world. A wise mind would teach (preach) the aspirant about the futility of pursuing this artificial world, and instead seek ways of finding the Truth that gives eternity and brings to an end the endless

litaney of miseries and horrors, perplexities and confusions, restlessness and agitations that are invariably associated with un-truth, delusions and ignorance.

Narad was the most erudite and scholarly devotee of the Lord. No other sage or saint could match him in his scholarly acumen and profundity of wisdom (ref. Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 7, section 1, verse no. 2). Narad is also credited with the composition of the great Sutra (formula or key) called 'Narad Bhakti Sutra' which defines the eclectic principles and characteristics of the spiritual practice called Bhakti which is to have a profound and exemplary degree of devotion for and surrender to the Supreme Being. Narad himself epitomizes Bhakti at its most refined and developed form.

²The word 'Adi' means the very ancient one who was there at the very beginning, and 'Purush' refers to the first cosmic revelation of the supreme transcendental Brahm when this creation came into being—i.e. the Viraat Purush who was the all-pervading, all-encompassing, almighty, formless and attribute-less cosmic manifestation of Brahm. In other words, the Viraat Purush was the gross body of Brahm at the macrocosmic level of creation, and it was from this Viraat Purush that the entire creation emerged. That is, this creation is a revealed aspect of the invisible Viraat Purush. Lord Narayan is another name of Vishnu who is no one else but this Viraat Purush in a more dynamic and active form. The terms Viraat Purush and Vishnu—and therefore all the names of Vishnu—are used synonymously for all practical purposes. Hence, Narayan or Vishnu is the Supreme Being himself manifested at the invisible macrocosmic level of creation. The Lord (Vishnu or Narayan) revealed himself on this earth on many occasions from time to time, but only twice in the form of a normal human being who takes a normal birth from a parent, lives as a child, grows to become an adult, marries and goes through the entire long process of life on earth, living it fruitfully till he reaches a ripe old age when its time to wind up. These two human-like forms of Narayan are Lord Ram who revealed himself in the second era called Tretayug, and Lord Krishna who came on this earth during the third era called Dwaparyug which preceded the present Kaliyug to which this Upanishad refers.]

2. The celestial sage Narad asked once again, 'Oh great grandfather! Which is that name?' So, Brahma the creator, who is also known as Hiranyagarbha¹, replied, 'It is the sixteen-word Mantra of the Lord. The Mantra is this— 'Hare Ram Hare Ram Ram Ram Hare Hare, Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare' (हरे राम हरे राम राम हरे हरे । हरे कृष्ण हरे कृष्ण कृष्ण कृष्ण हरे हरे).

These sixteen words have the potential of destroying all the great sins of Kaliyug along with their evil effects. No other better method is available, discernible or prescribed in the four Vedas. [That is, it is the simplest and the best medicine for all the ills of Kaliyug, and it helps the creature to get easy liberation and deliverance from the myriad evils and miseries that torment him in this life.]

By invoking this sixteen-word Mantra, the creature's sixteen Kalaas², that act as sheaths which envelop the Atma or soul and act as an obstruction between the creature and the supreme Brahm, are gradually peeled off and removed. After that, the dazzling, glittering and splendorous light emanating from the supreme Brahm enlightens the entire inner-self of the creature even as the bright rays of the splendorous sun illuminates everything around in the world after the shroud of clouds is removed' (2).

[Note—¹*Hiranyagarbha* is the macrocosmic subtle body of Brahm, so called because it is akin to the cosmic golden egg lying in the womb of Brahm from which emerged the Viraat Purush, the gross body of Brahm at the macrocosmic level of creation. The word *Hiranyagarbha* has two components—'Hiranya' meaning yellow, and 'Garbha' meaning the womb. *Hiranyagarbha* was the primordial cosmic fertilised egg, deriving

its name from the fact that its yolk core was yellow and glowing with an incandescent light like the one radiating out from the splendorous Sun in the sky, called the Maartand.

There are different versions regarding this Hiranyagarbha. According to the concept of Vedanta, Brahm is the cosmic supreme and transcendental Consciousness residing in the macrocosmic causal body called the Ishwar. In this context, when Brahm decided to reveal or unfold this creation, first the causal body known as a Ishwar developed the macrocosmic subtle body called the Hiranyagarbha, and from this evolved the macrocosmic gross body of Brahm called the Viraat Purush. This is the picture at the macrocosmic level. All these three sublime bodies of Brahm at the cosmic level—viz. Ishwar, Hiranyagarbha and Viraat Purush—were invisible, subtle, unqualified, without any attributes, all-inclusive and all-pervading. It was the unrevealed form of Brahm. But that was just the beginning.

When this visible world was created, which had attributes and qualifications, the same macrocosmic units of Brahm metamorphosed themselves into their respective counterparts in the individual creature's body. Hence, Ishwar is represented by the Pragya or the individual's causal body, Hiranyagarbha is represented by the Taijas or the individual's subtle body, and the Viraat Purush is represented by the Vishwa or the individual's gross body.

These three bodies are the three states in which consciousness exists, both at the macrocosmic level as well as the microcosmic level. At the microcosmic level, the Pragya relates to the deep sleeper state of consciousness called the Sushupta state, the Taijas relates to the dreamer state of consciousness called Swapna state, and the Vishwa relates to the waking state of consciousness called Jagrat state. The three corresponding states at the macrocosmic level are the Ishwar which relates to the cosmic deep sleep state of Consciousness called cosmic Sushupta, the Hiranyagarbha which relates to the cosmic dreamer state of Consciousness called cosmic Swapna, and the Viraat Purushh which relates to the cosmic waking state of Consciousness called cosmic Jagrat.

According to Purans, the Hiranyagarbha refers to the Brahma the creator, as well as to the Viraat Purush because Brahma was born atop a lotus that emerged from the navel of Lord Vishnu who is no one else but the Viraat Purush. If the word 'Hiranyagarbha' is to indicate the cosmic egg, then it was from this egg, lodged in the womb-like navel of Vishnu, that Brahma emerged. Hence, the 'original creator' was not Brahma but the Viraat Purush as Vishnu, and therefore the latter is the Hiranyagarbha—the golden cosmic egg. So we conclude that Hiranyagarbha essentially refers to the cosmic egg from which the rest of the creation evolved. Since Brahma is said to be the great grandfather of this creation, he is aptly named Hiranyagarbha, i.e. the cosmic egg from which this visible and gross form of creation evolved.

This entire concept of Hiranyagarbha being produced from the body of the Supreme Being called Narayan or Ishwar have been elaborately dealt with in Mahopanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 8 of the Sam Veda tradition.

The Hiranyagarbha is very subtle like the mind-intellect of the creature. The mind-intellect is also called the subtle body because it is through this mind-intellect that the Atma of the individual creature creates this world by using the mind's stupendous ability to imagine, envision and conceptualise things, and then using the intellect to justify it to be true, real and logical. But this instrument of the mind-intellect is invisible, is so subtle and hidden from view that its presence is only deduced by its astounding potentials which are manifested in the form of the gross body and its own stupendous capabilities. Whatever the mind wishes to do, it gets it done by the body.

This Hiranyagarbha is like the musk present in the body of the musk deer. The deer is not able to see the musk but is nevertheless maddened by its perfume, running mad in search of the source of the perfume not knowing that it is hidden well inside

its own body. Similarly, the creature is unaware that the supreme Brahm is residing in his own bosom as the pure consciousness called the Atma while he spends his entire life searching for it everywhere in the outside world.

There is another connotation to this observation. Since the mind is the creator of the world by its power of imagination, and then sustaining or perpetuating its own creation by believing in the truthfulness and reality of the world, it is therefore the mind itself that can conclude this world. So, while it is like Brahma the creator, it is also like Vishnu the sustainer and protector, and Shiva the concluder. If the same mind can assume three roles, it is not incongruous to believe that the same Hiranyagarbha is Brahma and Vishnu simultaneously. Since Shiva is a synonym used for the supreme transcendental Brahm—because the word ‘Shiva’ stands for an entity that is truthful, beautiful, auspicious, divine and holy as affirmed by a number of Upanishads of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition that deal with the ‘Shiva Tattwa’, this Hiranyagarbha is also Shiva.

Hiranyagarbha is also called Maartanda, the Sun, because of its golden colour and brilliance like the golden yellow and brilliant disc of the sun in the sky. Like the light of the sun illuminates the world and brings everything in it to light or knowledge, the Hiranyagarbha too brings to the fore the intentions of Brahm by revealing this vast creation. The Hiranyagarbha had spread the sacred divinity, the stupendous glory, the dazzling radiance and the brilliant splendour through the length and breadth of the vast realm of the cosmos like the sun spreading its glory on the earth by way of its energy, light, heat and warmth.

The word ‘Hiranyam’ (हिरण्यं) also refers to ‘Amrit or elixir or nectar of eternity and bliss’; it also means ‘green’. That is why greenery is associated with fertility, vibrancy, life and abundance of food and plentiful vegetation. The trees are green, and their precursor, the algae and moss, were also green. Indeed the food is the elixir of life in the world—nothing can ever survive without food and water. So, ‘Hiranyagarbha’ first created these to initiate the process of creation, and then sustained them once the process got under way. The ‘Viraat Purush’ as well as the ‘Hiranyagarbha’ are both used often synonymously to indicate the macrocosmic forms of the Male aspect of creation whose female counterpart is called ‘Nature’ or Shakti. The Shakti is the dynamic aspect of Brahm’s creative powers and an effective method of displaying the Lord’s cosmic authority.

²The *sixteen Kalaas*—The sixteen Kalaas of a man represents the special qualities, art, craft, skills, expertise, attributes etc. that one must possess if he were to successfully reach his target in life. These different qualities and virtues present in a man symbolically make him perfect; they represent his various strengths and potentials, and they are said to be sixteen in number corresponding to and symbolised by the sixteen phases of the moon. Since a man is an exact replica of the ‘Viraat Purush’, who in turn is a subtle manifestation of the sublime Brahm, these sixteen qualities or attributes of a man refer to the sixteen qualities of Brahm himself that made him the Lord of creation. The presence of all these divine attributes makes a man complete and very powerful. Hence, these sixteen Kalaas represent all the magnificent good qualities that are present in this creation which enable a man to overcome all adversities, hurdles and ill circumstances. Since Brahm is the creature’s only sincere well wisher and succour in times of distress and dismay, and since Brahm possesses all the exemplary qualities grouped under the single word Kalaa, a man who is blessed with them is regarded as being equivalent to Brahm. Or in other words, he personifies Brahm with all his dignified virtues that are needed by a man to complete and get across the cycle of birth and death without hurdles.

These sixteen Kalaas of creation that are present in a man refer to the sixteen elements or primary components that form the basis of a man’s very existence and his nature and temperament. These are the fundamental building blocks of his subtle and gross body, its characteristic qualities as well as the world surrounding him and how the man lives in and interacts with it.

The sixteen Kalaas are following—(i) Shraddha (faith, believe, conviction, reverence, respect, devotion), (ii) Pran (life; the very essence of creation; the vibrations of life; the rhythm and essential functions pertaining to life), (iii) Akash (the all-pervading, all-encompassing sky or space element), (iv) Vayu (wind, air element), (v) Tej (energy, splendour, radiance, glory, might, majesty and fire element), (vi) Apaha (water element which is the all-important ingredient for life), (vii) 'Prithivi' (earth element which is the base or foundation for all mortal creation), (viii) Indriya (the organs of the body, both the organs of perception as well as of action), (ix) Mana (the mind and heart complex and their stupendous potentials), (x) Anna (food, the element without which life is simply not imaginable because it provides it with the basic nourishment and energy), (xi) Virya (semen, sperms, standing for courage, valour, potency, vitality and prowess), (xii) Tapa (austerity and penance, tolerance of hardship as a means of penitence, forbearance as well as carrying out strict religious vows in order to purify one's self) (xiii) Mantra (the key or formula to achieve success in any enterprise; it also refers to the ability to give good advise, the power to contemplate and think, concentrate and focus, logically arrive at a conclusion), (xiv) Karma (taking actions and doing deeds), (xv) Loka (worldly interactions, conduct and behaviour), and (xvi) Naam (good name, fame, reputation, honour and glory).

Reference—Chandogya Upanishad, 6/7/1-6 of Sam Veda tradition.

In simple terms it means that a person's total composite personality, his characteristic attributes and individuality, his vitality and stamina, his prowess, powers and strength, his drive and vigour et al can be divided into sixteen parts.

When this Upanishad describes them as impediments in realising the glory of the 'self' it implies that although all these sixteen qualities are related to achieving glory and majesty in the world, they have nothing to do with 'self-realisation' and 'Brahm-realisation' which is possible only by abandoning everything related to this world as well as the body both in its gross part and its subtle part.]

3. The celestial sage Narad asked Brahma once again, 'Oh Lord! What is the proper system or method to be followed for doing Japa (constant repetition) with this divine Mantra?'

Brahma replied, 'There is no prescribed method or any set of rigid rules to be followed for doing Japa with this Mantra. Whether one is formally purified or not (i.e. whether the Japa is done after due observance of formal purification rites such as bathing etc. or not), a person who constantly, consistently and persistently repeats this holy and divine Mantra with faith, devotion and conviction can easily get all the four types of 'Muktis' (i.e. liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation) that are available to a spiritual aspirant.

These four Muktis are 'Salokya', 'Samipya', 'Sarupya' and 'Sayujya'¹.

When the seeker/aspirant has repeated this sixteen-word Mantra for 3½ crore times [1 crore = 10 million], he is deemed to be liberated or exonerated from the grave and horrible consequences of the sin of killing a Brahmin. He is also liberated/exonerated from the grave sin of killing a brave warrior or his own brother treacherously, stealing gold or other types of treasures belonging to others, being disloyal and treacherous towards his 'Pittars' (dead ancestors) and causing harm to them as well as to Gods and other fellows human beings. They are also pardoned from the generally unpardonable sin of abandoning the path of 'Dharma' (righteousness, probity, propriety, nobility and virtuousness)².

Such persons achieve liberation and deliverance from this world in the vicious and sinful era called Kaliyug, and they soon accomplish the great spiritual achievement known as 'Moksha', or emancipation and salvation of their souls.

Verily, this is what this Upanishad says; this is what it asserts'. Amen! (3).
 [Note--¹The four types of Mukhtis mentioned above are the following—(i) Salokya—to reside in the divine abode of the Lord; (ii) Samipya—to reside near the Lord; (iii) Sarupya—to obtain the divine form which is similar to that of the Lord; and (iv) Sayujya—to become one with the Lord by merging one's soul with him.

²It must be noted that when the Upanishad says that great sins would be pardoned it implies that the sinner is sincere in repenting for his misdeeds, honestly wishes to atone for his sins, and has taken the stern vow not to repeat it again at any cost. Pardoning is available only to them and not to imposters. It should be noted that the main goal of all the scriptures is to provide a means of redemption for a man who has sincerely realised his mistakes and wants to relent and mend his ways. It is for such honest persons that this pardon is sanctioned because it is only human to make a mistake if only it is not repeated and the subject is ready to undergo punishment for his misdeeds if he is given the chance of redemption. It is obvious that once a man has suffered in his ignorance of the correct path and once the correct path is made known to him, then a wise man would sacrifice everything and grasp it with both hands. It ought to be remembered here that such pardoning isn't meant for imposters and deceitful cheats who would like to invoke this Upanishad to escape punishment, just to be back to their nefarious ways once the pardoning is given.]

-----Shanti Paath-----

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Chapter 32

Saraswati Rahasya Upanishad/Saraswatirahasyo-panishad

This Upanishad was revealed by sage Ashwalaayan to other sages who had approached him to learn about the great mystical secrets of Goddess Saraswati, the goddess personifying all arts, sciences, crafts and skills as well as all wisdom, erudition, expertise and knowledge. Since speech is the medium by which one teaches others and is the vehicle for dissemination of wisdom, information and knowledge, Saraswati is also said to be patron goddess of speech.

This Upanishad is roughly divided into two parts—the first part is like the Mantra part of the Vedas wherein the Suktas or devotional hymns dedicated to the goddess are said (verse nos. 1-35), and the second part is like the Brahmin section of the Vedas wherein an elaboration is done of what has already been said in the Mantra part and their spiritual and other benefits are enumerated (verse nos. 36-68). The collection of Mantras is also called a Sukta.

In its Mantras and Brahmins this Upanishad essentially describes Saraswati as the dynamic force of Brahma, the creator, which helped him to unveil this multifarious world in all its dimensions. It is obvious that without the requisite knowledge nothing is possible, and hence Saraswati epitomizes all that is worth knowing and learning in this creation—and this would naturally include all the versions presented regarding the origin of creation, its sustenance and its final conclusion. Nothing in creation is beyond the scope of Saraswati, and in this context she is Brahm personified because nothing in this creation is beyond Brahm. Therefore, even as nothing remains beyond the reach of a Brahm-realised person,

nothing remains beyond the reach of those who have pleased Goddess Saraswati and not only know the esoteric metaphysical meaning of the various hymns dedicated to her but can also harness their latent dynamic powers and potentials. Such a person is indeed able to obtain liberation and deliverance from all sorts of delusions arising out of ignorance of the truth and the reality. It is a metaphoric way of saying that ‘correct knowledge and spiritual wisdom’, personified by Saraswati, is really emancipating and liberating for the creature’s soul.

-----Shanti Paath-----

Please see appendix no. 1 for the meaning of this Shanti Paath.

1. Once upon a time, all the sages and seers went to the hermitage of the great sage Ashwalaayan and duly worshipped and honoured him.

They then requested him most humbly—‘Oh Lord! What is the way one can acquire knowledge of the fundamental principles pertaining to the supreme Absolute that can not only make one aware of it and enlightened about it but also help him in its realisation? How can one understand the esoteric and mystical meaning of the supreme Divinity that governs everything in existence and is the only essence of this creation? Please share with us the knowledge of the divine Shakti (cosmic dynamic powers of Nature) that has enabled you to become so exemplarily realised, so exalted and so highly wise and erudite.’ (1).

2. Ashwalaayan explained the essentials to these sages in the following discourse. He said—‘Oh great sages! I have attained this great stature along with profound knowledge and exemplary wisdom by honouring the great divine Goddess Saraswati¹, by praising and worshipping her through the ten Richas (hymns) of the Rig Veda along with their respective Beej Mantras. I continue to honour her with these ten hymns, repeating them on a continuous basis, and I do it with immense devotion’ (2).

[Note—¹*Saraswati*—In the form of a goddess known as Saraswati who personifies the virtues of learning, wisdom, erudition, knowledge, expertise and skills of all kinds as well as all kinds of arts, crafts and sciences and all other bodies of knowledge that exist in this creation, she appears first in the Rig Veda, 1/164/49, and subsequently in Rig Veda, 6/61/1-14, 7/95/1-2, 4-6, and 7/96/1-3. The Goddess is also honoured in other Vedas as follows—in Sam Veda, 1461, in Yajur Veda, 20/84 and 34/41, and in Atharva Veda, 6/94, 18/1/42-43. The faculty of speech called Vak has been personified as a goddess. She is related to Brihaspati, the patron God of speech and wisdom (Rig Veda, 10/71/1). She is the patron goddess of speech because all forms of knowledge need speech and the ability to express and explain things properly to be perpetrated and become useful for this creation. Suppose there was no speech, then the knowledge would not have been disseminated so widely. All the Vedas are said to be created by her; hence she is regarded as the mother of the Vedas (Gayatri Rahasyo-panishad, 4/5/9-10).

According to the Purans, she is the Shakti or dynamic power of the creator Brahma because any specialised process would require technical skills, expertise and relevant knowledge in order to complete it successfully—especially the one as technical and complicated as the one related to the creation of a vast and infinitely complex structure known as the universe that is continuously evolving and ever changing in nature, in which no two units are alike, and which has defied explanation and full understanding even at the hands of the highest of intelligent brains. No

success in any auspicious endeavour is possible without intelligence, wisdom, erudition, relevant knowledge, skills and expertise.

Since Goddess Saraswati embodies these virtues in her self, and since the Vedas are the traditional ancient repositories of all knowledge that was created by Brahma the creator, it is said that the Vedas are personified forms of Saraswati. Again, since the information contained in the timeless Vedas were passed on from generation to generation by the process of teaching and learning which entails the use of speech and skill with language, this Goddess is said to patronize these two—the faculty of speech called Vak, and skills with the language. Learning and teaching also requires intelligence and a properly functioning mind and its sub-conscious, these too were patronized by Saraswati. That is why a person who is highly learned and scholarly, who is wise, intelligent and erudite, is said to be especially blessed by Goddess Saraswati. The Vedas created by Brahma would have been useless had it not been for Saraswati that enabled these Vedas to be revealed, taught and propagated from generation to generation. Etymologically, ‘Saraswati’ represents a river, and this is how she is represented in the Rig Veda, because the word literally means ‘to flow’. This is a very apt definition for Saraswati because that knowledge which ‘flows and spreads’, which ‘grows and develops’, is good for all and it blooms, while that which is locked in books and shelves of libraries is as good as non-existent, it becomes stagnant and has no practical value and utility. Metaphorically, this ‘flow’ can also represent speech because what we speak also flows forth from our mind and tongue; that is why good orators are said to be making a flowing and flowery speech that springs out from their mouth in a natural flow much like a stream gushing out from a natural spring or flowers that blossom in the spring season on their own.

Since the light of knowledge and wisdom is the anti-thesis of the darkness created by delusions and ignorance, she is iconographically depicted clothed in spotless white—the colour of all-inclusiveness purity and irrefutable immaculacy, of absolute truth and reality, as well as of wisdom, knowledge and light that removes the various shades of darkness representing ignorance and delusions. She sits on a lotus also symbolizing purity and cleanliness.

Her mount or vehicle is the Hans, the Swan, which is itself regarded as a very wise bird. It is believed that it would pick up pearls and leave the rest of the gems aside from a collection of jewels, and drink pure milk and leave its adulterants to symbolise its ability of selecting and accepting the best of what is available. Saraswati sitting on the Hans implies that mere technical knowledge, skill and expertise alone are not enough if it is not complemented with wisdom, insight, erudition and enlightenment. This means a person on whom Saraswati is pleased would use his discretionary intellect and wisdom to select the best option available to him; he would pick out the nuggets of wisdom contained in the vast and voluminous scriptures that are of any spiritual worth for him and accept them in his daily life, leaving aside the rest. The swan moves majestically in a pond of lotus flowers, it lends glory to the pond and the flowers because it is the only living entity in the immobile surroundings. Likewise, a wise and learned man is like a gem in the society.

In mythological lore, a Peacock is also depicted as her vehicle. The peacock is said to be the most beautiful bird with its opened plume of colorful feathers—this symbolises the fact that knowledge can not only bring the best things of the world to the person who has knowledge and expertise on any subject but also to symbolise that it is a person’s degree of mental development and the level of his wisdom, knowledge, erudition and enlightenment that makes him attractive, much respected and honoured rather than the amount of physical wealth he possesses, the strength of his body or its beauty that has any real importance. The peacock in its self is not a beautiful bird; it is its colourful plume of open feathers that makes it so charming and attractive. So, mere knowledge and intelligence is not as important as their type and the use to which they are put. A man’s knowledge can be the cause of ruin and

miseries for others, while another man's knowledge can show happiness and peace to the less fortunate ones. Obviously, the latter is revered by the society and the former is loathed.

In iconographic accounts, she is shown as having four hands. The four arms are indicative of her all-inclusiveness, as they stand for the four Vedas as well as the four cardinal points of the directional compass (east, south, west and north). Further, the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm is also said to have four Pads or aspects—refer Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 4, Section 5-8 of Sam Veda tradition.

In one version, two of the hands hold a Veena (Indian lute)—one hand holding it, while the other hand strumming its string to indicate that she is eternally singing the hymns of the Vedas, deriving eternal bliss from this singing, and perpetually immersed in contemplation and meditation. The Veena, a musical instrument used to sing melodiously, indicates the ability to be sentimental and emotional on the one hand, and this involves the interaction of the heart because a good singer sings from the heart, and to be intelligent and have a sharp mind which naturally involves the mind and intellect on the other hand, because one has to be an expert in the Vedas and the languages in order to remember the complicated verses and recall them flawlessly while singing. Coordination between the heart and mind is very necessary for singing; singing is not possible if the heart and the mind are not rested, are not at peace with them selves, and not in harmony. The third hand has an Akshamala (prayer rosary). The rosary indicates that inspite of knowing everything and being Brahm personified, she remains constantly engrossed in doing Japa or repeating some divine Mantra herself to teach her followers never to abandon contemplation and meditation as well as the use of divine Mantras. The fourth holds a book symbolizing knowledge in all its forms, in its most visible and tangible form. The book indicates knowledge not only of the scriptures but of all the sciences, arts and crafts taken together.

In another version, she is depicted as holding a rosary, a goad, a loop and a book in her four hands—refer verse no. 38 of the current 'Saraswati Rahasya Upanishad'. The symbolism of the goad and the loop is obvious. They indicate the fact that when a man becomes wise he is able to rein in his sense organs by using the loop, and coax himself to follow the correct path by using the goad of wisdom, erudition, knowledge and enlightenment.

Saraswati is considered as the divine consort of Brahma, and hence represents his power of intelligence, wisdom, skill, erudition, expertise and knowledge that enabled Brahma to create the Vedas and the rest of this creation.]

3. The assembled sages asked him once again—'Oh the most exalted sage who observes the highest traditions of an auspicious way of life ('Suvrat')! By which method or means did you receive this great Mantra of Saraswati that has bestowed upon you such stupendous powers? How were you initiated into this Mantra? How did the great divine Mother Saraswati become pleased with you? Please be kind to enlighten us about it' (3).

[Note—In iconographical and mythological terms, the Maha Saraswati is the incarnation of Goddess Parvati, the divine consort of Shiva and regarded as the Mother from whom the rest of creation came into being. She is also regarded as Durga personified.]

4. [Verse nos. 4-5 describe the *first Mantra*.]

Sage Ashwalaayan answered in detail—'Oh great sages! The Rishi of this Saraswati Mantra of ten verses is no one else but me, Aswalaayan. [The Rishi is the

sage who first conceptualized this Mantra of Goddess Saraswati, tested its potential powers and then propagated it for the benefit of mankind.]

The Chanda (composition style) is Anushtup. [The Anushtup Chanda is a special poetical style of composition of hymns of the Vedas which have The *Anushtup Chanda* is a verse with 4 lines, each line having 8 letters = total 32 letters. It was first conceived by an ancient sage named Anustuv, hence it bears his name.]

The patron deity called a Devta of a Mantra is Goddess Vaageshwari in this case. [The Devta or God is the patron deity to whom the Mantra is dedicated. Usually it is the supreme transcendental Brahm to whom the Mantra is devoted. In this particular instance, the Devta is the goddess who presides over the faculty of speech, i.e. Saraswati. The word 'Vaageshwari' literally means the patron goddess of speech or Vak.]

Its Beej Mantra is 'Yadvaag'. [The Beej Mantra is the root or seed formula around which a particular Mantra is built and which gives the Mantra its basic power and mystical strength.]

Its Shakti (mystical dynamic cosmic powers) is 'Devim Vaacham' (i.e. 'the goddess says'). [That is, this Mantra gets its authority and power from the fact that it praises the great cosmic Divinity in the form of the Goddess of speech, and is a personified form of Saraswati. It is Saraswati that is speaking through the medium of words coming out of the mouth of the speaker who says words of profound wisdom. The auspicious form of speech is Saraswati personified. The Mantra is the Goddess manifested in words; it represents the dynamic powers that come with knowledge and wisdom exemplified by Goddess Saraswati. Refer verse no. 27.]

The Keelak of this Mantra is 'Prano Devi'. [That is, this Mantra is hitched to the vital forces of life represented by Pran, the vital winds, and especially breath. The Mantra empowers the Pran to become active and empowered, to possess and display its stupendous powers and majesty of the worshipped deity through its various actions and deeds. For instance, when a man speaks wisely, truthfully and energetically, it is actually the Pran revealing these glorious virtues of Goddess Saraswati. The force, power and energy of breath and other vital winds of the body which are collectively called 'Pran' are needed by a man to speak anything at all. Ordinarily, wind or air do not 'speak' in the sense that the sound produced by them cannot be easily interpreted as intelligent letters, words or sentences. So the hidden power that makes it possible for this sound to become a spoken word is known as Saraswati. The Goddess pervades in this creation in the form of Pran or vital winds that sustain and protect life in this creation by the virtue of the power of knowledge. Even as Pran exists in all individual creatures who live in this creation, the Goddess also pervades the entire creation in the form of knowledge, skills, wisdom and erudition as well as all forms of sciences, arts and crafts without which sustenance, growth and protection of life is absolutely impossible'. Refer verse no. 29.]

This Mantra is invoked and incanted with the special purpose of pleasing Goddess Vaageshwari. [This is called 'Viniyog'.]

The Anganyas is done by using the following divine names of the Goddess—Sradha, Pragyā, Medha, Dharna, Vagdevta and Mahasaraswati. [The Anganyas is reposting the stupendous divine cosmic powers of the deity being worshipped and invoked on various parts of the body so as to not only purify the body and make it a symbolic abode or seat of the invoked deity but also ensure that the worshipper is given protection of the deity and personifies all the glorious, majestic, divine and magnificent virtues exemplified by the worshipped deity.]¹ (4).

[Note--¹*Anga Nyas* and *Kar Nyas* of any Mantra using its seed or root called the 'Beej' of that Mantra are the two basic rituals of invoking the divine powers of the Mantras which are basically mystical formulas employed in religious practice, specially during occult rites and meditation of which this Khechari is a part. The word 'Kar' means hand, and 'Anga' means body, while 'Nyas' refers to an invocation, or vesting or assigning any entity with something, or entrusting an entity with some trust and responsibility; to deposit, repose, trust, pledge, entrust, to keep a thing in mind, etc. This is a ritualistic process in which certain parts of the body are touched and certain Mantras are said. It also means the purification of the individual parts of the body and the installation of the individual letter of the invoked Mantra, complete with its full potentials, at those points. Therefore, Nyas is a process of pledging utmost faith and conviction on the divine and holy Mantra's supernatural powers and potentials by invoking it and reposing it on the various locations of the body and its vital parts, such as the limbs, the abdomen and chest, the throat and forehead etc.

In the context of the Beej Mantras, it refers to invoking their divine cosmic powers and establishing them on various parts of the body, or assigning the patron Gods of these seed Mantras some specific part of the body so that they can establish themselves there.

Hence, doing Kar Nyas with the Beej Mantras would be to establish these symbolic Gods representing the cosmic, divine and mystical powers that are encrypted in the different Beej Mantras on the hand of the practitioner, while Anga Nyas would be to do the same on other parts of the body such as the chest, abdomen, shoulders, throat, forehead etc.

The locations on the body where Anga Nyas is done has great metaphysical significance. According to Ramopanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, canto 2, verse no. 43, these ten locations are the following—Brahm-randhra (which is the hair-like slit on the top of the skull), the forehead, the central point of the eyebrows (where the symbolic third eye of wisdom is said to be located), the upper palate, the two earlobes, the heart, the navel and the two thighs = 10 sites.

Primarily there are six sites according to the same Upanishad's verse no. 23 where the primary seed or root words, called the Beej Mantras, are invoked are the following—the Brahm-randhra (top of the skull), the central point of the eyebrows, the heart, the navel, and the two thighs.

According to its verse no. 83-85, there five sites for doing Anga Nyas for a warrior. These are heart (left chest), forehead/central point of the eyebrows, the top of the head where the tuft of hair is located and which is the site of the Brahm-randhra, the body armour or shield, and the arms and armaments of the aspirant warrior. This is also followed in the worship of Shakti, the divine dynamic powers of creation, such as Durga, Parvati and Saraswati (the goddess of speech, knowledge and wisdom).

The human body is a microcosm of the cosmos, because according to the genesis of creation the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic, all-encompassing and all-inclusive manifestation of the supreme transcendental Brahm, had metamorphosed in the shape of the human body, and therefore this body is a manifestation of the entire creation including all its Gods and all its astounding potentials.

The creation has been visualised as having three divisions which form the so-called three worlds—viz. the heavens represented by the head of the human body where the Brahm-randhra, forehead and the eyebrows are located; the terrestrial world or the earth symbolised by the heart and the navel; and the nether world by the legs and the two thighs. It must be noted that the two earlobes stand for the two extreme directions of the cosmic globe. So, when the aspirant does Anga Nyas with any Mantra on these specific points, he symbolically purifies these points on his body and empowers them with the mystical and ethereal powers of the powerful forces of Nature which these Mantras embody as mystical formulas encrypting astounding energy and forces of creation. This is a perception which implies that the ethereal and mystical powers and potentials of the Mantras representing the stupendous forces of

Nature that control creation, right from its conception to its development, growth, expansion, sustenance and conclusion, are invoked and established throughout the breadth and length of this visible creation manifested in the body of the aspirant. In other words, the aspirant hopes that he would be empowered with all the glorious virtues and auspicious powers and stupendous potentials and majestic authority vested in the Viraat Purush at the cosmic level.]

5. After having done the Anganyas, the worshipper should meditate upon Goddess Saraswati's divine form as follows—The Goddess has an auspicious and radiant complexion resembling snow, pearl, camphor and a full moon. She is a bestower of all-round auspiciousness and welfare. She is adorned by a garland of Champak flowers (flower of the tree *Michelia champacca*) which are golden-yellow in colour. Her entire body is healthy and robust, with well developed bosom¹.

I offer my sincere obeisance and greatest of respect to the Goddess (Saraswati), using both my devoted mind and faculty of speech to worship her, seeking success in all my endeavours for attaining fame, majesty, honour and acclaim. Let such a glorious and divine Mother Goddess Saraswati bless us graciously with her benevolent patronage and give protection to us from all sides (5).

[Note—¹The reference to the 'bosom' is intended to stress that as the divine cosmic Mother she nourishes the entire creation with the milk of knowledge, wisdom and erudition just like a ordinary mother would breast-feed her child. The mother produces this milk all by herself, and it is the best all-round nourishment for the child. Similarly, the divine Mother ensures that her devotees, i.e. all the creatures of this creation, do have access to the best of wisdom, erudition, sagacity and knowledge that exist in this creation. That is also why she has been depicted as being personified as the Vedas. Milk is white in colour, and the cloth that the Goddess wears are also white in colour. Refer note of verse no. 2 above.]

6. [Verse nos. 6-8 describe the *second Mantra*.]

The next (second) Mantra is 'OM Prano Devi'. [This Mantra means—OM salutations! I bow most respectfully to pay my obeisance to the divine Goddess who is a personification of the stupendous dynamic powers, the strength and the energy as well as the divinity of the supreme transcendental Brahm whose eclectic Mantra is OM. This dynamic power of Brahm has injected life into this world by way of knowledge, wisdom, erudition and all other glorious virtues that Saraswati compositely stands for. Hence, OM representing Brahm in the latter's manifestation as Saraswati personifying the eclectic virtues of knowledge, wisdom, erudition, skills and expertise which are at the core of creation, and which virtually form the 'Pran' or the essential goodness, the eclectic virtues and priceless values for which life is so much sought after and highly regarded in this creation. It ought to be noted here that Saraswati is the patron goddess of speech, the spoken word, and OM is the word manifestation of Brahm, the Supreme Being. So, in essence this Mantra pays respects to that dynamic aspect of Brahm which has revealed itself as word along with all the powers and potentials that the word has. Again, the word OM is said to encapsulate the entire gamut of creation, from its beginning through its development and growth to its conclusion, in its three syllables A, U and M. Hence, knowledge is something upon which the entire edifice of creation rests; it is something that one needs right from the instant of one's birth, throughout one's life, and till the time of one's death.]

The Rishi of the Mantra is sage Bharadwaj.

Its composition style is the Chanda called Gayatri. [The Gayatri Chanda has 24 letters and syllables in all which are divided into 3 steps or stanzas of 8 letters or syllables each. Hence the total is $3 \times 8 = 24$.]

Its Devta (the deity who is worshipped) is Saraswati.

The Beej, Shakti and Kilak of this Mantra are 'Pranav or OM'.

This Mantra is invoked for the purpose of fulfilling one's wishes. [This is because when one is successful in meditating on this Mantra he acquires such great mystical powers which are natural accoutrements to acquisition of knowledge, wisdom, erudition, sagacity and skills that there is nothing in this world that remains beyond one's reach.]

The Anganyas process is also done with the same Mantra (6).

7. Then, the worshipper should meditate and pray to Goddess Saraswati as follows—
'The cosmic, sublime, divine and subtle form of Goddess Saraswati is basically the same as the non-dual, attributeless, unqualified, all-pervading and all-encompassing form of the supreme Brahm so much extolled and praised by the Vedas. It is basically one and the same. So, though Mother Saraswati is the non-dual, immutable, indivisible and essentially 'one' Brahm personified, she has still come to be known and worshipped by various names and in different forms (by her devotees). Let such a glorious and divine Mother Goddess Saraswati bless us graciously with her benevolent patronage and give protection to us from all sides (7).

8. Goddess Saraswati who is glorified and honoured by making charities and giving of alms and donations, who is well provided for with an abundant and infinite supply food and other necessities of life, and who gives full protection, succour and solace to those who revere her, honour her and praise her—let this divine Goddess graciously bless us, her devotees, with her bountiful benevolence and infinite magnanimity, and give protect to us by way of ensuring that we have an abundance of food to sustain ourselves' (8).

[Note—The worshipper essentially requests the goddess to bless him so that he becomes wise and learned, an expert in his trade and very intelligent and erudite so that people seek him for his knowledge, wisdom and expertise. This way, he would never have to worry for food and other necessities of life.]

9. [Verse nos. 9-11 describe the *third Mantra*.]

The next (third) Mantra is 'Aa No Divaha'. [This Mantra refers to the fact that Goddess Saraswati is none else but Brahm personified in her form. Brahm is symbolised by the vast, fathomless and infinite sky and the glorious heavens where the brilliant sun and the bright moon live high above the mortal world. This 'high' and 'brilliant' are metaphors for the exalted and illuminating presence of the Goddess who is a personified form of the divine virtues of knowledge, wisdom, erudition, sagacity, enlightenment, skills, expertise etc. Her importance and all-pervasive and all-inclusive nature is symbolised by the sky and the space elements. The word 'Diva' refers to the sky, the brilliant heaven and the endless directions.]

The Rishi of the Mantra is sage Atri.

Its composition style is the Chanda called Trishtup. [The Trishtup Chanda is a verse of 4 lines in which each line has 11 letters; $11 \times 4 = 44$ letters in all.]

Its Devta (the deity who is worshipped) is Saraswati.

The Beej, Shakti and Kilak of this Mantra are the same, and it is the Sanskrit syllable 'Hrim'. This Mantra is invoked for the purpose of fulfilling one's wishes.

The Anganyas process is also done with the same Mantra (9).

10. Thereafter, the worshipper should meditate and pray to Goddess Saraswati as follows—‘All the four Vedas, their branches and sub-branches sing the glories of and honour the one non-dual immutable universal Divinity known as the supreme transcendental Brahm. The dynamic Shakti (energy, vitality, powers, strength and authority) of this Brahm has manifested as the cosmic Mother known as Goddess Saraswati. Let such a glorious and divine Mother Goddess Saraswati bless us graciously with her benevolent patronage and give protection to us from all sides (10).

11. Let the universal Mother Goddess Saraswati, who is being worshipped and invoked by us with the help of the Beej Mantra ‘Hrim’, descend from her radiant and dazzling abode in the heavens, travel past the vast banks of clouds resembling huge mountains in the sky, and come to take her honourable seat in the religious fire sacrifice being performed by us in her honour.

Let her be charmed and pleased by the hymns we are singing in her honour, and let her hear them blissfully and cheerfully.’ (11).

12. [Verse nos. 12-14 describe the *fourth Mantra*.]

The next (fourth) Mantra is ‘Paavakaa Naha’. [This Mantra refers to the fact that Goddess Saraswati is as glorious, powerful, potential and energetic as the fire element. The word ‘Paavak’ refers to the ‘fire’.]

The Rishi of the Mantra is sage Madhuchhanda.

Its composition style is the Chanda called Gayatri. [The Gayatri Chanda has 24 letters and syllables in all which are divided into 3 steps or stanzas of 8 letters or syllables each. Hence the total is $3 \times 8 = 24$.]

Its Devta (the deity who is worshipped) is Saraswati.

The Beej, Shakti and Kilak of this Mantra are the same, and it is the Sanskrit syllable ‘Srim or Sring’. This Mantra is invoked for the purpose of fulfilling one’s wishes.

The Anganyas process is also done with the same Mantra (12).

13. Thereafter, the worshipper should meditate and pray to Goddess Saraswati as follows—‘The divine goddess is always and universally present in a subtle form as the meaning and spirit (essence) of all mystical syllables, letters, words, stanzas, verses and prose (i.e. the hymns), who is beyond the definition and scope of such terms as the end or the beginning, and who possesses such eclectic and unique qualities as being eternal and infinite (i.e. the goddess who has no end and no beginning, who is infinite, eternal and imperishable because knowledge and wisdom never die and are of an infinite dimension)—let such a glorious and divine Mother Goddess Saraswati bless us graciously with her benevolent patronage and give protection to us from all sides. [Refer verse no. 32.] (13).

14. The divine Goddess, worshipped by us with the help of the Beej Mantra ‘Srim’, purifies and cleanses all her devotees and spiritual aspirants just like the fire cleanses and purifies everything put into it. She (in her manifestation as knowledge, expertise, intelligence and wisdom) makes it possible for one to acquire abundance of food and all other material benefits that can be possibly acquired by doing deeds requiring skill, knowledge, expertise and intelligence.

Let such a divine, glorious and majestic Mother Goddess Saraswati grace our fire sacrifice by her auspicious presence, and help in its fruitful completion.’ (14).

15. [Verse nos. 15-17 describe the *fifth Mantra*.]

The next (fifth) Mantra is ‘Chodyitri’. [This term ‘Chodyitri’ means an inspirer and motivator; one who propels and pushes forward. Hence, the Goddess represents the dynamic powers of Brahm to inspire and motivate everything and everyone in this creation. Hence, Saraswati is the universal inspirer and motivator of all, including the Gods representing the various virtues of creation, as well as the individual creatures and their Atma or soul.]

The Rishi of the Mantra is sage Madhuchhanda.

Its composition style is the Chanda called Gayatri. [The Gayatri Chanda has 24 letters and syllables in all which are divided into 3 steps or stanzas of 8 letters or syllables each. Hence the total is $3 \times 8 = 24$.]

Its Devta (the deity who is worshipped) is Saraswati.

The Beej, Shakti and Kilak of this Mantra are the same, and it is the Sanskrit syllable ‘Blum’. This Mantra is invoked for the purpose of fulfilling one’s wishes.

The Anganyas process is also done with the same Mantra (15).

16. Thereafter, the worshipper should meditate and pray to Goddess Saraswati as follows—‘The divine Goddess is the universal inspirer and motivator of all the Gods. [That is, she personifies the hidden powers of Brahm that reside quietly inside each living being, whether the divine Gods or the humble creature, to control all its activity.] She is a personification of the virtues and forces of Nature both at the level of the individual Atma (Adhyatma) of the creature as well as at the level of the Gods (Adhidaiva). She is always present in all living creatures as their ability to speak and express themselves. Let such a glorious and divine Mother Goddess Saraswati bless us graciously with her benevolent patronage and give protection to us from all sides (16).

17. The Goddess, worshipped by us with the help of the Beej Mantra ‘Blum’, always inspires and motivates all to speak the truth and pleasant words in a sweet voice and graceful tone. She guides wise, learned, upright and intelligent men on the path that is always correct, righteous, auspicious and noble by inspiring them to be conscientious, upright and ethical, and to be always aware of their moral duties and responsibilities.

Such a gracious and glorious Goddess Saraswati has accepted us and our endeavour in the form of the fire sacrifice.’ [This fire sacrifice is a metaphor for the auspicious and righteous deeds done by all good and noble people with good intentions. The very fact that such people do such sacrifices indicates the Goddess’s blessing and grace is upon them, for otherwise they would have been indulging in crimes and sinful activities.] (17).

18. [Verse nos. 18-20 describe the *sixth Mantra*.]

The next (sixth) Mantra is ‘Maho Arnaha’. [This term ‘Maho’ means ‘great’, while ‘Arnaha’ refers to the great ocean from which all essential material assets of the creation were produced at the time of creation by its churning by the Gods and Demons at the beginning of the creation. It indicates Lord Vishnu as well who is said to recline on the celestial python that floats on the surface of the celestial ocean of milk (the Kshir Sagar) in the heaven. The word also means the ‘teak tree’ famous for its long life and sturdiness. Hence, the Mantra refers to the fact that the Goddess is

like that vast ocean from whose bosom all the material assets needed by this creation emerged. This metaphor is most apt in the sense that ever conceivable benefit is obtainable in this world if one has the requisite knowledge, expertise, skill and intelligence. Nothing is unreachable or unattainable by knowledge and intelligence. She also stands for the 'teak tree' because knowledge and wisdom makes a man the best and the most reliable amongst all humans and creatures belonging to the zoological kingdom just like the teak tree is best amongst the members of the plant kingdom.]

The Rishi of the Mantra is sage Madhuchhanda.

Its composition style is the Chanda called Gayatri. [The Gayatri Chanda has 24 letters and syllables in all which are divided into 3 steps or stanzas of 8 letters or syllables each. Hence the total is $3 \times 8 = 24$.]

Its Devta (the deity who is worshipped) is Saraswati.

The Beej, Shakti and Kilak of this Mantra are the same, and it is the Sanskrit syllable 'Souha'. [Refer verse no. 27 also.]

This Mantra is invoked for the purpose of fulfilling one's wishes. The Anganyas process is also done with the same Mantra (18).

19. Thereafter, the worshipper should meditate and pray to Goddess Saraswati as follows—'The divine Goddess is the universal controller and regulator while living as the inner voice of conscience present in all living beings. She is established in the form of Gods Rudra and Aditya (Lord Shiva and the Sun God respectively). [That is, on the one hand she can destroy everything in the form of Rudra who is anger personified, while at the same time she sustains and protects life in the form of the Sun without which no life can be imagined on this earth. Whereas anger makes a man blind, the sun is a metaphor for light and illumination in their physical form as well as in the form of knowledge and wisdom.]

Let such a glorious and divine Mother Goddess Saraswati bless us graciously with her benevolent patronage and give protection to us from all sides.' (19).

20. It is Goddess Saraswati who has manifested herself in the form of the ever-flowing river bearing her name 'Saraswati'. [This is a very important analogy, especially in the face of the fact that this is an underground or subterranean river, for its outer visible form is not present. This is a clear indication of what is being implied here—the virtues of knowledge, wisdom, skills, intelligence, learning and enlightenment that Saraswati stands for, and the fact that she controls everything by being the inspiring and motivating force residing in the bosom of all living beings, is very clearly indicative of this underground river which is not physically seen from the surface but nevertheless is present just below the surface, eternally replenishing the underground water sources such as the springs and maintaining subterranean water level on earth. The grand virtues for which Saraswati is so much honoured and revered are the ones which make a man who possesses them equally honoured and revered in this world.]

This Mother Goddess Saraswati, in her sublime and subtle form that is all-pervading and omnipresent, kindles, inspires and motivates the creature's intellect and conscience to do what is auspicious, righteous and noble.' [That is why if we do something wrong, our conscience immediately pricks us; it is another matter that this pricking does not suit us because of our sense organs which are ever eager for self gratification, and they force us not to give any heed to morals and ethics in their selfish pursuit.] (20).

21. [Verse nos. 21-23 describe the *seventh Mantra*.]

The next (seventh) Mantra is 'Chatvaari Vaak'. [This term 'Chatvaari Vaak' refers to the faculty of speech that enables the inner feelings and thoughts to be revealed so that they become known to others. It is like fruition of the efforts made in the fire sacrifice. The word 'Chatvaari' itself refers to the fire sacrifice pit having four corners.]

The Rishi of the Mantra is sage Dirghatmaa, the son of sage Uchathya.

Its composition style is the Chanda called Trishtup. [The Trishtup Chanda is a verse of 4 lines in which each line has 11 letters; $11 \times 4 = 44$ letters in all.]

Its Devta (the deity who is worshipped) is Saraswati.

The Beej, Shakti and Kilak of this Mantra are the same, and it is the Sanskrit syllable 'Aiyang'. [Refer verse no. 33.]

This Mantra is invoked for the purpose of fulfilling one's wishes. The Anganyas process is also done with the same Mantra (21).

22. Thereafter, the worshipper should meditate and pray to Goddess Saraswati as follows—'The Goddess is revealed in various forms, but for those who have deep insight and can peer behind the external façade to see what lies behind, the Goddess in one and non-dual in all her numerous forms. In this, she is manifested Brahm, as Brahm is also revealed in the form of this myriad world of stupendous diversity but is primarily one and non-dual in the view of those who are wise, self-realised and enlightened. Refer verse no. 32.]

She is established everywhere as the only entity worth seeing, understanding and accepting. [In other words, in the confusions created by the visible diversity of this physical world, she represents the only non-dual Reality and absolute Truth which should be understood and grasped by excluding everything else.]

Let such a glorious and divine Mother Goddess Saraswati bless us with her patronage and protection from all sides.' (22).

23. The faculty of speech whose presiding deity is Goddess Saraswati, who is worshipped by the help of the Beej Mantra 'Aim', is divided by experts into four types or aspects—(1) Paraa (which refers to speaking about things which are beyond normal sight and knowledge, to speak about paranormal things that are beyond comprehension and range of perception); (2) Pashyanti (which refers to speaking about things that are visible, perceived and understandable); (3) Madhyamaa (to speak softly and mildly, to speak pleasantly and sweetly, to speak inarticulately and in a low voice that is difficult to easily comprehend); and (4) Vaikhari (to speak in a clear, loud and articulate way symbolising clarity of thought, firmness of conviction, exemplary confidence, energy and vitality—refer verse no. 29).

Those who are experts and wise know all these aspects of speech. Out of these, the first three, viz. the Paraa, Pashyanti and Madhyamaa, are established in the cave-like heart. They are not revealed to the world. [This is to indicate that unless one is articulate in his speech, unless one speaks out loud and clear what he wants to say, and unless he is honest and forthright in what he speaks, all his knowledge and whatever he wishes to say would either remain confined to the deep recesses of his cave-like heart or not fully understood and implemented. The world would not be able to see what is hidden in this dark cave of the heart unless one expresses his thoughts and emotions in clear language.]

Compared to them, the Vaikhari speech is loud and clear; it helps one to articulately say what is in his mind and heart. It is this fourth form of speech that is employed by a man to express himself (23).

24. [Verse nos. 24-26 describe the *seventh Mantra*.]

The next (seventh) Mantra is ‘Yadvaagvadanti’. [This term refers to the fact that the faculty of speech is inspired by Goddess Saraswati. What is spoken is an expression of Saraswati.]

The Rishi of the Mantra is sage Bhargava.

Its composition style is the Chanda called Trishtup. [The Trishtup Chanda is a verse of 4 lines in which each line has 11 letters; $11 \times 4 = 44$ letters in all.]

Its Devta (the deity who is worshipped) is Saraswati.

The Beej, Shakti and Kilak of this Mantra are the same, and it is the Sanskrit syllable ‘Klim’ or ‘Kling’. This Mantra is invoked for the purpose of fulfilling one’s wishes.

The Anganyas process is also done with the same Mantra (24).

25. Thereafter, the worshipper should meditate and pray to Goddess Saraswati as follows—‘Goddess Saraswati is revealed in eight forms or aspects of creation such as name, caste etc¹. But at the same time she appears as one single immutable and indivisible non-dual entity to a wise man. [In other words, though a man recognises others based on these eight known characteristic features and attributes, fundamentally all living beings are the same as the same Atma resides in all of them. Since the Goddess represents the dynamic aspects of Brahm, it follows that whatever is seen and known as ‘life’ in all its variations and forms are nothing but the same universal Principal assuming myriad forms. All human beings have the same Atma representing the Goddess present in them; what vary are the external features and characteristics, but the essence and principle remains the same. This is the magnificent spiritual wisdom of non-duality and universality that the Goddess stands for. That is why a person who has developed this eclectic vision of this creation is said to be especially blessed by Goddess Saraswati because he has acquired true spiritual knowledge that is eternal and not just a superficial one that pertains only to the mortal world of material sense objects that are perishable and lack any permanence.]

Let such a glorious and divine Mother Goddess Saraswati bless us with her patronage and protection from all sides (25).

[Note--¹The eight apparent classifications in the world by which a man is recognized are the following—his name, caste, complexion, birth or family, race, nationality, Ashram (one of the four phases in life, such as Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vaanprastha and Sanyas), and Varna (class of society such as Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra and Nishad or Chandala).]

26. When the divine Goddess worshipped by the Beej Mantra ‘Klim’ revealed in the form of the faculty of speech and the power and strength inherent to it, the Goddess who inspires noble and auspicious emotions and thoughts, manifests her august self at the venue of the fire sacrifice, she not only provides all the Gods with extreme happiness and joy by her presence but also simultaneously removes the ignorance and delusions of those who are ignorant and deluded.

Her auspicious presence at the venue of the fire sacrifice and participation in the ceremony enables one to milk all the four directions for food and water—i.e. she

enables the performer of the fire sacrifice derive benefits from having studied the Vedas and reciting their hymns for completing the fire sacrifice systematically and according to the process laid down in the Vedas themselves. That is, he is able to recite the correct hymns, carry out the rituals properly and correctly, satisfy the Gods invited on the occasion and in general conduct the entire exercise according to set norms and traditions so that the desired rewards are obtained¹.

Now, what happens to the best elements of the Madhyamaa part of the speech? [The concept of Madhyamaa has been explained in verse no. 23.] (26).

[Note--After all, this is the purpose of a man choosing his profession and studying diligently so that he can become an expert in his field. Once he is an expert, all glories and prosperity is easily available to him. The doing of the fire sacrifice is just a metaphor for the importance of learning, acquisition of skills and knowledge, their practical application and the rewards incumbent to the entire exercise. This verse highlights the importance of Saraswati who is personified knowledge, wisdom, erudition, sagacity, skills and expertise as well as the expression of these virtues as the faculty of speech. Once a man has acquired expertise in any specialised field, he no longer would starve for food or die of thirst—i.e. he would not be lacking in wealth and necessities of life. Glory and fame would come to his doorstep if he is skilled, wise and learned. Even if he is infirm and sick and unable to do any physical activity, people from far and wide would come seeking his advice and would voluntarily take care of his needs. His knowledge and wisdom can be beneficial to others only when is able to speak and express himself clearly and understandably. So, the importance of Saraswati becomes self-evident. Refer verse no. 23, 2nd Paragraph.

When the Goddess of speech reveals her august presence in the form of proper wisdom, erudition and knowledge along with the manifestation of these virtues in the form of wise words spoken by the learned man, no auspicious things or benefits available in this world remain inaccessible for him.

The different Mantras chanted during elaborate fire sacrifices must be remembered by heart and recited orally in a melodious tune without consulting the text midway, besides the need to flawlessly complete the complicated rites involved in such rituals. This obviously needs a healthy mind and a sharp memory along with various technical skills concerning fire sacrifice rituals and the ability to sing the hymns correctly, articulately and pleasantly. All this is made possible by proper functioning of the mind-intellect and the faculty of speech, besides the committed involvement of the heart because otherwise the entire exercise would lack sincerity and devotion. The Goddess presides over these functions. The successful completion of a fire sacrifice is a metaphoric way of saying that any enterprise undertaken by a man has been successfully completed and he has got the desired results.

The offerings made to the fire sacrifice are meant for the Gods and these offerings are said to sustain them. So, once Mantras are said and offerings are made into the sacrificial fire, it is natural that the Gods would be pleased as now they are being duly fed and shown due respect.]

27. [Verse nos. 27-29 describe the *eighth Mantra*.]

The next (eighth) Mantra is 'Devim Vaacham'. [This term literally means 'the Goddess speaks'. [Refer verse no. 4.] It implies that what we speak is actually the Goddess speaking. Since the Goddess controls the mind and the intellect and the expression of their wisdom and thoughts through the faculty of speech, whatever is spoken is indeed spoken by Saraswati.]

The Rishi of the Mantra is sage Bhargava.

Its composition style is the Chanda called Trishtup. [The Trishtup Chanda is a verse of 4 lines in which each line has 11 letters; 11 x 4 = 44 letters in all.]

Its Devta (the deity who is worshipped) is Saraswati.

The Beej, Shakti and Kilak of this Mantra are the same, and it is the Sanskrit syllable 'Sauha'. [Refer verse no. 18 also.]

This Mantra is invoked for the purpose of fulfilling one's wishes. The Anganyas process is also done with the same Mantra (27).

28. Thereafter, the worshipper should meditate and pray to Goddess Saraswati as follows—'The Goddess is praised by all the Gods as well as all the creatures, both the ones who can speak (such as humans who use words to express themselves as well as animals who express themselves by merely making sounds typical to each type of animal) as well as the ones who cannot speak (such as worms and insects).

The Goddess is like a Kamdhenu cow (the cow of Gods which gives all desired things when pleased) because she gives her worshippers whatever they wish to have like the Kamdhenu cow's never-ending milk. [An ordinary cow cannot be milked endlessly and continuously, but the Kamdhenu cow would give milk as and when desired. Further, she can give anything desired; she can bestow all the material comforts and objects of the world if one asks for them from her. Likewise, nothing is unobtainable for a man upon whom Goddess Saraswati is pleased. In other words, wisdom, knowledge, erudition, sagacity, skills and expertise make every conceivable thing accessible for a man in this world. He himself may be mortal but his wise words, i.e. his 'speech' and the words that he utters, make him immortal.]

Let such a glorious and divine Mother Goddess Saraswati bless us with her patronage and protection from all sides (28).

29. The divine Gods represented by the Prans (vital wind forces in the body representing vitality, vigour, strength, stamina and vibrant form of life—refer verse no. 4) have produced the Vaikahri form of speech. [Refer verse no. 23.] That is, they have enabled one to speak coherently, articulately, in a pleasant, cohesive and enthralling manner. A robust and vigorous speech spoken with energy and vibe is indicative of the active life forces in the body. This is proved when a man is sick or mentally depressed—in such cases his speech suffers. He would not be able to speak properly; a sick man sometimes speaks in a delirious tone so much so that more often than not it becomes difficult to understand what he means. So, being able to speak with a robust voice and in an articulate and a coherent manner is a sign that the vital forces of life are in high spirits and vibrant inside the body.]

Whatever a creature speaks in any form is actually a manifestation of the Goddess's divine glory and stupendous powers (to produce 'sound' from virtually nothing). [This has a direct analogy to how the cosmic Naad was created by Brahm from virtually nothing!]

That Goddess is a bestower of all sorts of happiness and joys like the legendary Kamdhenu cow, and provides abundant food, drink, energy and strength to all. [Refer verse no. 28.]

She has manifested herself in the form of the faculty of speech and the voice. [Refer verse no. 23.]

Let that divine Goddess be pleased by our prayers and come to be graciously present in our midst in this fire sacrifice. She is respectfully invited to participate in the fire sacrifice.' (29).

30. [Verse nos. 30-32 describe the *ninth Mantra*.]

The next (ninth) Mantra is 'Ut Twaha'. [This term means 'That is you'. Here 'that' refers to the supreme transcendental Brahm, the divine entity whose stupendous

wisdom and knowledge is revealed in the form of Goddess Saraswati. Since the job of creation is a highly technical and complicated matter, it is obvious that Brahm definitely possessed this expertise and the relevant skills needed to successfully accomplish it. Saraswati is a manifestation of this unique ability of Brahm. In other words, Saraswati is an expression of Brahm; or Brahm expressed himself in the form of Saraswati. When one speaks, he must be present on the site. So a wise man sees the presence of Brahm wherever and whenever he hears some voice or sound. Conversely, if there is sound and someone speaking, it is sure that Brahm is present there. And better still, the entity that is speaking is itself Brahm personified! This holistic view of creation is the non-dual eclectic view of Vedanta, and it is being applied to Saraswati here.]

The Rishi of the Mantra is sage Brishaspati (the Guru of Gods).

Its composition style is the Chanda called Trishtup. [The Trishtup Chanda is a verse of 4 lines in which each line has 11 letters; $11 \times 4 = 44$ letters in all.]

Its Devta (the deity who is worshipped) is Saraswati.

The Beej, Shakti and Kilak of this Mantra are the same, and it is the Sanskrit syllable 'Sum' or 'Sun(g)'. This Mantra is invoked for the purpose of fulfilling one's wishes.

The Anganyas process is also done with the same Mantra (30).

31. Thereafter, the worshipper should meditate and pray to Goddess Saraswati as follows—'Enlightened and learned ascetics realise that the Goddess is a personification of the knowledge pertaining to Brahm. This entitles them to find freedom from all fetters of ignorance that have been shackling them till this realisation dawns upon them. This leads them upon the path that is auspicious and spiritually liberating. This path takes them to the stature of Absolute and wholesomeness; nothing remains to be known thereafter. The stature attained then is imperishable and immortal.

Let such a glorious and divine Mother Goddess Saraswati bless us with her patronage and protection from all sides.' (31).

32. This stupendous power of expression (possessed by Brahm and) revealed in the form of the faculty of speech and voice (that helps not only to disseminate knowledge and wisdom but also to prove the presence of Brahm everywhere (in the form of knowledge, wisdom, erudition and expertise in all the sciences, arts and crafts) is very evident all around in this creation. But many people cannot see it inspite of seeing the physical life in this world all around them. Similarly, there are many people who cannot hear Brahm speaking inspite of hearing all the sounds emanating from so many sources in this world. [That is, inspite of knowing that everything in existence is Brahm, they are so stupid that they cannot see the Supreme Being everywhere and attempt to see or find him in specifics such as shrines, idols, pilgrim sites, religious ceremonies and holy books which do not have a 'voice', which do not 'speak' a word. They hear discourses but are deaf to their meaning, so for all practical purposes they haven't heard them at all—i.e. they haven't heard Brahm speaking nor have they heard him being spoken about. They see but are blind in the sense that they treat the exterior façade as the truth without realising that the real truth is hidden behind this exterior—i.e. they are deluded into believing that what the gross organ of sight in the body, known as the eye, sees in this world is the real thing without analyzing what is seen with the eye of wisdom and intellect to arrive at the correct conclusion about the reality of what is physically observed. They read the scriptures and learn them by

heart, but this knowledge is only superficial and misleading. They visit shrines and bow before images, but cannot see or have any idea of the Divinity represented in them. If the wisdom and erudition is not there, if the light of knowledge is not bright enough to illuminate their intellect and mind, if enlightenment does not dawn upon the 'self' inspite of the sun of knowledge shining so brilliantly in front of them, then indeed the process of seeing and hearing for such ignorant men is as good as seeing anything by a blind man or hearing anything by a deaf man.]

But for some fortunate ones the Goddess of speech (i.e. Saraswati) reveals herself just like a faithful woman appears before her husband in all her vibrant beauty bedecked with ornaments and attired in her best of clothes as soon as he wishes to see her. [In other words, foolish people exploit their knowledge to accumulate worldly riches and to deceive people by pretensions of being wise and knowledgeable. Such pervert, deceitful and sinful people literally use Saraswati to gratify their selfish interests just like a lustful man would invite a beautiful woman to satisfy his carnal instincts.] (32).

33. [Verse nos. 31-35 describe the *tenth Mantra*.]

The next (tenth) Mantra is 'Ambitame'. [This term means that the Goddess is the universal cosmic Mother herself.]

The Rishi of the Mantra is sage Gritsmad.

Its composition style is the Chanda called Anushtup. [The Anushtup Chanda is a verse with 4 lines, each line having 8 letters = total 32 letters. It was first conceived by an ancient sage named Anustuv, hence it bears his name.]

Its Devta (the deity who is worshipped) is Saraswati.

The Beej, Shakti and Kilak of this Mantra are the same, and it is the Sanskrit syllable 'Aim(g)'. [Refer verse no. 21 also.]

This Mantra is invoked for the purpose of fulfilling one's wishes. The Anganyas process is also done with the same Mantra (33).

34. Thereafter, the worshipper should meditate and pray to Goddess Saraswati as follows—'Those who are wise and enlightened about the eclectic principle of Brahm dissolve the entire delusory world consisting of uncountable names and forms in the non-dual form of the divine cosmic Goddess. [Refer verse nos. 7, 22, 25.]

Having done this, i.e. having established non-duality everywhere, they then concentrate their attention on this one single form of the Divinity. [That is, once they realise that the entire world, including the various Gods and Goddesses are nothing but manifestations of the one universal Brahm that is one and non-dual, or Advaitya, in the entire creation, they do not allow themselves to be confused and deluded any longer by the concept of duality, or Dwaitya.]

Let such a glorious and divine Mother Goddess Saraswati who is no one else but the supreme transcendental Brahm in that form bless us with her patronage and protection from all sides.' (34).

35. 'Oh Mother Saraswati! You are the most exalted amongst all the Shaktis, all the rivers and all the goddesses. [The Shaktis represent the dynamic forces and energy of creation without which nothing can happen in this world. The rivers are providers of water that irrigate the earth and make it fertile so that it can produce food and foster life; rivers are the lifeline of life on this earth. Water is the elixir of life and the rivers take this elixir to distant places. The goddesses represent the dynamic half of all the gods who themselves are personifications of different forces of Nature and represent

one or the other powers of Brahm that are employed by him to carry on with the nitty-gritty of creation.]

We are feeling underprivileged and deprived. So oh mother, please bless us so that we become fulfilled and contented; make us feel privileged and fortunate.’ (35).

36. Goddess Saraswati is like a majestic Swan roaming majestically in the symbolic forest of divine lotus flowers represented by the mouth of the creator Brahma—let that divine Goddess Saraswati, who glows radiantly with an effulgence of splendour from all sides, reside in the lake represented by our Mana (thoughtful and intellectual mind as well as sentimental and emotional heart) (36).

[Note—Brahma the creator pronounced the Vedas, the repository of all knowledge that exist in this creation. Since the mouth was used by him for pronouncing not only the Vedas but even the principle Beej Mantras Bhu, Bhuvaha, Swaha and Janaha from which the rest of the creation evolved, his mouth is regarded as the habitat and playground of Saraswati who is an eternal fount of enlightenment, knowledge, skill, wisdom and erudition. The mind-intellect is obviously the seat of knowledge in the human body, but the heart has no less important role to play because if the heart is not involved in anything the man would not be sincere and steadfast in his endeavour, even in his studies and application of the knowledge that he has acquired by this study. That is why we use the phrase ‘learn by heart’ or ‘put your heart in the work you do’ instead of invoking the mind and intellect because if the heart is not involved no work would be completed fruitfully. Lotus grows in clusters in a pond, so the term ‘forest’ simply refers to a dense growth of lotus flowers, and since this particular flower is regarded as holy and auspicious the reference implies that amongst all the body of knowledge that exists in this creation the one that is spiritually enlightening and liberating is deemed to be auspicious and welcome. Knowledge is related to the gross material world that Brahma pronounced is like the dense cluster of lotus flowers living in a pond, but the one that is really holy and divine in it is the one that is good for the spiritual well being of the man; it is like the crown jewel and stands out in the lake of lotuses like the majestic Swan cited here in this verse.]

37. Oh Goddess Sharda who lives in the city of Kashmir¹! I bow before you. I pray to you daily. Please bless me with Vidya (knowledge, skills, erudition, sagacity, wisdom, expertise, aptitude and acumen) (37).

[Note—¹The word *Kashmir* is only used in a symbolic manner here as a metaphor for her abode in the brain. This is because Kashmir is a state in the northern most part of India, a metaphor for ‘top or head’. Intelligence and wisdom have their seat in the mind and the intellect which have their seat in the brain located on the top of the body. If the rest of the body is the land mass of the country, then surely the head is like Kashmir.

There is another connotation here. Kashmir is in the mighty Himalayan Mountain range, and according to mythology the abode of Gods is in the north direction in the Himalayas. So, reference to Kashmir also would suggest that proper wisdom and knowledge of Brahm in the form of manifested Saraswati is necessary before one finds his final emancipation and salvation by acquiring truthful spiritual knowledge which would be like reaching the abode of Gods. This idea is also expressed in verses nos. 31 and 34.]

38. She holds in her four arms an Aksha Sutra (the prayer rosary), Ankush (goad), Paash (snare or loop) and a book. She is adorned by a beautiful pearl necklace. Let Goddess Saraswati take up her residence in my speech and voice (38).

[Note—The symbolism of the four things held by her are—(a) The *rosary* indicates that in spite of knowing everything and being Brahm personified, she remains

constantly engrossed in doing Japa or repeating some Mantra. (b) The *goad* and *loop* indicates the fact that when a man becomes wise he is able to rein in his sense organs by using the loop, and coax himself to follow the correct path by using the goad of wisdom, erudition, knowledge and enlightenment. And (c) the *book* of course indicated knowledge in all its form, not only of the scriptures but of all the sciences, arts and crafts.]

39. The sound emanating from her throat resembles the sound of the conch. Her lips are beautifully red, and she is adorned by all types of ornaments. Such a great Goddess Saraswati is requested to come and take her seat at the tip of my tongue. [That is, let my tongue be very articulate and clear in its pronunciation. Let my speech become wise and intelligent. Let me speak pleasantly, articulately and truthfully. Let me speak words of great wisdom, erudition and enlightenment. Let me not speak anything that is not the truth, is inauspicious and sinful.] (39).

40. Goddess Saraswati is the beloved of Brahma the creator. She is an embodiment of the virtues of Shradha (firmness of faith and conviction), Dharana (firmness of belief and idea) and Medha (steadfastness of intellect, prudence, understanding and comprehension).

She makes the tongue of her devotees as her symbolic residence. [That is, a man upon whom the goddess has become pleased becomes an expert orator, very wise, highly intelligent and erudite. He is deemed to a learned man who is skilled and knowledgeable in a wide array of subjects. He is much sought after for his wisdom, erudition, sagacity, knowledge, expertise and skills. His words do not go in vain; whatever he utters are lapped up eagerly by his followers as priceless pearls of wisdom. He speaks the truth pleasantly in a sweet voice that is welcome by all.]

She blesses them with the glorious virtues of Sham, Dam etc.¹ (40).

[Note--¹These virtues are the following— (i) Sham (having self restraint and control; having peace, tranquility, serenity and quietness; being able to suppress desires, yearnings and natural instincts and impulses); Dam (tolerance, forbearance, fortitude); (iii) Upriti (renunciation, detachment, dispassion, indifference and non-involvement); (iv) Titksha (endurance, patience, fortitude, sufferance, equanimity); (v) Samadhan (solution, answer, lack of confusion or doubts, clarity of thoughts and conception); and (vi) Shraddha (having faith, belief, conviction, reverence and devotion).]

41. The Goddess's lock of hairs on the head is decorated by the crescent moon which is tucked in them like an ornament. She is like a river of nectar that can eliminate the torments arising from this world which is like a fearful ocean. I bow most reverentially to that Goddess Saraswati who is a manifestation of Bhavani (who is the divine consort of Lord Shiva, the concluder) (41).

42. Those who are desirous of achieving expertise in oratory and skills with the languages and literature, those who seek fearlessness, those who wish to enjoy the material comforts and pleasures of the objects of the sense organs available in this charming material world, and even those who wish to have liberation and deliverance from all their spiritual fetters, should devotedly worship the Goddess and offer prayers to her (42).

[Note—Acquisition of expertise and technical knowledge of the material sciences would indeed provide all the comforts and pleasures that the world has to offer. Similarly, study of the text of the scriptures and acquiring expertise in the languages would make a man respected in the society of scholars and erudite men. Worldly

fame, majesty, material prosperity, pomp and pelf would follow suit. Fear is caused by ignorance, but a man upon whom the goddess of knowledge has become pleased can no longer fear from it, besides the fact that such a man need not fear from poverty and neglect, from hunger and thirst etc. either. Money and fame would follow him wherever he goes.

At the same time, those who are wise and enlightened amongst them would understand that all the skills and knowledge that they have acquired would be futile and worthless if they are not used to gain liberation and deliverance for the soul from the cycle of birth and death in this world, and it would be tantamount to frittering away of a golden chance by pursuing worthless things of this material world that are nevertheless transient and perishable. Such men who not use their mind to acquire knowledge but to interpret this knowledge correctly are the ones who can ever hope to get emancipation and salvation by applying this knowledge in a practical way in life so that they can rise above the mundane and attain a spiritually elevated stature; they find beatitude and felicity with the aid of the knowledge and wisdom that is being misused by their less fortunate brethren who pursue this world endlessly.]

43. A devotee who worships and offers sincere prayers to her with the greatest of devotion and faith is able to witness her blessings and grace in less than six months time (43).

44. Once they are blessed by the Goddess, endless stream of prose and poetry of astounding beauty and style, composed in immaculate language and grammar, begin to spring forth from their mouth without any special effort being made for it on their part (44).

45. It is often seen that a sincere devotee-poet of Goddess Saraswati (i.e. someone who is an expert with the languages and letters; a man who has a command of the languages and their grammar, who is well read and well-versed with the vast treasury of knowledge contained in the scriptures and which is personified by Goddess Saraswati herself) is able to comprehend even complicated texts all by himself without seeking anyone else's guidance. Oh the assembled Brahmins (the learned ones)! [Refer verse no. 1.] This has been affirmed by the Goddess herself (45).

46. It is by the grace of Brahma the creator that I (sage Aashwalaayan) have acquired this eternal and truthful knowledge of the Atma (pure consciousness). This has provided me with eternal and perpetual state of Sat-Chit-Anand (i.e. I enjoy the bliss that comes with coming to know the absolute truth pertaining to the pure consciousness which removes all confusions and their attendant doubts and perplexities, and provides eternal bliss and happiness). That is, I have had the privilege and good fortune to enjoy the beatitude and felicity that comes with Brahm-realisation which naturally follows self-realisation (46).

47. The Prakriti (Nature) was created or produced by a combination of the three primary qualifications called Sata, Raja and Tama Gunas. [These are the basic qualities that determine the nature and temperament of all creatures. All living beings have them in varying proportions. The Sata is the best and most auspicious quality that makes a man spiritually inclined. The Raja makes him tend to veer towards the tendency to move towards the world with the intentions to expand and acquire fame and name. The Tama is the meanest of the three qualities which make a man mean

and of a low mentality. The personality and character of any man is decided by the ratio of these three basic qualities.]

Just like an image forming in a mirror appears to be very true, life-like and almost identical to the object of which it is a reflection (if one is unaware that what one sees in this mirror is merely an image and not the real thing), the reflection of the consciousness in the mirror of Nature appears to be identical to the original cosmic Consciousness. [The nature of a man is already said to be tainted by the three Gunas as stated above. When the consciousness is seen through this veil, it is obvious that these three Gunas would cast their affect on the real form and nature of the consciousness and it would be tainted by them. So though the primary consciousness is pristine pure, incorrupt and immaculate, its version as seen in living creatures appears to be tainted due to presence of the various Gunas that are invariably present in all living creatures as their inherent character and nature. See verse no. 48 below.] (47).

48. Since the Prakriti (Nature) consists of three Gunas, when the pure consciousness is reflected in it, the result is that the Prakriti appears to depict three versions of the same consciousness, or Prakriti begins to glow or shine with three different hues that correspond to the three basic Gunas (called Sata, Raja and Tama) that this Prakriti has as its integral part. [The Prakriti has no shine of its own but it is the consciousness that is present in a creature that makes it alive and showcase its characters much like the case of a lantern's glass chimney of a particular colour which glows and shows its colour only when the wick of the lantern is lighted inside it. The light of the lantern here is the consciousness, the coloured chimney is the Prakriti of the creature, and the lantern is the creature himself.]

You, i.e. your pure quintessential 'self' as the pure consciousness, become a Jiva (a mortal living being having a gross body and depicting a set of characteristics or attributes) because of being separated or torn away from your quintessential true form known as the Consciousness (which is always immaculate, incorrupt and pure) due to this distorted view of your 'self' when the latter is seen through the prism of the tainted Prakriti. [The pure quintessential 'self' is consciousness personified. It is marked by being eternal, immaculate and taintless. On the other hand the Jiva is mortal, perishable and tainted with numerous shortcomings. This happens because the creature sees the consciousness through the looking glass of his inherent nature which is already tainted by the three Gunas of Sata, Raja and Tama. These three Gunas do not allow anyone to see the consciousness in its true form. To do so, one would have to rise above the mundane and develop proper insight just like a microscope is needed to see things that are too small to be seen by the naked eye.] (48).

[Note—Refer verse no. 55.]

49. Prakriti (Nature) in which the dominant Guna or quality is pure Sata¹ is called the 'Maya that is predominantly auspicious'².

The pure consciousness that is reflected in this Maya (Prakriti or Nature) which is dominated by the Sata Guna is known as 'Aja' or the creator Brahma³. [And this is why Brahma is regarded as being predominantly wise, learned and enlightened about spiritual and metaphysical matters inspite of the fact that he is neck deep in the process of creation, and is enchanted so much by his own creation and its astounding beauty that he remains perpetually enthralled and so completely enamoured by it that he appears, for all practical purposes, to be deeply engrossed in this perishable and

finite world inspite of being the creator of the Vedas and their Upanishads that are the epitome of knowledge and wisdom regarding spiritualism.] (49).

[Note--¹*Sata* is the first of the three quintessential natural qualities that determine the basis nature, temperament and personality of the creature as an individual as well as the entire creation as a resultant composite affect of the characteristics of all the individual units combined together to present a whole picture. *Sata Guna* is the quality which is regarded as the best quality present in a creature and it is marked by a predominance of auspiciousness, righteousness, virtuousness and noble qualities. It is marked by such high standards of ethical existence that have, as their characteristic features, such qualities as coolness of head, peace, contentedness, humility, devotion, wisdom, mercy, compassion, creativity, selflessness, service, righteousness, virtuousness, holiness and nobility of thought and action etc. As is evident, these qualities are the best qualities that one can have in him; they have a spiritual dimension to them; they are spiritually uplifting and give a divine halo to those who practice them. This quality creates an inherent affinity in a creature towards things in life which are of high moral value and uplifting for the soul rather than things which are demoting and denigrating for the spirit.

The *Sata Guna* or quality is the veil covering the soul like a smoke covering the fire. A slight breeze will remove this smoke. Similarly a little bit of prayer and meditation will remove the *Satwic* desires; its removal requires the least effort. It is the foremost and the best amongst the three characteristics of a creature such as good and positive virtuous such as righteousness, creativity, noble deeds and thoughts, the positive qualities of service, benevolence, mercy, devotion, wisdom, holiness, piety etc.

²*Maya* broadly means delusions creating powers of the Supreme Being. *Maya* is the indescribable and inconceivable cosmic dynamic power that the transcendental cosmic Consciousness known as *Brahm* employs to create delusions. The basic idea here is that *Maya* is like a transparent coloured sheet which covers the supreme 'truth' in the creation. Since it is transparent, it assumes the attributes of the 'truth' that it covers, because for all practical purposes an ordinary man is unable to see that veil because of its transparency. But at the same time, being tinged by different *Gunas*, the view of the 'truth' as seen through the veil of *Maya* gets tainted or distorted proportionately.

There is a simple way of understanding what is called 'illusion and *Maya vis-à-vis* the Truth and Reality'. Let us take the instance of the lantern with the coloured glass chimney to visualise how this happens. The colour of the flame as well as the light that the lantern gives would obviously be affected by the colour of the glass chimney. At the same time, the chimney has no light of its own but when the wick is lighted the chimney begins to glow. This coloured chimney is like the veil of *Maya* surrounding the inner light of consciousness; it is the veil that hides the true colour of the consciousness and gives the latter its own hue. *Maya* has no effect upon the person who wishes to see the consciousness sans its interference just like the case when one can see the actual colour of the flame when he views it after removing the coloured glass chimney. Not only this, the colour of everything upon which this tainted light of the lantern falls would also be affected. In other words, the creature under the overriding influence of *Maya* begins to see the world with a tainted vision which is far removed from the truth.

Maya hides the truthfulness of the Truth, and instead lends its own attributes and characteristics to that Truth known as the 'Nirgun *Brahm*' by the Upanishads when the latter is observed through this veil, while at the same time the *Maya* assumes the glorious attributes of *Brahm* itself just like the case of the lantern with the coloured glass chimney cited here. So, ignorant fools think that the *Maya* is the real thing, whereas they are actually seeing the 'veiled truth' as observed through this covering of *Maya*, because the actual 'truth' is hidden from view by this transparent sheet

which has lend it its own colour and hue. As a result, that Nirgun appears to have some attributes, and it thereby becomes 'Sagun', or the one with attributes and characteristics, by the interference of Maya.

As we have seen in verse no. 47-48 above, the three Gunas of Sata, Raja and Tama are the colours present in the Prakriti that forms a veil that covers the 'truth', and that is why Maya prevents one to see and understand the 'real' nature and form of this 'truth' because of the intervention of these three tainting affects.

Brahma the creator of the visible world is also known as Hiranyagarbha, the cosmic subtle body of the supreme transcendental Consciousness known as Brahm. This Hiranyagarbha was the first step in the process of evolution of creation because it represented Brahm's auspicious desire to create; it marked the dominance of Sata Guna because the very desire to create as opposed to destroy is a good quality. When the process moved ahead, elements of grossness silently and imperceptibly crept in gradually, and the Hiranyagarbha transformed into Brahma the creator of the visible world. So while Hiranyagarbha is the finer aspect of the subtle body of Brahm, Brahma is the grosser aspect of the same subtle body at the cosmic level of creation. According to another version, Hiranyagarbha metamorphosed into the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic gross body of Brahm, and it is from the latter that first Vishnu and then Brahma emerged. When Brahm woke up to the realities of life created by him, he was known as Vishnu, the sustainer and protector of creation. Since Brahma, the creator of the visible world, is the first auspicious step that the Supreme Being (Brahm) took in this process, he is marked by the predominance of Sata Guna. That is also why the Vedas were pronounced by Brahma himself.

Refer also to verse nos. 53-54 and their accompanying notes.]

50. The Ishwar (the Supreme Being who is the cause of the entire creation, including the Prakriti and Maya) is called 'supreme and almighty' as he possesses the authority and power to control this Maya (Prakriti or Nature) and keep it subservient to him.

The three unique characteristic qualities or virtues of this Ishwar are the following—(a) to keep Maya under control (Vashyamayattva), (b) to be non-dual and unparalleled (Eka), and (c) to be omniscient, all-knowing and all-wise (Sarvagya) (50).

51. This Ishwar (the Supreme Being) is predominantly auspicious, truthful and holy (Satwic), he is all-inclusive and all-encompassing (Samashti), and is a witness to everything in this creation (i.e. nothing is hidden from him—Sakshi). Being endowed with these unique eclectic auspicious qualities, supernatural powers and divine virtues, the Ishwar is able to create this world or decide not to do so, and even conclude what has already been created (51).

52. In this way, the pure cosmic Consciousness possessing all the eclectic and divine virtues and supernatural powers, such as being Sarvagya (omniscient, all-knowing and all-wise) etc. is called 'Ishwar¹'.

Maya has two Shaktis (dynamic powers or forces) that are employed by this Ishwar (pure consciousness) to implement its will. These are—(a) Vikshep Shakti meaning 'deflection, dissipation, confusion, perplexity, obstruction, disturbance, scattering or tossing about in uncertainty and disarray, agitation of mind and spirit, fickleness, fragmentation, fission and disharmony etc.', and (b) Aavaran Shakti meaning 'to cover in a veil, to sheath, to envelop, to wrap in a sheet, distortions, pretension, deception, deceit and something that does not allow the original thing to be seen by covering it with a thin veil that distorts its originality; a veil of ignorance

about one's true nature, identity and essential form that cloaks the Atma/soul which is pure consciousness and the true self" (52).

[Note--¹*Ishwar* is honoured by epithets which highlight some or the other of his majestic glories. Some of them, inter alia, are the following—Satya (truth), Shiva (auspicious), Sundar (beauty); Satt (eternal), Chitt (consciousness; knowledge), Anand (beatitude and felicity); Akchar (imperishable; the eternal ethereal word), Uttam (the best, the most exalted, the ultimate), Purush (the primary Male Spirit; the supreme Spirit), Parmatma (the supreme Soul of creation), Prakriti (primary Nature), Purshottam (the best Purush; the most exalted holy spirit), Pragya (knowledgeable, wise, skilled, enlightened and conscious) and Vibho (omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent).]

53. The first forceful power of Maya called Vikshep Shakti is responsible for creation of the entire world, right from the gross body of the individual creature at the micro level of creation to the vast universe at the macro level of creation.

The second forceful power of Maya called Aavaran Shakti is responsible creating a distinction between the 'seer' (i.e. the pure conscious 'self' or the Atma) and the 'things or objects that are seen' by this seer at the micro level of creation, and between 'Brahm' (the all-pervading seer or cosmic Consciousness) and 'Srishti' (the manifested creation springing forth from this Brahm and the latter's visible revelation) at the macro level of creation. This Aavaran Shakti covers the truthfulness of 'consciousness' and makes it tainted. [Refer verse nos. 47-49.] (53).

[Note—The delusions created by Maya casts a veil around the truth so much so that the Atma, the pure consciousness and the true identity of the creature, is unable to see the 'absolute truth and reality' behind what is seen externally in the physical world. It forgets in its ignorance created by this veil of Maya that actually the external world has derived the importance and worth because of the presence of conscious life in the form of Atma in it, and the exterior façade is merely a covering that sheaths this Atma. Shorn of the Atma, the world would be as good as a dead body—say, who would like to fall in love with a dead body? A living being is dear one moment till he is alive and useful, and as soon as he is dead, he becomes useless and is disposed of immediately at the other moment. The basic unit that lends life, substance and value to everything in existence is the quintessential factor of universal consciousness that is a non-dual entity. That is, the consciousness in the creature known as the 'seer' and the other creature who is 'seen' is the same. This is the climax of enlightenment, and the absence of it is due to the covering of Aavaran which eclipses or distorts this wisdom and enlightenment. The tainted Aavaran of Maya prevents one to come to know the truth and reality, and it is the cause of all delusions that create a sense of duality and separation between things that are inherently one, immutable and inseparable. This delusion creates an impression of one entity being the 'self' and the second entity being the 'other person'. It is the cause of all strife, all bad blood, disharmony, animosity, jealousy, malice and hatred in this world; it is the prime cause of all dichotomy, confusions, perplexities and doubts.]

54. This (Maya) is the root cause of all worldly fetters that shackle a creature to this artificial material world of delusions. Under the influence of Maya, the Sakshi—the true 'self' of the creature, the pure conscious Atma that is supposed to remain a neutral witness to the happenings in the gross physical external world without actually getting involved in it—begins to see and recognise the external world that exists in the front of its eyes with its gross physical properties and outer characteristic features by employing the gross eyes of the body.

That is, the gross features of the external world are seen and believed to be the true and real form of the world under the deluding influence of Maya. In other words,

the 'Ling Deha' (gross body) of the creation is perceived as the real world instead of the pure consciousness and the 'truth' that pervades through out in it in a most subtle and hidden form (54).

[Note—Since the world is beheld by the 'self' through the tainted veil of Maya which has already influenced the mind-intellect complex through which external inputs and information are received and interpreted, the creature (i.e. the Sakshi) sees only a distorted version of the world. That is, the creature is able to see only the external features of the gross world outside. This external façade is so life-like and magical that the creature believes it to be true and real. Maya prevents the 'self' from seeing the truth; Maya prevents the creature from realising the fact that this physical gross world is unreal and untruth and simply like a mirage of the desert—un-sustainable, transient, non-attainable, illusionary and deluding. The creature is not able to perceive the concealed 'truth' of life behind this façade, the 'truth' called the Atma or consciousness representing the cosmic Absolute without which this external gross body would be of no good. This is the magical theatrical performance of the maverick Maya that it produces a scenario that is so life-like and charming that a deluded creature who was supposed to remain a 'Sakshi' or a neutral witness to the external world is swept off his feet and gets neck-deeply involved in it.

Under the tainting influence of Maya, the creature is not able to see the hidden 'real and absolute Truth' and instead begins to believe in the 'apparent truth' which is more like the water of a mirage than the water of a river or lake. Refer also to note of verse no. 49.

In other words, the 'Sakshi', i.e. the true 'self' of the creature—who is supposed to be neutral and just mutely watch the magical creation of Maya unfold in the form of this physical world which is unreal, transient and perishable without actually getting involved in it (much like a spectator watching a magic show—forgets this basic principle and is so charmed by the scene watched that he gets swept off his feet and plunges head on into this world and its activities.

The net result of the influence of Maya is that the Sakshi gets neck-deep involved in something with which it should not have been involved at all—i.e. the 'self' of the creature should have remained neutral towards the material objects of the world and getting involved in them, should have seen the underlying 'truth' in the world and not be swept off by its external charms, but unfortunately this does not happen. Under the delusory effects of Maya, this Sakshi believes that what he sees in the outside world of sense objects is the truth and reality, and therefore it is worth pursuing and obtaining. The Sakshi allows himself to be voluntarily trapped like a bird willingly getting caught in a bird-catcher's net. These facts are affirmed in verse no. 55 below.

The fact is that the world is artificial and an imaginary creation of the mind and its sub-conscious (refer Yogshika Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 6, verse nos. 58-61, 70), and the Atma—which is eternally wised and enlightened—is supposed to be aware of this fact and treat the artificial world as such. But unfortunately it doesn't. This is because the Atma, which is supposed to be a mere 'Sakshi' (mute, dispassionate, neutral and non-involved witness) gets deluded or misled by the veil of ignorance cast around it by Maya. Treating itself as part of the world, the Sakshi gets involved in the activities of the world. Having exceeded its brief, the Sakshi is bound to suffer from its excesses and get tied in shackles represented by various misconceptions about the reality and truth. The Sakshi remains involved in doing deeds and hopes that he would get peace and comfort from this world. This world is like a whirlpool in an ocean, it sucks the Sakshi deeper in its vortex and it remains ever trapped in the cycle of birth and death, bobbing up and down in this vast endless ocean represented by this world. After a very long time and many births, the Sakshi realises its follies and decides that enough is enough; it now endeavours to find out a way that would finally ensure that liberation and deliverance is obtained by it at any cost, and that it would not do anything which would force it

into being subjugated by Maya and recycled into the bin of birth and death once again. It then researches on the method to achieve this end, and studies the scriptures and consults wise men. It discovers that the basic cause of the entire edifice getting erected is Maya and its delusory effects. It also realises that the 'self' does nothing, and that everything is done by the 'non-self', i.e. the gross body. So, it abhors Maya and delusions created by it, deciding not to get involved in the world. Consequently, when the past baggage of deeds and their consequences are exhausted and newer ones do not accumulate, the Sakshi finally gets its treasured liberation and deliverance.]

55. When the pure consciousness is reflected in the form of Nature, it becomes the causal body of creation. That is, the world is created by the consciousness when its immaculate nature gets tainted by the three Gunas (as explained in verse no. 47-49 and 51-54 above). When this happens, the pure consciousness (which is not supposed to get involved in the world) gets involved in the world and becomes a Jiva, or a living being with a body that interacts with the gross world.

This deceptive form of the consciousness as the Jiva living and interacting with the world is actually, upon analysis, found to be an accusation on the pure nature of the immaculate conscious 'self' (which is supposed to remain merely a mute and neutral witness or 'Sakshi' of what is happening around it, and which is, left to its own, is pristine pure 'consciousness') (55).

56-57. When the covering veil of Maya is removed, the creature is clearly able to see the error and the difference between what is the 'actual truth' and the 'apparent truth'. Then the consciousness stops to have any kind of attractions for the gross material world with which it was so enamoured till now. [In the instance of the lantern cited in note of verse no. 49 above, when the tinted glass of the chimney is removed and replaced with transparent colourless glass, one can see the real colour of the flame along with the true colour of the objects that are seen with its light.]

Hence, the notion of the existence of a 'Jiva' (living being) who is separate from the 'true self' or the 'conscious Atma' vanishes. In other words, he begins to see the same Brahm everywhere, both inside his own self as the conscious Atma at the micro level of creation as well as the cosmic Consciousness that pervades everywhere in the external world at the macro level of creation. [That is, the enlightened creature henceforth begins to identify his 'self' with the sublime and subtle consciousness that is invisible, instead of with the gross body that is physically seen in this world. Similarly, he sees no difference between any two living beings because the same conscious Atma lives in both of them.]

He also realises the truth of the fact that the primarily immaculate and untainted divine entity known as Brahm had appeared to be dual in the form of the Supreme Being and the Jiva or the Supreme Being and the manifested world. When the veil of delusions and ignorance is removed, the dichotomy between Brahm and this world is eliminated, and uniformity and non-duality between Brahm and the rest of the creation becomes evident. [That is, he realises that the visible world is nothing but the same immutable, indivisible and non-dual Brahm revealed in these myriad and multifarious forms in which this vast and endless creation exists so much so that no two units in it are identical.] (56-57).

58. The fault known as 'duality' which creates an impression of existence of two distinct entities separated from one another in something which is actually one and indivisible is applicable to this artificial world and not to Brahm. [That is, only in this physical gross world do we see two different types of creatures, such as for example a

horse and a cow. In essence, what is known as the horse and a cow is the physical gross body, but the basic factor that infuses life in both of them is the ‘Pran’ and the ‘Atma’ which are the life-giving vital winds and consciousness respectively that are the same in both. The horse and the cow would both feel the same degree of pain when hurt. For that matter, a wise man realises that the pain felt by these animals would be the same which he would feel himself when similarly hurt. The gross body is perishable and changeable, but the Pran and the Atma are immutable and the same in all creatures. It is the conscious Atma that makes one feel any sort of pain instead of the body because the latter has no life of its own but depends upon the Atma to be alive; a dead body has no feeling of pain or happiness. Similarly, Brahm is only one and a non-dual, immutable and indivisible divine entity, whereas the physical forms that this Brahm takes when it revealed itself in the form of the vast creation has countless and varied forms. But a wise man sees this non-duality everywhere inspite of the visible illusion of duality.]

This creation has five quintessential components—viz. Asti (that which ‘is’), Bhaati (that which ‘appears to be’), Priya (that which is ‘dear’ and ‘gives pleasure’), Roop (that which has a physical ‘form’), and Naam (that which ‘has a name’) (58).

59. Out of these five quintessential parts of creation, the subtle components such as Asti, Bhaati and Priya are applicable to Brahm, while Roop and Naam are the two components of the visible world.

When the essentially sublime, transcendental and supreme divinity known as Brahm who is characterized by the glorious virtues of truthfulness, consciousness, beatitude and felicity assumes some kind of gross Roop (gross form having a physical dimension) and Naam (a name that is applied to the physical form), then the same Brahm becomes metamorphosed into and known as the ‘world’ (59).

60. The spiritual aspirant should remain in a state of perpetual Samadhi, both internally as well as externally. [That is, he should remain in a virtual state of meditation and be focused on the Truth and Reality at all times. The state of Samadhi is the state when the man is totally oblivious of the body and the surrounding world, and instead remains submerged in the bliss obtained by self-realisation and being in constant communion with the consciousness. Such a man would lead an ordinary life but remain completely detached at the mental and intellectual level from all things and deeds done by the body.]

The heart (representing the true ‘self’ or the consciousness known as the Atma because the latter is said to reside in the cave-like subtle sky of the heart) is involved in two types of Samadhi—(a) Savikalpa (one having more than one alternatives or versions) and (b) Nirvakalpa (that which is one of its kind and has no alternatives or versions) (60).

61-65. The Savikalpa Samadhi is of two types—(a) one Samadhi that is literally pierced or disturbed or deflected or impinged upon by the numerous attractive sights of the world that one sees due to one’s natural instincts and desires to see pleasant and endearing objects of the world that seem attractive and enticing for the senses, and (b) one Samadhi that is disturbed by various sounds and words that one hears in this world.

The disturbance, hindrance and deflections caused to Samadhi by the sights of the physical world can be overcome by meditating and contemplating thus—‘These sights of the visible and gross world that disturb Samadhi are created by the inborn

Kaam (worldly desires, passions and yearnings for the visible and gross sense objects of the world) that a creature has, whereas the Atma is pure consciousness and expected to be only a mere neutral witness to their existence, without having any desire to obtain them or getting involved with them or attracted towards them.' [When this erudition develops, the man would neglect the visible attractions of the world and remain focused on his Samadhi.]

Similarly, the disturbance caused to Samadhi by various sounds is taken care of by meditating and contemplating thus—'I do not have any company with whom to talk (i.e. I live alone in a secluded place, in absolute serenity and calmness). I am a personification of the virtues of truth, consciousness and bliss. I am self-illuminated. I am non-dual, one, unparalleled, unique, immutable and indivisible.' [That is, I am an ethereal divine entity that neither hears anything nor speaks anything.]

A spiritual aspirant who neglects the visible world and its noises, and instead remains submerged in the thoughts of the Atma, the consciousness and the truth, he is said to be in a state of 'Nirvakalpa Samadhi'. His condition is stable, steady and unwavering like the steadily burning, un-flickering and erect flame of a lighted oil lamp placed at a place where there is no movement in air whatsoever.

These are the two types Samadhis called Savikalpa and Nirvakalpa that have their seat in the heart, i.e. they are internal Samadhis and are done with the help of the inner thoughts of the ascetic.

In the same way, when a man focuses his attention on some object in the external world, his mind becomes fixed on it and he thinks of nothing else except it. This is the external state of Samadhi.

This external Samadhi again can be classified as follows—

(a) The one that depends upon the awareness of the 'seer' and the 'seen'. [For example, 'I' am or 'he' is seeing that 'animal' or 'tree'].

(b) The separation of the external gross physical form and name of each thing that is seen from its essential form or fundamental principle that is present in it, i.e. to see the same consciousness prevailing uniformly and universally in each unit of the living world. [For example, to see the same consciousness as being present in a horse and an elephant, or in a boy and a girl, is to see the fundamental principle operating in anything that has a name and form instead of seeing only its externally visible form which do not tell the real, truthful and complete story. If this is extended further to the physical world, a truly wise man would see the element 'water' in everything liquid or fluid, such as milk and fruit juice which have different names and external forms but are nevertheless 'liquid or fluid', and liquidity and fluidity cannot come without water being present in them].

(c) The uniformity and universality of vision when one sees the same cosmic consciousness in everything in the external world. In this higher state of awareness, the ascetic does not even see any external forms and knows no names except the fact that the same cosmic Consciousness or the supreme transcendental Brahm is present everywhere. In other words, in the higher stages of Samadhi the spiritual aspirant is firmly rooted in the eclectic concept of 'non-duality' which becomes a universal phenomenon for him. There is no such thing as 'that' and 'this' anymore.

(d) The last stage creates a state of existence when there are no perplexities and confusions, when there are no distractions, deflections and disturbances. It is like the state of complete shock when one becomes dumbfounded, dumbstruck, non-responsive and stunned into non-activity. [Since at a higher level of awareness and enlightenment the spiritual aspirant is able to see the universality of Brahm everywhere; since this world appears uniform to him there would be nothing that

would stand out to either attract his attention or repel it; since the same consciousness prevails in each unit of the living world there is no question of any dichotomy arising, and hence no cause of any confusion and perplexity regarding what is true and what is false. Therefore, for such a realised and enlightened aspirant, the entire creation becomes Brahm personified (61-65).

66. A wise spiritual aspirant should spend his time in practicing these six forms of Samadhis (as described in verse nos. 61-65).

When one has become wisened, enlightened and aware of the universal presence of the Truth known as Brahm everywhere, both in the external world as well as inside his own self as the Atma, an awareness which makes him freed from the fetter of ignorance that makes him proud of his body and become self-centered instead of having a universal and broad outlook and vision of this creation that is non-dual, all-inclusive and absolute—it is only then that he experiences the nectar of supreme bliss dripping from the presence of the Absolute and Truth everywhere. [That is, when the spiritual aspirant no longer thinks that he is a separate entity with a distinct body that has its independent existence in this world and the rest of the material objects of the world are meant for his consumption and use, when he stops viewing the rest of the world with self-centric eyes of selfishness, when he stops judging the usefulness or uselessness of anything in this world with selfish criterion of whether or not that thing can gratify the sense organs of the body and their natural instincts, when he does not treat anything or anybody as more or less important than his own self, when he has developed an eclectic view of the universality and uniformity of the ‘self’ and the Atma—it is only then that he is entitled to be called ‘Brahm-realised’. It is obvious that such a man would become calm, placid and tranquil like a mountain lake; he would become steady and unwavering like the flame of a lighted lamp inside a glass enclosure where there is no movement in air.] (66).

67. When a spiritual aspirant attains this high level of enlightenment of self-realisation and Brahm-realisation, when he sees the absolute, pure and flawless Brahm as being all-permeating, all-inclusive and all-encompassing, it is then that all the knots of his heart are untied, all the confusions and perplexities that keep churning his mind-intellect and heart endlessly, thereby robbing them of their inherent peace and happiness, are dispelled. [That is, all the bonds that bind a man to the artificial world and its destructive as well as ruinous charms, all the fetters that shackle him to the deluding world and compel him to remain chained to it in the hope of possessing it and enjoying it which in turn lead him to get sucked in the vortex of birth and death—all such negative and self-destructive factors are dispensed with. The spiritual aspirant feels like a bird de-caged and is able to see the broad and vast sky not from behind the bars of the cage but from the outside. This view of the sky from outside the cage is unhindered and un-tampered by the bars of the cage. The bird watches for sometime and then takes to its wings. Similarly, the spiritual aspirant frees himself from the fetters that had been shackling him till now, sees what it means to be enlightened and have a broad vision of creation, and then finds his ‘self’ spiritually liberated. He develops a spiritual perspective with a sight and vision that is as vast and holistic as the surrounding space around him].

In this eclectic and exalted state of existence, all his deeds are automatically destroyed. [This is because he would realise that the deeds are done by the body and not the ‘self’ or the Atma, thereby absolving the latter from the consequences of the former. An ordinary man does various deeds to gain something from his efforts; he

has some desires and aspirations, and makes efforts to fulfill his wishes. But an enlightened and spiritually attained man has nothing to desire; he is completely fulfilled. In other words, the need to do anything does not arise, the need to make efforts to achieve some object is not necessitated, and therefore the 'deeds' are not done. This statement that 'deeds are not done' must be understood in the correct perspective. It does not mean that the wise, self-realised and enlightened man would lie idle and waste his time sleeping—nothing is farther from the truth. What is meant here is that inspite of doing everything that comes his way with his gross physical body, an enlightened man would not get mentally and emotionally involved or attached with any of the deeds or things. His 'self', his 'spirit', would remain aloof, disinterested and detached like a neutral observer who does not participate in anything, or like a bystander lost in his thoughts watching the traffic whiz past him on a busy road without even being aware of which car or bike has gone by or even bothering to know about it.] (67).

68. A man who is firmly convinced of the eclectic truth that there is no such thing as the existence of two distinct entities called a Jiva (living being or creature) and an Ishwar (the supreme Lord; the Supreme Being)—verily, such a man is indeed spiritually liberated and delivered; he has indeed attained spiritual emancipation and salvation. There is no iota of doubt in it. This is the Upanishad; this is what it says. Amen! (68).

-----Shanti Paath-----

THE END

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Appendix 1

Shanti Paath

(Krishna Yajur Veda Upanishads)

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ॐ सह नाववतु । सह नौ भुनक्तु । सह वीर्यं करवावहै । तेजस्वि नावधीतमस्तु ।
मा विद्विषावहै ।
—

_____ॐ शान्तिः । शान्तिः । शान्तिः । !!!

om saha nāvavatu / saha nau bhunaktu / saha vīryaṃ karvāvahai / tējasvi
nāvadhītamastu / mā vidviṣāvahai //

om śāntiḥ! śāntiḥ!! śāntiḥ!!!

The Shanti Paath has the following meaning—‘OM salutations! Oh the supreme, absolute and transcendental Brahm! Protect both of us—the Guru (teacher) as well as the disciple—simultaneously. Give us both your patronage; protect and sustain us together; take care of our welfare and well-being. Let us gain in strength and spiritual energy together. Let the eclectic knowledge that we both acquire become glittering and splendid as well as permanent, sound and unchallengeable so that no one can supersede us in our wisdom, erudition and knowledge; let this holistic knowledge reach its natural climax without any obstacles. Let us be at peace with each other; let us not have any kind of jealousy, malice, envy, hatred etc. against each other. Oh the most majestic and almighty Lord! Let all our three so-called ‘Traitaps’ be calmed down. Let us have peace; let us have peace; let us have peace. [The so-called three ‘Traitaps’ are the torments that the creature is subjected to due to his body such as illness, old age etc.; due to other worldly creatures such as the fear from the king, thieves etc.; and due to the malignant stars and opposed Gods etc.] Let us have peace. Let us have peace. Let us have peace.’

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Appendix 2

Rudra Upanishad/Rudro-panishad

This is a very small Upanishad having only three verses in the form of paragraphs. It is dedicated to Lord Shiva and is closely related to Dakshin Mukhi Upanishad which is also dedicated to this deity. It says that those who remain sincerely involved in following the essential tenets of the divine Principal of creation known as Shiva, i.e. the eclectic principles of the Shiva Tattva, are truly exalted and wise ones; they are worthy to be called Brahmins. All the elements of creation, e.g. earth, water, fire, air and sky are regarded as symbols of Shiva and represent the sacred ash smeared by him on his body. In other words, since this world is formulated out of these five primary elements of creation, it follows that the whole world is a revelation of Shiva.

Shiva is synonymous with Pran; he is revealed in the form of the vital spark of life called 'Pran' that transforms a lifeless creature into a lively living being.

He is the wisest and most enlightened teacher and preacher for the entire world and had even taught Brahma, the creator of this visible world, about the basic truth of creation and its hidden realities. In fact, it was Brahma who had first worshipped Shiva in this capacity of a wise teacher and a personification of knowledge and truth as clearly mentioned in Dakshin Mukhi Upanishad which is Chapter 18 of this volume.

Shiva is revealed Brahm inasmuch as he has five forms called Panch Brahm representing the five primal manifestations of Brahm. Basically this entire creation is an expansion of this Panch Brahm, and therefore of Shiva. This is elaborately explained in Panch Brahm Upanishad which is Chapter 28 of this volume.

By adoring the grand eclectic virtues that Shiva stands for and represents, the follower too becomes one like him; he too attains the highest level of wisdom and enlightenment which paves the path for his liberation and deliverance.

1. The Brahmin who is known as 'Vishwa Maye' (i.e. an exalted and wise person of high birth who has a broad view of the world and sees the entire world as a manifestation of the Supreme Being) approaches Lord Shiva (for worship, knowledge, patronage and blessing).

That Brahmin experiences (in his own inner self, his Atma) the presence of the Lord, and honours him by the five-letter Mantra (which is 'Namo Shivaye'—meaning 'I bow before Lord Shiva').

That Brahmin is regarded as the best and most exalted who spends his time in worshipping and contemplating upon Lord Shiva. [That is, he remains submerged in meditation on the pure conscious Truth where Shiva is said to reside.]

If any Brahmin is devoid of devotion for and faith in Shiva, he would be regarded as a Chandal or Up-chandal, the lowest category of human beings.

In spite of knowing all the four Vedas, a Brahmin is called true and worthy only if he has turned inwards to worship Shiva in his own Atma; or who has turned away from all external forms of worship of Shiva, and worships the ultimate Truth in his own bosom, i.e. in his pure conscious self known as the Atma.

Even a lowly Chandal (an outcaste) who is soaked in devotion for Shiva is better than a Brahmin who is devoid of it.

A Brahmin who wears the mark of the Tripund (the horizontal lines on the forehead of all Shiva worshippers) is regarded as the best category of Brahmin.

This (i.e. the virtues enumerated in this Upanishad) is the hallmark of his being a Brahmin; this is deemed absolutely essential and necessary for him to indicate that he adores and follows the best principles.

Only those who have sincere devotion for and faith in Shiva are eligible to be called a Brahmin.

Even a Chandal who worships the Shiva Lingam (the idol representing Shiva; Shiva's symbol) is deemed to be better than a Brahmin (who has no devotion for and who does not worship the Shiva principle).

The ash received from the hands of a Chandal who has worshipped Shiva is more holy and respected than the ash of a sacrificial fire pit.

The holy ash used by devotees of Shiva is of three colours—copper (dark) coloured, white coloured and grey coloured like the colour of smoke.

For renunciate hermits and ascetics, the ash should be sanctified or pure. [That is, it ought to come directly from the sacrificial fire pit.]

For householders, the ash should be clean. [That is, it should be fine powdery in texture and should not contain coarse particles of burnt wood or charcoal etc. that would make it appear unclean.]

The renunciates and ascetics who do Tapa (severe penances and austerities) should accept any form of ash (i.e. even the coarser forms unlike the fine powdery forms acceptable by householders) as long as that sample of ash has been blessed with Shiva's divine powers and his essential principle has been established in it. They should readily wear (smear) this ash with due respect as a symbol of Shiva's presence.

This ash which is acceptable by ascetics is also acceptable to the Gods (1).

2. OM salutations! The five elements such as the fire, the wind or air, the earth, the water and the sky—all of them are personified in this ash worn by Shiva. One should wear it (i.e. smear it on his body) with this belief and faith.

Elsewhere in the scriptures it has been said that the Ishwar, the supreme Lord of creation, has his eyes in all the directions, his mouth in all directions, his hands and legs in all the directions. [In other words, all forms of individual creatures are manifestations of Ishwar; he lives in every corner of creation, and all the eyes, mouths, hands and legs that are seen all around us every moment are actually the organs of that Ishwar.]

He is the only Lord or creator who creates the earth and sky by his own hands (like the potter moulding various pots and pans of clay by his own hands).

He is worthy of being adored, revered and honoured by all.

All living beings bow before him. That is why he is recognised by the element known as Pran or life. In other words, since only living beings can recognise him, since living beings would pay their obeisance to only that entity which has 'life' in it and which is of any value for them, for they obviously wouldn't worship a dead and useless entity, it follows that Shiva principle and Pran principle are synonymous with each other.

Therefore, Shiva principle is 'Pran Linga'—Shiva has manifested himself in this world in the form of 'Pran' which is the vital spark of life present in a living being; he is Pran personified and vice versa. Shiva is recognised as the 'living' aspect of creation, the fundamental but most secret and esoteric power that keeps the world

‘alive’ in the form of the Pran—the vital winds which provide the most essential factors of life to the otherwise lifeless body of the creature in this living world. So, the latter is the ‘Pran Linga’ of Shiva—i.e. it is the gross visible manifestation of the life infusing capabilities of Shiva in the form of the vital winds called Pran.

The iconographic form of Pran Linga Shiva has a lock of matted hairs on his head and ash smeared on his body.

Shiva and Pran are synonymous with each other. The world of mobile living creatures is a manifestation of Shiva, and vice versa.

The entire living creation is a manifestation of Shiva, and Shiva embodies in his cosmic self this entire creation. They are synonymous with each other.

It is not possible for the entire living creation, which is called the Pran Linga world (so-called because it is sustained by the vital winds called Pran), to obtain mystical divine powers and purest forms of wisdom and spiritual attainment. Amongst the entire living creation, only those who are spiritually upwardly mobile are regarded as better and more competent for acquiring such exalted position. [The entire living world includes plants and lower level of animal kingdom such as insects, worms, birds, reptiles wild animals etc. It is obvious that they cannot read scriptures and do auspicious deeds to improve themselves spiritually. Plants and animals cannot worship Shiva and understand even the basics of metaphysics and spiritualism. Low rung creatures of this world are contented in feeding themselves and deriving sense gratifications. They do not think of their future. This is the exclusive privilege of the human race. So humans are deemed to be competent to obtain the Shiva Tattva. But even amongst them, all do not get this privilege because the majority of them are no less than animals in their instincts, temperaments and behaviour. It is only a few who really qualify for the exalted stature of being called wise and enlightened.]

Even amongst the humans, those who do Tapa (observe severe forms of self restraint, do penances and austerities, and generally suffer hardships as a means to cleanse themselves) are regarded as exalted. But the privileged, exalted and holy stature occupied by such people is no match when compared with those Chandals who are great devotees of Shiva. Such Chandals are deemed to be more highly placed in the spiritual hierarchy than even ascetics who spend their time in doing rigorous Tapa but do not know the real intent and purpose nor the proper path to be followed in the observance of this religious exercise because they do it just for the sake of doing it and are more often than not misguided. Therefore, they cannot access the nectar called the Shiva Tattva, the ‘Shiva principle’.

All living beings with a gross body are visible proofs of the astounding and magnificent powers of life revealed in the form of their ‘Pran’, i.e. each living creature with a gross body is Pran personified. They are ‘Pran Linga’, or Pran with a gross body. But amongst them those Chandals who devotedly worship Shiva are considered as the best form of Pran Lingas. That is, such Chandals are regarded as the most exalted humans, even surpassing the Brahmins and ascetics.

Anyone who understands this basic principle is indeed Shiva personified.

Rudra (a form of Shiva) is the only Pran Linga in this world, and there is no one else except him who has manifested himself as the living world consisting of living creatures. [This is the holistic non-dual Advaitya philosophy espoused and expounded by all the Upanishads in one voice, and in a universal and uniform manner.] (2).

3. OM salutations! The Atma (pure consciousness) is an embodiment of the (supreme transcendental) Brahm as well as of (the auspicious and truthful, the holy and divine) Shiva.

The Atma is a personification of the moral preceptor who is wise and enlightened, i.e. the Guru, as well as Shiva (the enlightened, wise, most erudite and all-knowing Lord who is the teacher and preacher for the whole world in his form as Dakshin Mukhi Shiva).

It is the moral duty of a true Guru to lend moral and advisory support to the entire world with his high level of wisdom, knowledge and erudition. He should prevent the world from sinking under the weight of sins and perversions by providing it with correct and practical guidance; it is tantamount to his bearing the world and preventing it from breaking apart or sinking into chaos. This is achieved by them by harnessing the stupendous dynamic powers that are encapsulated in the various divine Mantras by chanting them or repeating them systematically so that the powerful energy of the Mantra can actually be utilized constructively for the welfare of the entire world. This world is dependent upon such Mantras. [That is, the world needs knowledge and wise council to survive. Without knowledge and information, life on earth would be very difficult and hostile. It is the duty of Brahmins to act as wise, selfless, neutral and sincere teachers and advisors—or Gurus—to guide the people and help them fulfill their desires in a righteous manner.]

The supreme Lord's glories and magnificence, his majestic powers and authority, his astounding abilities and prowess are being expressed through these Mantras. [This is because the whole world is a manifestation of Brahm, the supreme Lord, and since the Mantras are nothing but formulas to solve various problems that occur in a person's life, they are an expression of the Lord's multidimensional ability to sustain and protect this creation.]

That Lord is the universal Guru of all of us. [Here, the 'Lord' being referred to is Shiva in his form as the moral preceptor and teacher of the entire world in his form as Dakshin Mukhi Shiva described in the Upanishad named after him.]

The truthful spiritual knowledge and divine wisdom which is imparted by Shiva in his capacity as the creation's Guru is like the food for the creature that sustains his life in this creation. This knowledge is as sublime and supreme as the supreme Brahm. [This is because without Brahm the world would not have come into being in the beginning. This has a parallel in food without which no life can be ever sustained. Food is needed to sustain physical life in creation while spiritual knowledge is needed to sustain one's spiritual life and help him in his progress to obtain his true goal in life. Therefore, food and knowledge bear close resemblance and kinship with the creature just like the supreme Brahm whose physical features are represented by this gross visible world and whose subtle features are represented by such glorious virtues as knowledge, wisdom, erudition, sagacity, enlightenment etc. While the physical features form the gross body of the creation, the subtle features are represented by the faculty of mind and intellect. The Brahm himself is represented by the Atma residing inside the body consisting of both the gross form as well as the subtle form.]

Brahm is so esoteric, mysterious and enigmatic that he can be known only by a person's own experience and not by being told or taught by others.

Lord Shiva is the universal Guru, and this form of Shiva is a subtle and sublime form. [That is, the Shiva principle is present in all wise teachers and preachers. Extended further, it implies that self-realisation or self teaching or self

awareness is also a form of Shiva because no knowledge is ever possible without Shiva being an integral part of the process.]

Shiva is an image or personification of both the aspects of the supreme transcendental Brahm—i.e. as a manifested God he has a well defined body with known attributes and character traits, and as the un-manifested sublime principle he reveals himself as the pure consciousness or the self-illuminate Atma of all living beings. He is therefore the ‘life’ of all; he is the ‘Pran’ of all.

Being an authority of such glorious magnificence and divine virtues, he is called ‘Maheshwar’, the great God. [This ‘great god’ is none other but Brahm himself. In other words, Shiva and Brahm are one and the same.]

Therefore, Shiva is the great Guru as well. [This is because the word Guru means one who removes darkness, and the Atma, being self-illuminated and a treasury of wisdom and enlightenment, would naturally remove the darkness of ignorance that had been engulfing the creature once he comes to realise the presence of the Shiva principle in his own Atma present inside his own bosom by meditating upon the Shiva Tattva, or the principle tenets of metaphysics and spiritualism that talk about the ultimate and non-dual Truth about the pure divinity known as the ‘self’ in this creation.]

Where there is a Guru there is Shiva present. [That is, a teacher is a personification of Shiva because he gives knowledge and wisdom that removes the darkness of ignorance for his disciple. Hence, a sincere and worthy Guru should be given the same degree of respect and honour that one would give Shiva.]

The great God called Maheshwar is indeed a personified form of a Guru and Shiva. [The form that combines the excellent virtues of a wise, learned and knowledgeable teacher or Guru, and the one who is truthful, auspicious, divine, holy, enlightened and dispassionate or Shiva is indeed rare to find even amongst the Gods. That is why one personifies the eclectic and glorious virtues of a Guru and Shiva is indeed eligible to be called a great God or Maheshwar.]

Applying the principle of ‘Bhramar-Keet’¹, a devotee who remains perpetually engrossed in the deep thoughts and devoted worship of Shiva not only as his chosen deity but also as his Guru, i.e. one who worships Lord Shiva as his Guru besides worshipping him as the personification of the Supreme Being, becomes, in due course of time, indistinguishable from Shiva so much so that he need not then offer separate worship to the Lord anymore. In other words, he keeps on worshipping Shiva involuntarily each moment of his conscious life so that he need not do so consciously and separately.

[¹The *Bhramar* is the wasp who catches hold of smaller insects, the *Keet*, and keeps them trapped in its comb. The incarcerated insect is subjected to constant close humming sound made by the wasp that hovers constantly around it at very close quarters. The resultant psychological effect is so profound that by and by the insect also assumes the nature of the wasp and transforms into one; the insect is brain-washed to such an extent that it thinks and imagines of nothing else but the wasp and begins to imagine itself also as a wasp. This example is cited here to explain the phenomenon how the devotees who constantly think of Shiva and keeps on repeating his Mantras becomes one like Shiva. This is because constant practice and thoughts of Shiva would have had a profound effect on his psyche, and his sub-conscious mind would think of nothing else but Shiva not only as some revered God but also as the one who imparts divine wisdom and eclectic knowledge of the fundamental Truth of creation.]

By doing 'Abhishek' of Shiva Lingam (i.e. by anointing the Shiva Lingam with milk or water as a token of honouring and paying obeisance to Lord Shiva through his symbol), all the sins and other forms of evil deeds done by the devotee are made null and void. That is, he does not have to suffer from their horrendous consequences.

By doing 'Abhishek' of the Guru (i.e. by anointing the teacher with milk or water as a token of honouring him and paying one's obeisance to him) and by sipping the water used to wash the feet of Maheshwar (Lord Shiva), one can wash off the sins of many generations.

To have love and devotion for them (i.e. by doing Abhishek of the Lord and washing his feet, by doing Abhishek of the Guru, and by worshipping them both) is tantamount to having love and devotion for Shiva. [In other words, the Guru here may be Lord Shiva himself or some other person or God, but the worshipper should think, while offering his obeisance to the Guru, that he is worshipping Shiva in the form of the Guru.]

The great satisfaction and contentedness derived by the worshipper from this form of worship is tantamount to Shiva himself deriving this satisfaction and contentedness. [This is an obvious inference from the fact that the Atma or soul or pure self of the worshipper is the actual entity which enjoys the mental satisfaction and derives pleasures from doing something noble, holy and auspicious, and this Atma is a personification of Brahm who is none other but Shiva himself. Therefore, the one who is actually enjoying the rewards of good deeds is Shiva himself.]

To live in its proximity is the most auspicious and holy deed. [When one lives close by something noble, holy and auspicious, his whole being undergoes a radical transformation, because one becomes like the company one keeps. In other words, the worshipper becomes a changed man in due course of time. He becomes as holy, noble and auspicious as Shiva.]

Elimination or destruction of all delusions and ignorance is like Shiva annihilating or concluding this material, deluding and falsehood-ridden world. [The symbolism of Shiva as the concluder of the world is very cleverly brought out here.]

A person who has inculcated this divine and eclectic knowledge is always submerged in a perpetual state of bliss and ecstasy. [This is why Lord Shiva has been depicted as always being in a state of utmost bliss and ecstasy. Once all delusions and ignorance are removed, there will be no cause for any confusions and consternations to create any kind restlessness and unhappiness. Once the light of enlightenment shines through, the darkness of ignorance and delusions will automatically vanish.]

That is why one should take the refuge and shelter of Lord Shiva. That is also why one should take the refuge and shelter of a Guru (because it is the latter who would direct the seeker towards the Truth in the form of Shiva).

This is the best and the most holy thing, or the most auspicious and righteous path to be followed (3).

Appendix 3

Vishnu Sukta

This devotional hymn is dedicated to Lord Vishnu who is the most gracious, compassionate, merciful, benevolent, magnanimous and affable sustainer, nourisher and protector of the whole creation. He is the Viraat Purush and the supreme transcendental Brahm personified. The Skanda Upanishad to which this Sukta relates is Chapter 19 of this volume, and it describes him as being synonymous with Shiva the auspicious and truthful Lord of creation, and with Brahm who is the supreme transcendental Supreme Being on the one hand, and with the Jiva, the creature in the form of his pure conscious self, on the other. This Sukta has seven verses that appear in Shukla Yajur Veda 5/15-21.

The Rishi of this Sukta (i.e. the sage who had first conceptualised it and tested its spiritual powers) was Dirghatama (literally meaning the sage who had an extremely long life). Vishnu is also known as Maha-Vishnu, the great Vishnu in line with Maha-Dev, an epithet used to describe the divinity, the majesty and greatness of Shiva. The sun in the heaven or sky, and the fire originating from the fire sacrifice done on earth are also other forms of Vishnu because they both sustain life. He is most ancient amongst Gods, and is omniscient and all-knowing. Even the creator of the visible creation, Lord Brahma, is said to have emerged from a divine lotus coming out from Vishnu's navel. Goddess Laxmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity, is his divine consort. This is a symbolic way of saying that Vishnu is the Lord of all material wealth in this world. Wealth and material prosperity was necessary for him to sustain the creation and take care of its worldly needs. He has revealed himself in various incarnations to protect the world from the tyranny of demonic forces when their torments and the horrors that they perpetrate became intolerable.

1. The all-pervading and omnipresent Lord Vishnu bears this world. He has established the three worlds as a tripod on which the entire edifice of creation rests, and these three represents his legs. The earth is his first step, the sky is the second step, and the heaven is the third step. [That is, the mortal beings live on the earth, the mid-level spirits live in the sky, and the exalted Gods live in the heaven.]

The entire creation is embodied in the person of Vishnu. We offer our oblations to you and show our great gratitude and deepest respect for you by making this offering into the sacred fire meant for worshipping you by saying Swaha (1).

2. This earth provides staple food and all other forms of edible things besides sustaining the cow which gives wholesome nourishment in the form of milk produced by her for the all round well being of all the living creatures that inhabit the earth. [In other words, the earth ensures that all the living beings who live on it are well looked after by directly producing food to nourish them, and at the same time it has manifested itself in the body of the cow who produces milk that is a complete food for all the living beings.]

Oh Lord Vishnu! You have graciously borne and supported this fertile earth from all the sides by the virtue of your glorious rays. [Here, the reference is to the sun

in the sky whose light, heat and energy supports life on earth, as well as to the fire that is present in the earth itself and serves the same purpose.]

We offer our oblations to you and show our great gratitude and deepest respect for you by making this offering into the sacred fire meant for worshipping you by saying Swaha (2).

3. Let this auspicious deed of mine be known to the great souls who have assembled in the court of Gods. [Let them know that I too am eligible to obtain the same exalted stature as they have and am equally eligible as they to have access to heaven.]

To show support to my efforts of doing this fire sacrifice, you (Vishnu) are requested to go to the east direction and enhance its glory and magnificence. Do not defile my sacrifice or do anything to reduce or nullify its auspicious good effects. [In other words, give protection to me and my auspicious efforts. The Sun God is said to be the patron God of the east according to Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, 3/9/20-24. The sun rises in the east, so this verse implies that when one worships the rising sun, one is actually worshipping Lord Vishnu, welcoming the Lord as a herald of new life and honouring him as a harbinger of growth and development. So Lord Vishnu is requested to light up the world till the time the fire sacrifice is not completed. It also means that let the sun shine brightly over the land and reward the efforts of doing the fire sacrifice by giving sufficient light energy and heat to this earth so that it can sustain a healthy and vibrant life, a life that is always fresh as the morning sun and which continues to grow and develop in majesty and magnificence as time passes much like the progress of the sun in the sky.]

Let the Goddesses manifested as cows live in their cow-sheds. [The cows are regarded as personifications of divine Goddesses who live in the heaven. So, one prays to Lord Vishnu to ensure that these divine forces of creation live in his own cow-shed in the form of cows. The cows are expected to be healthy so that they can give abundant milk to sustain healthy creatures on this earth.]

Let us and all our dependants have prosperity and material well being till we live on the earth. [Let us not suffer from poverty and wants.]

Be benevolent and merciful on your subjects and off springs (i.e. on the creatures of this creation).

Always remain present in this comfortable and pleasant place (earth). [That is, do not abandon us and remain with us as our care taker and protector.] (3).

4. That supreme all-pervading Lord Vishnu who has created this earth along with the other units of creation such as the sky and the heavens, who is revered and adored in the entire world and occupies the highest glorious position in it—say, which of his magnificent glories can be narrated. [That is, it is practically impossible to describe the glories of the almighty and supreme Lord of creation.] (4).

5. Oh Vishnu! Let this world enjoy the fruit of your magnanimous grace; let this world be filled with all joys and happiness that come with your divine grace. Be certain to provide this world (i.e. its inhabitant creatures) with all essential things and materials produced by earth, and all the divine things produced by the sky. [The material things produced by the earth are food, minerals, metals, gems and other forms of wealth etc, while the divine things produced by the sky refer to rains and sunlight.]

Oh the Lord who resides in the inner self of living beings as their Atma, the pure conscious soul, is omniscient and all-knowing! Oh Vishnu who liberally gives

away all sorts of comforts and happiness by both his hands! We worship you and express our greatest of reverence for you (5).

6. Oh Lord Vishnu! You are all-pervading and omnipresent. You roam freely and fearlessly like a ferocious lion does in the high mountains. Your matchless valour and bravery makes you worthy of praise. All the creatures that exist in this creation do so in the three places where the all-pervading and omnipresent Lord Vishnu lives (i.e. Lord Vishnu is present in all the three worlds that have come into existence, and these worlds are the mortal world called the earth, the nether worlds where fallen creatures live, and the heavens where the Gods and high spirits live) (6).

7. The divine light (representing the brilliant glory, the stupendous majesty, the astounding mystical powers, the divine authority, the unmatched fame and glorious magnificence) of the all-pervading and omnipresent Lord Vishnu is continuously spreading uniformly throughout this world. It is due to Lord Vishnu that this world is established (i.e. it is due to him that this world has come into being in the first place), it is due to him that it has spread (i.e. it is due to him that it has found sustenance, nourishment and development), and it is he who pervades in every bit of what exists.

Oh Lord who has created this world, who has established this world! We pay our deepest of regards to you; we pay our sincere respects to you.

Appendix 4

Narayan Sukta

This devotional hymn extols the magnificent divine glories of Narayan, the Supreme Being. Its Rishi (the sage who first conceptualised and preached it) is Narayan (Lord Vishnu the care take of the entire creation). Its Devta (the patron God or the deity worshipped through the hymn) is Aditya Purush (i.e. the cosmic divine male aspect of creation, the Viraat Purush, manifested in all his splendorous and dazzling glory as the Sun God). And the poetical style used in its composition, called the Chanda, is Trishtup.

It is relevant to the Narayan Upanishad which is Chapter 7 of this volume. It has six verses that appear as the concluding verses of the Purush Sukta that appears in the Shukla Yajur Veda, hence sometimes also called the 'Uttar Narayan Sukta'.

It basically describes succinctly the greatness of the primary Lord of creation, the genesis of creation, and the moral duties of a righteous person. Since it is addressed to the chief God called Narayan, it is natural that all other Gods become submissive to the person who uses this Sukta to pray to the Supreme Being known as Narayan.

1. In order to create the earth and other units of this world, he (the Supreme Being) willingly and magnanimously transformed himself into water and other necessary ingredients of creation. Then he uniformly spread everywhere. [That is, all the basic elements of creation were uniformly dissolved in this primordial cosmic fluid.]

The Sun emerged (in all its splendid glory and majestic splendour) as a vivid manifestation of this primary Purush (the Supreme Being). That is why the Sun is the chief God and occupies the highest importance for all human kind. [That is, when the sun appeared on the horizon of this water, it looked that the Supreme Being is coming out of the sea¹. It is the chief God because no life would have been possible if there was no sun shining in the dark and forebodingly chilling night that preceded this creation. The sun provided the necessary heat, light and energy that made it possible for water to become warm and helps to spring forth the latent life forms hidden in its bosom. The plants needed sunlight to carry on photosynthesis for their survival, the warmth of the sun created an atmosphere conducive to creation of fungus and algae and other life forms depending on humidity and heat, the sun produced the season and rains, and it was generally regarded as the first manifestation of the Supreme Being from the point of view of human beings who offered their worship to the sun as a means of worshipping the visible image of the otherwise invisible Supreme Being. The scene that is visualised here is of a brilliant disc of the sun rising from the surface of the vast ocean that covered the earth at the beginning of life on the planet.] (1).

[Note—¹The *Holy Bible* has an identical depiction of the first few steps of creation in the first book of Moses called the *Genesis* in its Chapter 1, verse nos. 1-31, and Chapter 2, verse nos. 1-7. The relevant part is quoted here as follows—

“Chapter 1:--1: In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

2: And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

3: And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.
4: And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.
5: And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.
6: And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.
7: And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so.
8: And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day.
9: And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so.
10: And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good.
11: And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so.
12: And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good.
13: And the evening and the morning were the third day.
14: And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years:
15: And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so.
16: And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also.
17: And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth,
18: And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good.
19: And the evening and the morning were the fourth day.
20: And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.
21: And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good.
22: And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth.
23: And the evening and the morning were the fifth day.
24: And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so.
25: And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good.
26: And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.
27: So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.
28: And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.
29: And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat.

30: And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so.

31: And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

“Chapter 2:--1: Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.

2: And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.

3: And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.

4: These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens,

5: And every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew: for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground.

6: But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground.

7: And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”]

2. I know that excellent Purush (the Supreme Being) in his splendorous form of the radiant sun which symbolises the fact that he (the Supreme Being) is beyond the reach of the darkness of ignorance. By merely knowing who he is one can overcome death. [This is because ‘death’ is a metaphor for darkness and ignorance. Once the light of wisdom and enlightenment shines on the horizon of the man’s intellect, these symbols of death are eradicated, which means that he has obtained a symbolic victory over death.]

There is no other way out for those seeking shelter (from the fear of death) (2).

3. That Prajapati (the Lord of creation who looks after his creation like a loving father) is present in the inner self of all the creatures (as their Atma). Although he has no birth, he reveals himself as all the creatures of creation. Only those who have total self control are able to witness his presence. All the creatures are part of his vast and cosmic form; nothing in existence is outside of him (3).

4. I bow most reverentially to that glorious and splendorous divine entity known as Brahm who shines in the form of the Sun for the benefit of Gods, who helps the Gods in doing their duties, and is the one who precedes all the Gods as the primary elements themselves (from which not only the Gods but the rest of the creation also came into being) (4).

5. Honouring that supreme Brahm and placing him before themselves in the divine hierarchy of Gods, they declared—‘Those Brahmins who would recognise you with these eclectic qualities and divine virtues, we the Gods would be under his command’ (5).

6. Prosperity, glories and majesty as well as beauty and charm that mark this creation are your symbolic consorts (i.e. they are the other half of your divine personality).

The day and the night are your two flanks. The countless stars are your countless forms. The heavens and the earth are two main places where you are to be found.

When one wishes to have a desire and ambition, let him have the desire for the world beyond the present. [In other words, let us see beyond our restricted viewing window and look at the vast and colourful world in the yonder. Let us open up our minds and hearts and rise up to go beyond constricted views and selfish vision of the world. Let our thoughts and intellect have a broad perspective of the world and let us be ready to listen to other's point of view, and accept it. Let us be broad minded and open hearted. Let us acquire newer forms of knowledge and access more information to broaden our horizon of knowledge and wisdom. Let us transform ourselves from our present hovel-like existence and dream like an emperor, because only when we dream big and high can we hope to ever actually fulfill our dreams.]

Let me become a man of the global world and have a global vision of life (instead of being selfish and self-centered) (6).

Appendix 5

Krishi Sukta

The Krishi Sukta is the 17th Sukta (prayer / hymn) of the third Canto of Atharva Veda. It praises agriculture, for it is an endeavour to produce the all-important food which not only supports life in the mortal world but even the Gods depend on it by way of food offerings made to them during fire sacrifices, and the spirits of dead ancestors too who find their sustenance from the food offerings made to them by their descendents.

The Rishi (chief sage or seer who first conceptualised it) is Vishwamitra. Its Devta (deity) is Sita (the divine consort of Lord Ram). It has been lauded as the endeavour that enhances all round welfare and good fortune. It is one of the best forms of human enterprise and the most important one at that. The life on this planet is sustained and fostered due to this effort of agriculture. Favourable season, good soil, hard labour—these are some of the most important necessities of agriculture. The sage requests the Rain God, Indra, to irrigate the land, and the Sun God, Surya, to protect it with his powerful light. It outlines the process of cultivation and harvesting.

1. Those wise ones who believe in divine powers represented by or personified in the form of Gods plough their fields diligently and painstakingly while deriving great joy and happiness by this arduous toil. It gives them an all round welfare, comfort and pleasure in great abundance. They keep the yoke aside at the end of the day's toil (so that the ox can rest) (1).
2. The ploughman should prepare the yoke and attach it properly to the plough and then till the land. Prepare the land properly and sow the seeds. This would result in a good crop and a robust harvest, which in turn would produce food (when cooked) (2).
3. The plough should have a strong iron ploughshare/blade, a comfortable wooden handle for the purpose of easy holding of the implement when moving the plough on rough ground. This plough (should be duly respected because it) provides the cow and the bull, the sheep and the goat, the horse and the mare, the wife and the son with excellent healthy food in the form of green grass and fresh fodder as well as cereals, pulses and other eatables respectively, which makes them all contented, happy, healthy and robust (3).
4. Let Indra (the Rain God) irrigate the land which has been tilled and made ready by the plough for sowing. Let Surya (the Sun God) who is the sustainer, nourisher and protector of crop protect it with his rays of light. Let this earth give us crop full of life, strength, energy, vitality and vigour on a perennial basis (4).
5. Let the beautiful ploughshare/blade dig properly in the earth and make perfect furrows while the farmer (the ploughman) moves behind it. Let Vayu (the Wind God) and Surya (the Sun God) who are pleased by the offerings made to them by us during

the fire sacrifice bless us with excellent herbs with potent medicinal properties that are produced by this effort of agriculture (5).

6. Let the ox live happily, contentedly and comfortably. Let every man be happy, contented and cheerful. Let excellent cultivation be done and excellent harvest be produced by moving the plough willingly, cheerfully and gladly. Let the tying ropes be tied in the proper way. The whip should be raised only when absolutely necessary and according to the needs of the hour.

[That is, though it is inevitable to use the whip on the animal, but only as an exception. This implies that the ox and other farm animals should not be treated cruelly; they should be shown great mercy and compassion. It is on them that the life of a farmer depends.] (6).

7. The Surya and Vayu are requested to accept my fire sacrifice and the offerings made in it, and irrigate the land with the water in the sky—let there be abundant rain from the clouds (7).

8. We adore and give the greatest of respect to earth because it provides us with all auspiciousness, great opportunities, all round welfare and good fortunes as well as all sorts of comforts and pleasures. Let this earth bless us with excellent crop on a perpetual basis (8).

9. When the earth is irrigated by us with due honour by the offerings of clarified butter and honey, and when the patron deities of water (Indra), wind (Vayu) and other Gods are favourably inclined and benevolent, it is then that the earth gives us excellent crop of paddy and other cereals as well as succulent fruits as a reward (9).

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Appendix 6

References to Books that explain various Concepts & Terms appearing in the main text of the Upanishads

My esteemed reader is informed here that the different metaphysical and spiritual concepts that are an integral part of the Upanishads, and need more elaboration, analysis and a detailed explanation, have been published by this author (Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia) as independent Books. Their titles and links are mentioned below. Those readers who may like to have a further reading on the topics and subjects related to concepts of metaphysics, theology and spiritualism as envisioned in the Upanishads may download these Books from the following two websites:

- (i) Internet Archive.org: https://archive.org/details/@ajai_kumar_chhawchharia
- (ii) www.tulsidas-ram-books.weebly.com

Title of relevant Books as referred to herein above:

- (1) Title : 'Brahm' in the eyes of the Upanishads

Page URL :-

- (i) <https://archive.org/details/6-brahm-in-the-eyes-of-the-upanishads>
- (ii) tulsidas-ram-books.weebly.com/uploads/2/1/7/4/21746472/brahm_in_the_eyes_of_the_upanishads.pdf

- (2) Title : SANYAS with Vairagya Shatakam of Bhartrihari

Page URL :-

- (i) <https://archive.org/details/9-sanyas-with-vairagya-shatkam-of-bhartihari>
- (ii) tulsidas-ram-books.weebly.com/uploads/2/1/7/4/21746472/sanyas-with_vairagya_shatkam_of_bhartihari.pdf

- (3) Title : Tattvas (elements) and Gunas (qualities): According to the Upanishads

Page URL :-

- (i) <https://archive.org/details/11-tattvas-gunas-according-to-upanishads>
- (ii) tulsidas-ram-books.weebly.com/uploads/2/1/7/4/21746472/tattvas_and_gunas_of_creation_according_to_upanishads.pdf

- (4) Title : 'Maya' The Whirlpool of Delusions in Creation As elucidated in the 'Upanishads' & 'Ram Charit Manas'

Page URL :-

- (i) <https://archive.org/details/13-maya-the-whirlpool-of-delusions-in-creation>

(ii) https://tulsidas-ram-books.weebly.com/uploads/2/1/7/4/21746472/maya-the_whirlpool_of_delusions_in_creation.pdf

(5) Title : The Metaphor of the Hansa in the Upanishads

Page URL :-

(i) <https://archive.org/details/18-the-metaphor-of-the-hansa-in-the-upanishads>

(ii) https://tulsidas-ram-books.weebly.com/uploads/2/1/7/4/21746472/the_metaphor_of_the_hansa_in_the_upanishads.pdf

(6) Title: OM and NAAD—The Cosmic Manifestation of the Supreme Consciousness According to the Upanishads

Page URL :-

(i) <https://archive.org/details/48-om-and-naad-the-cosmic-manifestation-of-the-supreme-consciousness-according-to-the-upanishads>

(ii) https://tulsidas-ram-books.weebly.com/uploads/2/1/7/4/21746472/om_and_naad-the_cosmic_manifestation_of_the_supreme_consciousness_according_to_the_upanishads.pdf

(7) Title : Metaphysical & Spiritual Concepts of the Upanishads Explained. [This book covers the following topics: 1—Atma and the various Sheaths; 2—The Body of the creature (The body of the living being consists of Bhuts, Dhaatus, Tattvas etc.); 3—The various States of Existence of Consciousness; 4—Macrocosm and Microcosm; 5—Vrittis and Vasanas; 6—The Gunas; 7—Mental Flux; 8—The Five Basic Elements; 9—Brahm Randhra, Brahm Dwar and Brahm Vivar; 10—Meditation and contemplation; 11—Spirituality; 12—Dhyan (Dhyaan); 13—Upasana; 14—Mukti; 15—Maya; 16—Prakriti (Nature); 17—The Vital Winds or Prans; 18—Kalaa; 19—The Tattwas; 20—Theory of Karma; 21—Akash (Sky element and its subtlety); 22—Sat-Chit-Anand; 23—Bhumika; 24—Scientific view; 25—Diagrams and Sketches.]

Page URL :-

(i) <https://archive.org/details/51-metaphysical-spiritual-concepts-of-the-upanishads-explained>

(ii) https://tulsidas-ram-books.weebly.com/uploads/2/1/7/4/21746472/metaphysical_concepts_of_upanishads_explained.pdf

(8) Page Title : Concepts of Mantra, Japa, Tantra and Yantra According to the Upanishads

Page URL :-

(i) <https://archive.org/details/52-concepts-of-mantra-japa-tantra-and-yantra-according-to-the-upanishads>

(ii) https://tulsidas-ram-books.weebly.com/uploads/2/1/7/4/21746472/mantra_japa_yantra_tantra_according_to_upanishads.pdf

(9) Page Title : Chakras and Naadis in the Body

Page URL :-

(i) https://archive.org/details/53-chakras-naadis-in-the-body_202205

(ii) https://tulsidas-ram-books.weebly.com/uploads/2/1/7/4/21746472/chakras_naadis_in_body.pdf

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NOTE: Author's Books are available at:—

(1) www.amazon.com in its Kindle + Paper-Back Print Editions.

(2) www.pothi.com in a Print edition.

(3) www.draft2digital.com and its various vendors' platforms in E-Book edition:

URL: <https://www.draft2digital.com/ajaikumarchhawchharia>

(4) www.tulsidas-ram-books.weebly.com

(5) Internet Archive.org: https://archive.org/details/@ajai_kumar_chhawchharia

(6) Goodreads:

https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/991710.Ajai_Kumar_Chhawchharia

There are countless books based on Indian scriptures and their spiritual, metaphysical and theological principles written in English by Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia with a missionary zeal as his humble service to his beloved Lord Sri Ram.

These books are a 'book lover's dream come true' and stand out heads-over-shoulders in the realm of metaphysical, philosophical, devotional, spiritual and classical literature of India. Such as for example, there are Goswami Tulsidas' myriad works with Sri Ram as the central theme which are glittering like gems, poetically told, stupendous in beauty, marvelously narrated and contain a treasury of fathomless wisdom and deep insight into spiritualism, metaphysics and philosophy. Then there is

Veda Vyas' glorious narration of the epic story of Sri Ram in Adhyatma Ramayan and Devi Puran Maha Bhagwat Ramayan. The Upanishads represent the epitome of Indian philosophical, metaphysical and spiritual treatises— the marvellous highest pinnacle that human thought can possibly reach. They are acclaimed the world over as highly evolved and intellectually enlightening books. The Vedas, on the other hand, are believed to be revealed books. The two form the two legs of Hinduism.

The author has presented a simple, day to day bilingual version (Hindi and English) of these stupendous texts. A huge array of information on Sri Ram and Hanuman culled from the Vedas, Upanishads, Purans, and myriad other sources have been systematically presented by the author in lucid, florid, easy flowing, vibrant and captivating English language— useful to a layman, a devotee, curious people, research scholars, casual as well as serious readers, plain book lovers or connoisseurs of classical literature. A must read for everyone.

All the books have original text with line-to-line easy flowing English version with necessary explanatory notes, appendices, etc.

The list of books are as follows:

Detailed English versions with commentary on Books of 'Goswami Tulsidas':

- * Vairagya Sandipani of Goswami Tulsidas.
- * Vinai Patrika of Goswami Tulsidas.
- * Geetawali of Goswami Tulsidas.
- * Kavitaawali of Goswami Tulsidas.
- * Dohawali of Goswami Tulsidas.
- * Janki Mangal of Goswami Tulsidas.
- * Ram Lala Nahachu of Goswami Tulsidas
- * Parvati Mangal of Goswami Tulsidas.
- * Barvai Ramayan of Goswami Tulsidas.
- * Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand (Canto 1) [The other 6 Cantos, i.e. Ayodhya Kand, Aranya Kand, Kishkindha Kand, Sundar Kand, Lanka Kand, and Uttar Kand, are in the process of writing, and would be made available, one by one, as soon as they are ready for publication.]

Detailed English Books based on original texts of Goswami Tulsidas, with extensive commentary:

- * Story of Ravana and the Epic War of Lanka Told in Slow Motion: in 2 Volumes (5Parts)
- * 'Sundar Kand' of Ram Charit Manas
- * The Kaagbhhusund Ramayan or The Aadi Ramayan
- * The Divine Story of Lord Shiva's marriage with Parvati (based on Ram Charit Manas, Parvati Mangal & Vinai Patrika)
- * Lord Ram's marriage with Sita (based on Ram Charit Manas).
- * Ram Geeta: The Gospel of Lord Ram.
- * A Divine Biography of Lord Ram & Glory of Lord's Holy Name.

Other Books on the theme of Lord Ram:

- * Glory of Lord Ram's Holy Name, Sacred Mantras, Stotras & Hymns
- * Anthology of Sacred Hymns, Stotras & Mantras of Lord Ram.
- * Upanishads dedicated to Lord Ram & their Philosophy.
- * Saint Surdas' "Ram Charitawali".

- * The Chariot of God—Dharma Rath.
- * Bhakti—Devotion for Lord God.
- * Saints and Non-Saints, Their Character and Comparison.
- * ‘Ram Charit Manas’ (the holy lake containing the ambrosia in the form of the divine story describing the deeds and acts of Lord Ram who was an incarnation of the Supreme Being upon earth) by Goswami Tulsidas—full text with English introduction.
- * Life sketch of Goswami Tulsidas.

The Trilogy of Books on the epic known as the ‘Ramayan’:

- * English rendering of Adbhut Ramayan by sage Valmiki.
- * English rendering of Adhyatma Ramayan by sage Veda Vyas.
- * English rendering of Devi Puran’s Ramayan by sage Veda Vyas.

English Books dedicated to Lord Shiva:

- * Book 1= Marriage of Lord Shiva with Parvati
- * Book 2= Sacred Hymns of Lord Shiva.
- * Book 3= Lord Shiva—His legend, Upanishads, Puran, Hymns & Parvati Mangal.

A Book in English dedicated to Lord Hanuman:

- * The Legendary Glory of Hanuman.

English Books explaining various spiritual and metaphysical concepts based on the Upanishads:

- * Chakras and Naadis in the human body.
- * Metaphysical & Spiritual Concepts of the Upanishads Explained
- * Concepts of Mantra, Japa, Tantra and Yantra According to the Upanishads
- * A True Guru (The Qualities, Importance and Need of a True Teacher, Preceptor, Guide and Advisor).
- * Maya: The Whirlpool of Delusions in Creation.
- * The Triumvirate of Creation: According to the Upanishads.
- * The ‘Pentagon of Creation’—The Panch Tattvas, Panch Bhuts, Panch Prans & Panch Koshas.
- * Revelation of Creation as envisioned in the Upanishads.
- * YOGA—Its Practice & Philosophy according to the Upanishads.
- * Who is a Guru?
- * The 24 Avtaars (incarnations) of Lord Vishnu.
- * The Viraat Purush—the cosmic, all-embracing form of the Supreme Being: as conceived in the Upanishads, Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas, and Ram Charit Manas of Goswami Tulsidas.
- * OM and NAAD: the cosmic revelation of Super Consciousness extensively explained and compiled from the Upanishads.
- * Vaak (spoken word), Akshar (alphabet) & Sristi (creation).
- * The concept of ‘Kalaa’.
- * ‘Brahm’ in the eyes of the Upanishads.
- * ‘Sanyas’ with ‘Vairagya Shatkam’ of Bhartihari.
- * The ‘Mahavakyas’ (Great Sayings) of the Upanishads.
- * The ‘Tattwas’ (elements) and the Gunas (qualities) According to the Upanishads.
- * The Fundamental Elements and Character Traits of Creation as Enunciated in the Upanishads {available only on www.draft2digital.com }

* The Metaphor of the Hansa in the Upanishads: The symbolism of a Grand Swan used to explain the wisdom of spiritual and metaphysical principles by the Upanishads.

Other English Books on Hinduism and its Spiritual Philosophy (by Ajai kumar Chhawchharia):

- * Bhakti Sutra Mala
- * Shandilya Bhakti Sutra
- * Narad Bhakti Sutra
- * 'Vairagya Shatkam' of king-sage Bhartrihari.
- * The great ancient sages, seers, saints and enlightened kings of India.
- * The great sages, seers, saints and enlightened kings of ancient India {available only on www.draft2digital.com }
- * 'Arunachal Pancharatna & Rudra Ashtak'. {In English, co-produced by Rev. Janardan Kalianand-Swami of USA and Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia. }

***Detailed English renderings, with explanatory notes and commentaries of the 108 Upanishads classified according to the Vedic tradition.**

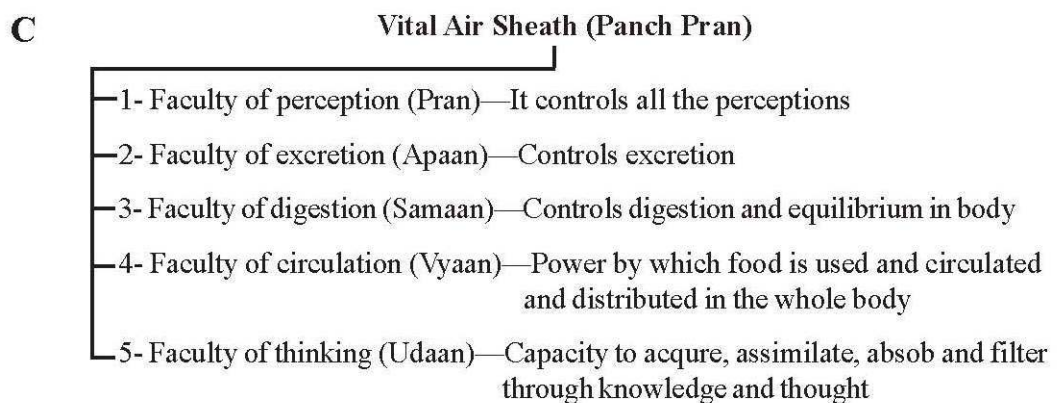
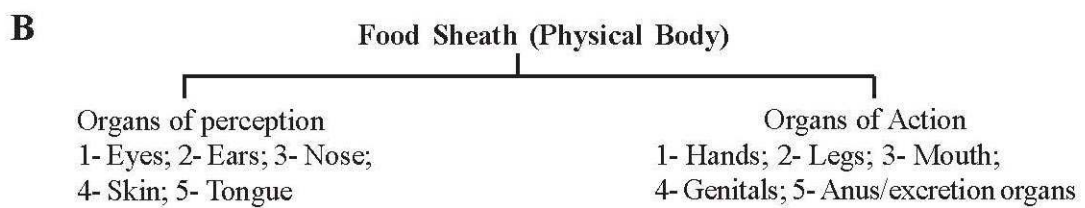
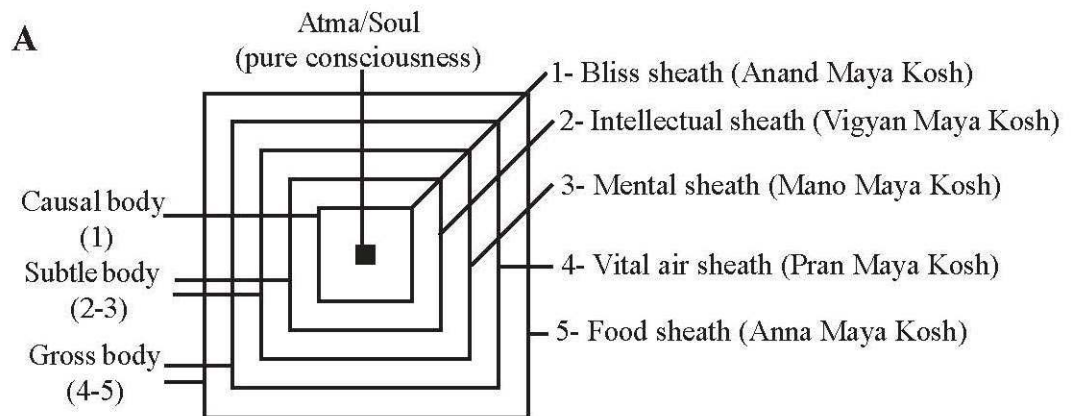
Vol. 1=Rig Veda Upanishads; Vol. 2= Sam Veda Upanishads; Vol. 3= Shukla Yajur Veda Upanishads; Vol. 4= Krishna Yajur Veda Upanishads; Vol. 5= Atharva Veda Upanishads;

NOTE: A full-blown English rendering of Tulsidas' epic 'Ram Charit Manas' is under preparation. It will be a unique Book and an elaborate one, as it would run into many thousands of pages that would endeavour to explain each single verse of Ram Charit Manas in detail from different perspectives, with the aid of explanatory notes and references.

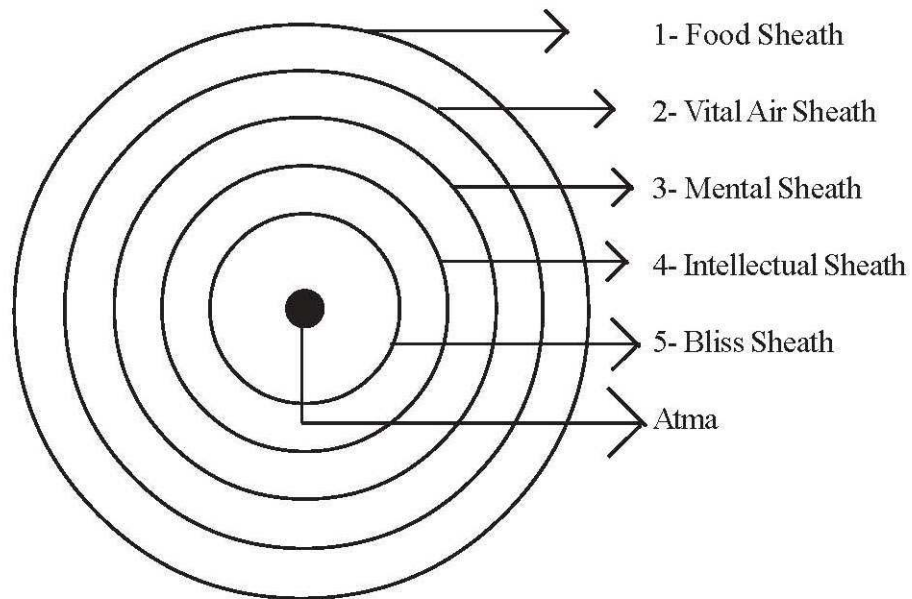
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Diagrams/Sketches explaining certain concepts of the Upanishads

Diagram of various sheaths and three bodies of the creature



The 5 Sheaths and Atma



Merging of Microcosmic Soul with Macrocosmic Soul

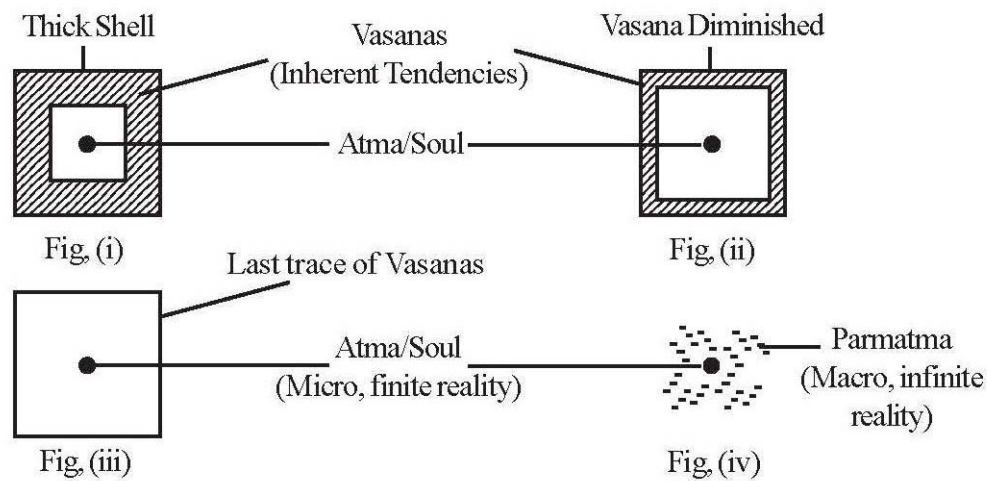
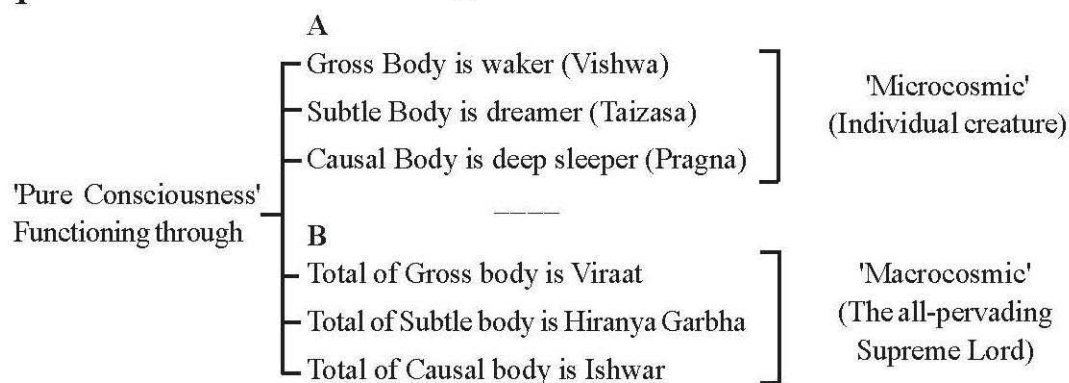
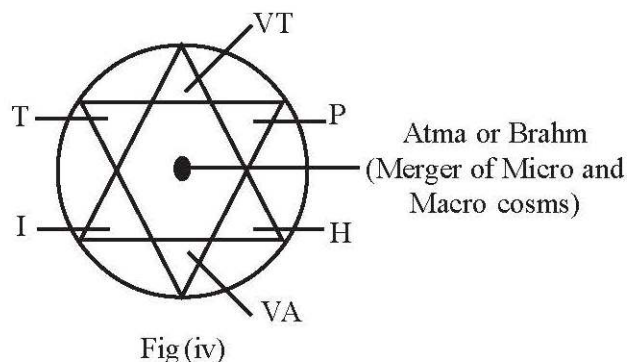
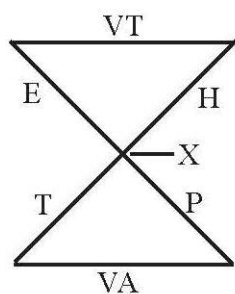
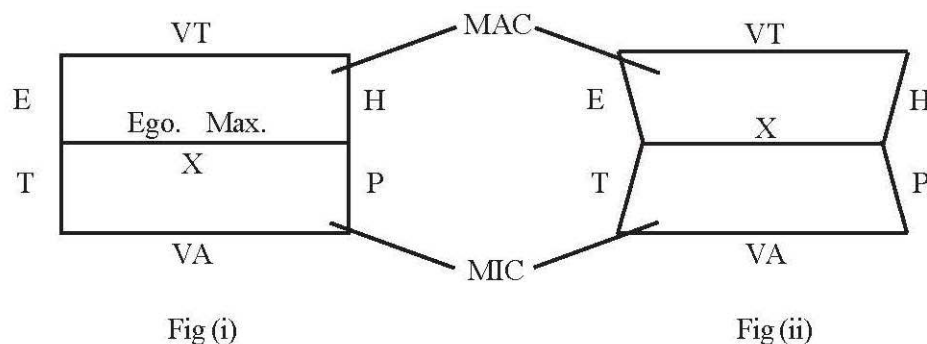


Figure shows how Atma merges with Parmatma by controlling Vasanas or Vrittis

1 **Functioning of Pure Consciousness**

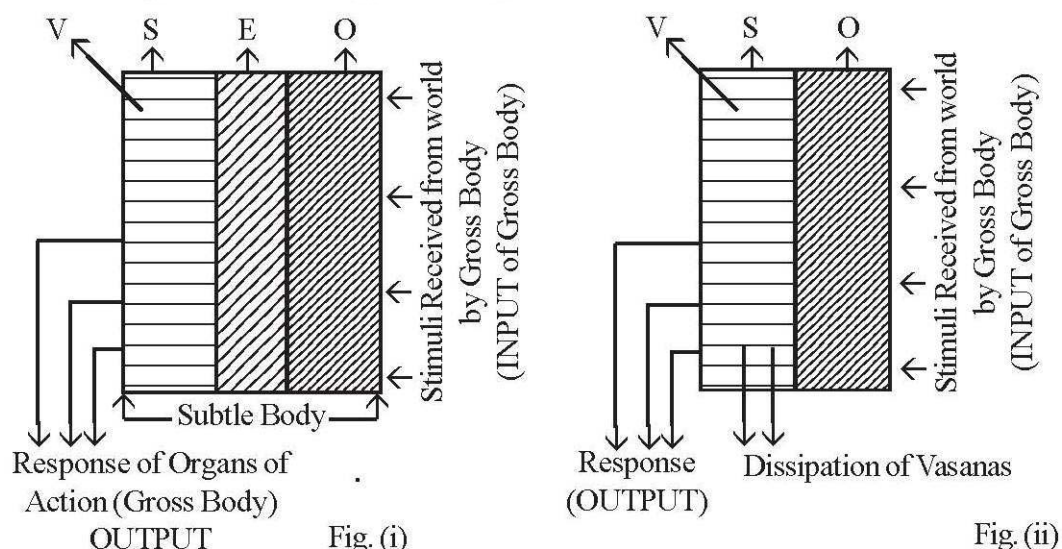


2 **Diagram depicting how Microcosm merges with Macrocosm**



Key— VT = Viraat (Cosmic waker); VA = Vishwa (Waker); P = Pragna (Deep sleeper); T = Taijasa (Dreamer); H = Hiranya Garbha (Cosmic dreamer); I = Ishwar (Cosmic deep sleeper); X = Inherent tendency or demarcation line representing 'perceiver-feeler-thinker-doer'; Atma = Microcosmic pure self of individual; Brahm = Macrocosmic Soul of the universe; MAC = Macrocosm; MIC = Microcosm;

Diagram showing how Ego and desires effect the Mind



Key— S = Subjective Subtle Body (Intellect); O = Objective Subtle Body (Mind);
V = Vasanas (Inherent Tendencies or Inclinations); E = Ego/Desires

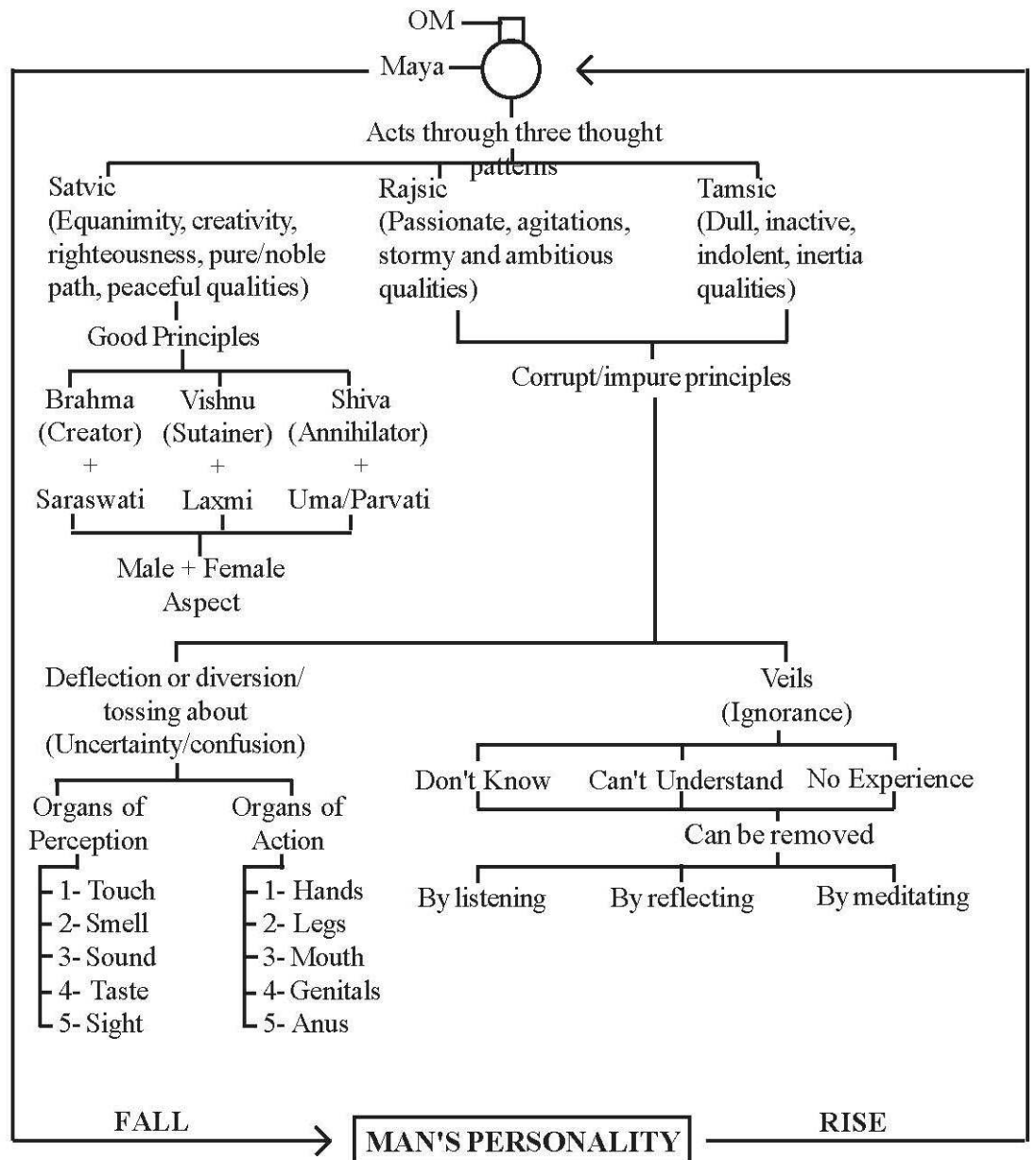
Explanation :- The stimuli received by the objective mind is passed to the subjective mind (intellect) through the constant interference of ego (Ahankar). Hence, while taking a decision, the intellect (Buddhi = बुद्धि) is influenced by the intervening ego (refer figure no. 1)

When ego is removed, there is direct coordination between the mind and the intellect and the former receives proper guidance from the latter. When actions are performed without interference by ego, no fresh Vasanas are deposited in the intellect. Those already present gradually dissipate away. In due course of time, the intellect is freed of all the Vasanas as well (refer figure no. 2).

This helps in purging of all the impurities associated with the soul and enveloping it like a layer or veil. When the veil is removed, the magnificence and brilliance of pure consciousness illuminates the creature.

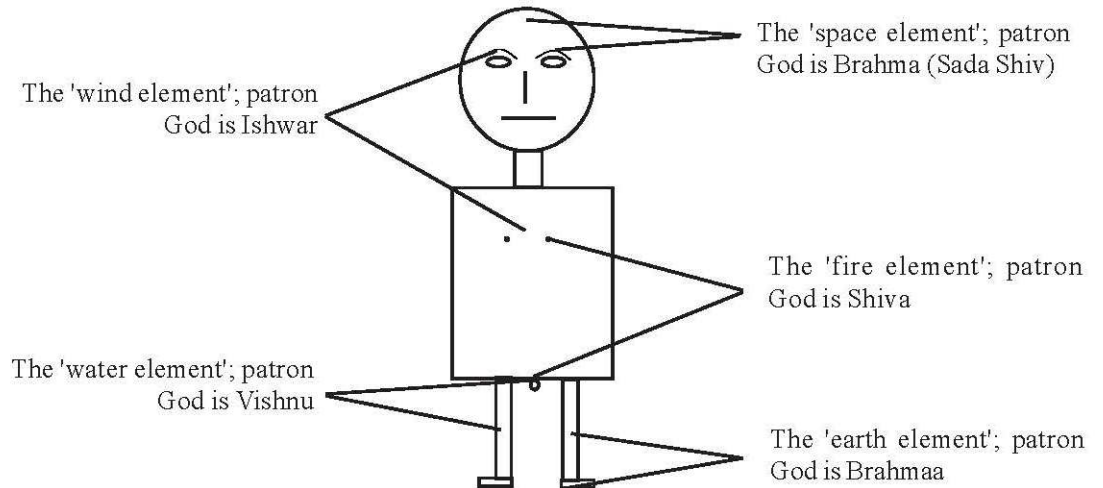
As is clear from the above diagram, when the ego and desire—which form the basic ingredients of the inherent tendencies of a creature—are dissipated by industrious effort, the pure Atma residing in the 3rd sheath (the causal body) of the creature can directly interact with the Intellect (the subjective subtle body) of the creature. This intellect is not now subject to any interference from Vasanas (fig. ii), and can act independently. The actions become pure, uncorrupted and scrupulous. The emphasis here is to put the intellect directly under the command of the Atma/soul without the interference of Vasanas, ego, desires and other inherent tendencies or inclinations that mire the soul as a result of (a) its past deeds and their results and (b) unfulfilled desires.

PERSONALITY OF MAN



**Diagram showing the predominance of the five elements
and their patron Gods in the Body**

(refer verse nos. 4-6, Canto 8, Jabaldarshano-panishad)



**Diagram showing the predominance of the five elements
and their shape and colour in the Body**

(refer verse nos. 2/135-141 Trishikhi Brahmano-panishad)

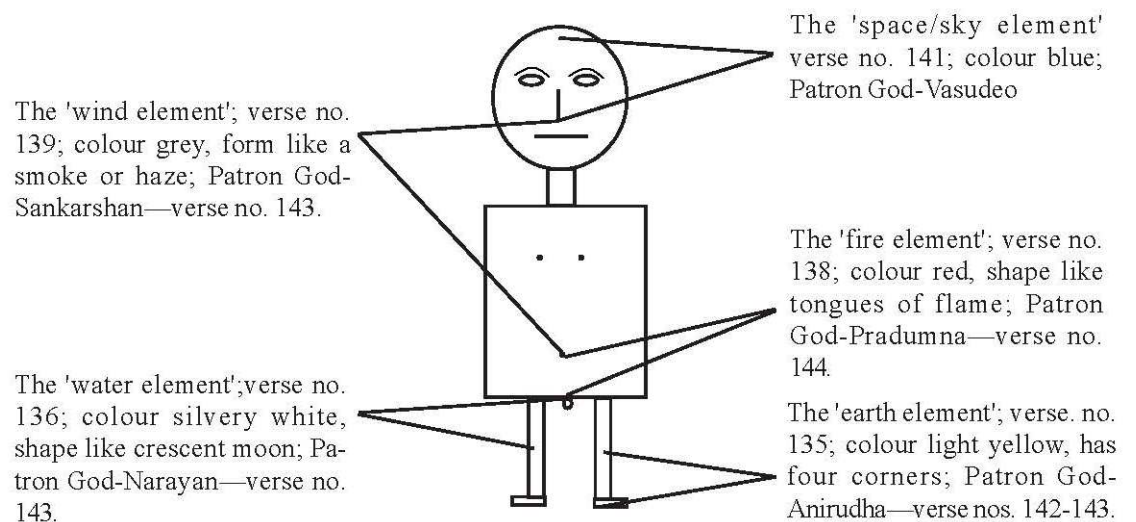


Diagram of Creation of the World from Viraat Purush
(Adhyatma Ramayan—Uttar Kand, Canto 2, verse nos.63-69)

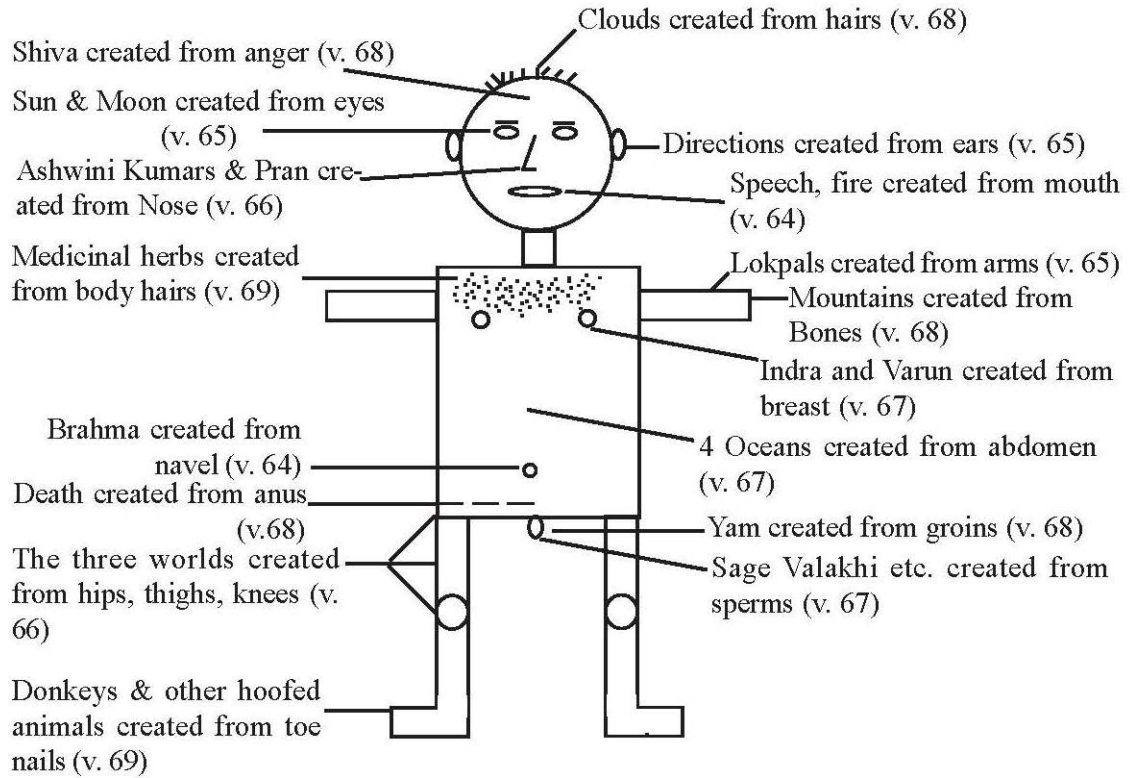
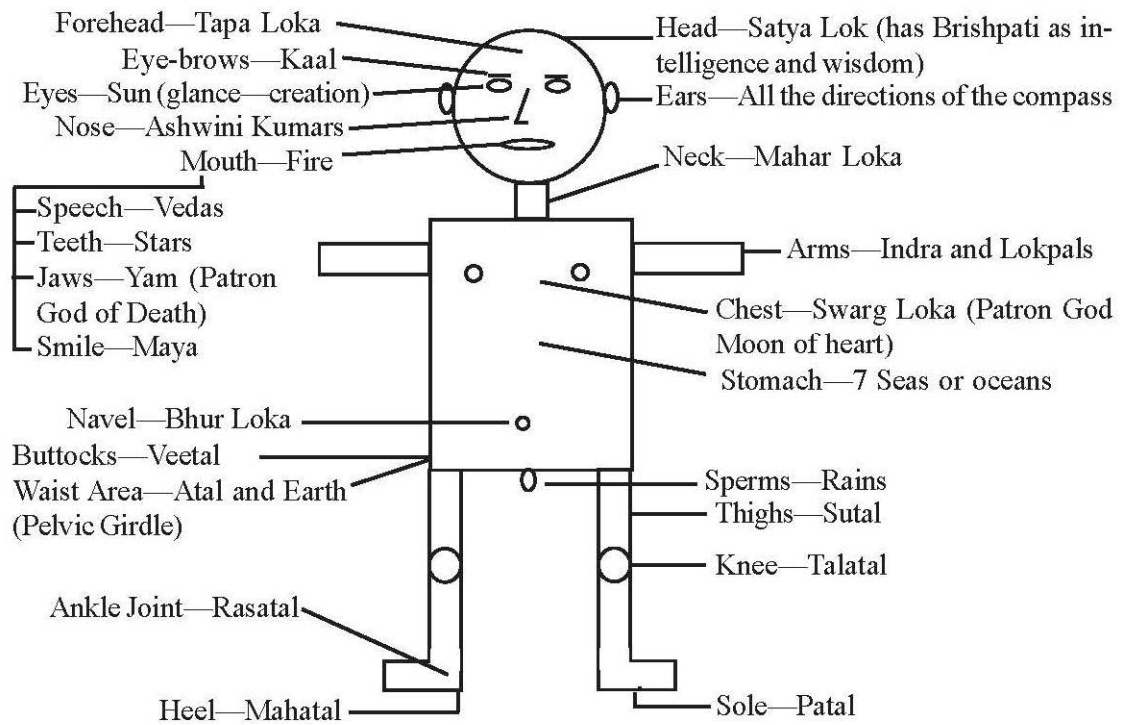


Diagram of Creation of the World from Viraat Purush

The Viraat Purush

(Adhyatma Ramayan—Aranya Kand, Canto 9, verse nos. 36-45)



Note :-(a) Eyes (Sun) = (i) Glances—Creation; (ii) Blink—Night; (iii) Open—Day
 (b) Body Hairs = Trees, Medicinal herbs, Creepers
 (d) Enlightenment/Wisdom/Knowledge = Glory, Fame, Renown

Chakras/subtle energy centers in the body

(Based on Saubhagya Laxmi Upanishad of Rig Veda, Canto 3)

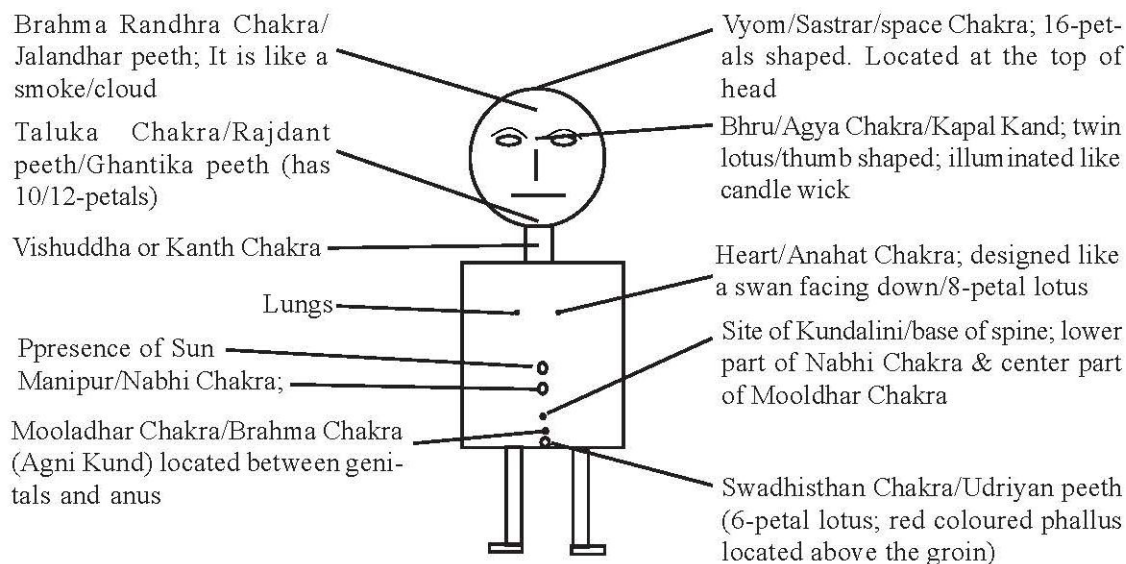


Fig (1)

Naadis: Nerves in the body

(Based on Jabal Darshan Upanishad of Sam Veda, Canto 4, verse 13-17)

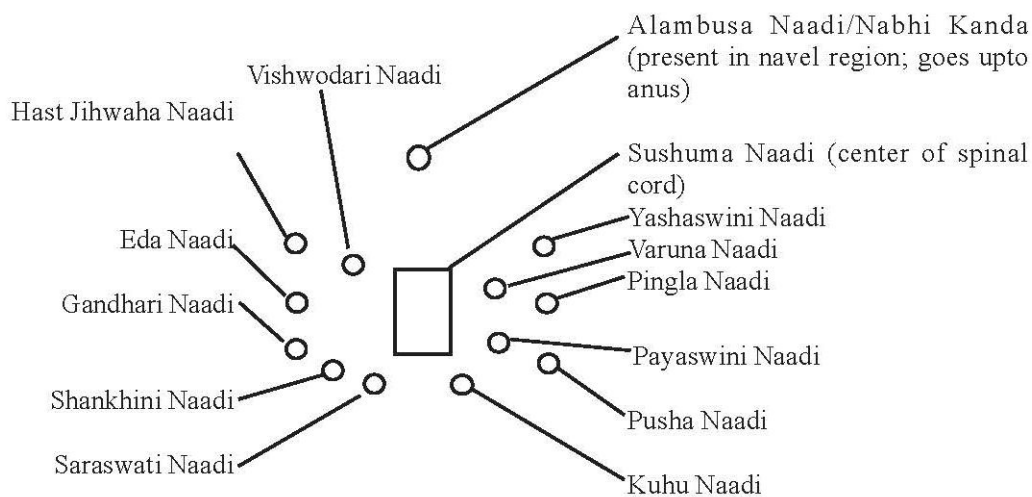
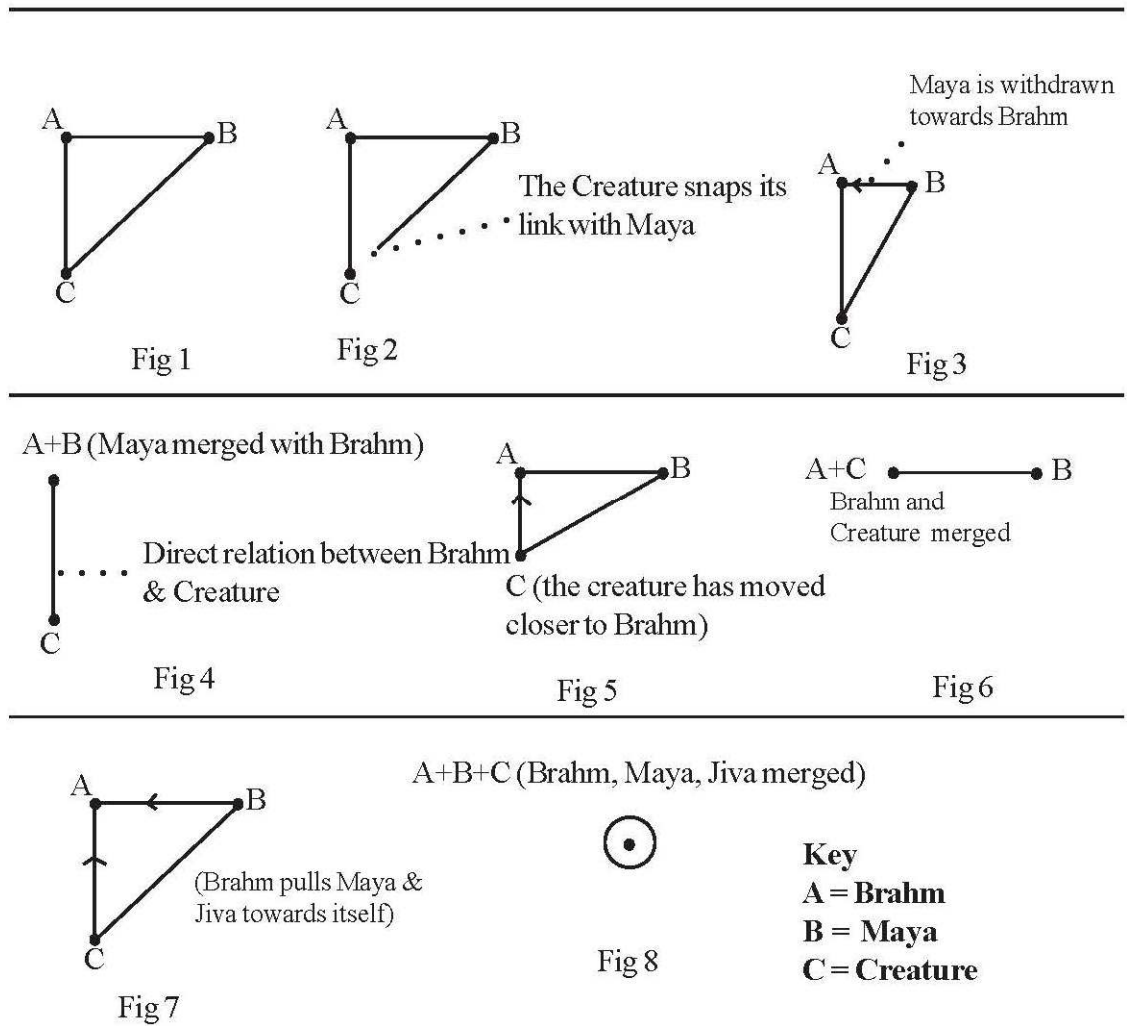


Fig (2)

(T.S. of Spinal Cord Region at the lower end)

Sketch Illustrating Relationship of Brahm, Maya & Jiva



(Relationship between Brahm, Maya and Jiva.)

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